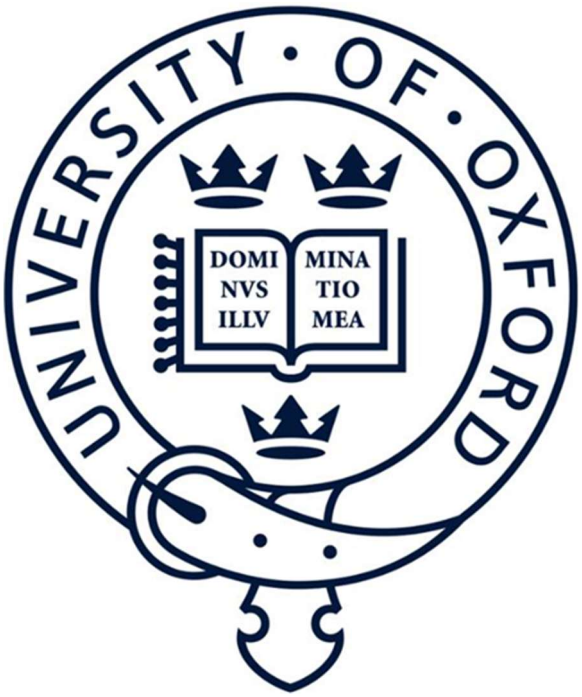
Being and Anarchy:
The Individual in International Order



Candidate Number: 1038252

Trinity Term, 2024

Word Count: 96,908

This thesis is submitted to the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DPhil in International Relations

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Economic & Social Research Council for their generous funding of this project and Professor Eddie Keene for the support he has provided throughout the process as my supervisor.

Abstract

This thesis is a work of normative International Relations (IR) theory which, through significant engagement with philosophical and IR literature, attempts to answer the research question:

> How can the paradoxical normative relationship between human freedom and transcendent values be reconciled in the context of the plural international order.

The thesis argues that many contemporary normative approaches to IR provide valuable insights into the research question and its ontological, epistemological and metaphysical aspects, but they do not offer a solution to the paradoxical relationship between seemingly incommensurate human freedom and transcendent value. Instead, it proposes that they key tensions alluded to in the research question are best explained at the individual level of analysis, specifically through a concept of the person provided by Hubert Dreyfus's interpretation of Søren Kierkegaard's works. When translated into the terminology of international order through Molly Cochran's pragmatic approach and Will Bain's political theology, this opens the door for a coherent existentialist approach to normative IR theory which answers the research question by redefining its key terms in relation to the existentialist individual.

This coherent approach incorporates, alongside Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It is a broad normative theory with many potential manifestations, but one illustrative example used in the thesis is the historical struggle for racial justice which demonstrates the value of analytically enhancing the role of the individual in normative IR theory, as well as normatively strengthening individuals in relation to conceptions of international order.

Contents

Abstract……2

Contents……3

Introduction …… 4
Research Question …… 5
Methodology …… 10
Structure …… 17

Part I – Escape from Freedom

Chapter 1 – A Concept of the Person …… 22
The Death of God …… 23
The Paradoxical Self …… 26
The Cure for Despair …… 31
Chapter 2 – Cosmopolitanism …… 38
Kantian Cosmopolitanism …… 38
Communicative Cosmopolitanism …… 46
Chapter 3 – Communitarianism …… 57
Constitutive Theory …… 58
Instrumental Communitarianism …… 62
Chapter 4 – English School …… 70
Pluralism and Solidarism …… 71
Natural Law …… 75
Moral Scepticism …… 83
Chapter 5 – Poststructuralism …… 91
Poststructuralism and Normative Theorising …… 92
The Limits of Poststructuralism …… 97
Chapter 6 – Phronetics, Pragmatism and Political Theology …… 105
Phronetics …… 106
Pragmatism …… 108
Political Theology …… 112

Part II – Condemned to Freedom

Chapter 7 – Eschatology …… 120
Bain and Political Theology …… 121
Kierkegaard and Political Theology …… 131
Chapter 8 – Existentialist Phenomenology …… 143
The Phenomenological Method …… 144
Phenomenology and Individual Freedom …… 148
Phenomenology and International Order …… 153
Chapter 9 – Existentialist Order …… 162
Ethics of Ambiguity …… 163
Ethics of Absurdity …… 175
Chapter 10 – Racial Justice …… 183
Racial Justice and Individual Freedom …… 184
Racial Justice and International Order …… 190
Conclusion …… 196

Bibliography …… 199

Introduction

On 1 September 2016, Colin Kaepernick, then quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, took a knee during the US national anthem, stating that he would not "stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of colour."[1] His protest quickly spread across the National Football League, to other US sports leagues, and then around the world. In June 2020, Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, took a knee at a protest in Ottawa in support of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.[2] By that point, the act of taking a knee was indelibly associated with global anti-racist protests which had become central to an international normative discourse. Though Kaepernick's act did not mark the beginning of the BLM movement or renewed global calls for racial justice, it exemplified the interplay of freedom both in support of and against transcendent values in two ways: firstly, he challenged the normative authority of the state over him, directing his protest against "a flag for a country" with which he could no longer identify according to his conscience. And, secondly, Kaepernick, in rejecting the norms of his state, catalysed a degree of normative change in international order which is shaping new understandings of how that order ought to look. In other words, Kaepernick's story is one of an individual acting in a way which tangibly affected international order by promoting his freedom beyond the concepts of freedom then represented in the existing institutions of international order and their attendant transcendent value – in this case, the state and race.

This thesis will therefore explore how it is that such normative action, especially in regards to racial justice, is justified when it seems to conflict with settled norms of international order. In this sense, the example of racial justice is a motivating case which gets at a far more abstract puzzle in normative International Relations (IR) theory: namely, the relationship between human freedom and transcendent value. Hence, the majority of the thesis will be a normative inquiry into that puzzle, asking the question:

> How can the paradoxical normative relationship between human freedom and transcendent values be reconciled in the context of the plural international order?

This introductory chapter will explain the puzzle captured above, the research question stemming from that puzzle, preliminary definitions, and the methodology used. It will then briefly outline the structure of the thesis. It is divided into three sections. The first section establishes the research question, after having given an overview of the normative puzzle which animates it. This puzzle is rooted in normative inquiry and identifies a paradoxical relationship between human freedom and transcendent value in international order. Many of these key terms are preliminarily defined in this section. The second section discusses the methodology employed throughout the thesis and, in doing so, situates the thesis in the IR literature. The

[1] Colin Kaepernick, quoted in Cindy Boren, 'A Timeline of Colin Kaepernick's Protests Against Police Brutality, Four Years After They Began', *The Washington Post*, 26 August 2020
[2] John Tasker, 'Trudeau Takes a Knee at Anti-Racism Protest on Parliament Hill', *CBC News*, 5 June 2020

thesis is a work of normative IR theory. Within the breadth of that field, the thesis aligns with Molly Cochran's definition of normative IR theory and adopts a fourfold method of interpretation, critique, evaluation and meta-normative reflection as defined by Chris Brown. Importantly, the second section also explains what the thesis is not. Specifically, despite drawing on philosophical and theological works, it is not a work of philosophy or theology, nor is it interested in the same questions as empirical IR theories despite some interaction with them. Finally, the third section provides a brief overview of the structure of the thesis.

Research Question

This thesis is about the normative constitution of international order. Hedley Bull's classic definition of order is of a social relationship between people – as individuals or groups – producing a pattern or arrangement which promotes certain values. He identifies three "elementary" values which are held within any social order: security against undue violence, confidence that promises and agreements will be upheld, and predictability in property relations.[3] *International* order specifically is the arrangement or pattern between states, directed to the value of maintaining a 'society of states' or 'international society'.[4] Because international order is fundamentally a social relationship, there is disagreement – beyond the three elementary values – over the normative goals of that order and which actors hold legitimate authority to act within it. That is why, heuristically, Bull identified a so-called 'world society' existing alongside the state-based international society, with this world society representing the role played by alternative actors in international order.[5] An important point raised by the notion of a 'world society' is that international order is *plural* in the sense that multiple categories of actor (and multiple actors within those categories) compete and co-operate to shape it. International order also contains institutions whose function is to mediate competing demands to incorporate new and different values. Examples of such institutions include the balance of power, international law and war, amongst others.[6] But when consensus over the legitimacy of international order in its current form weakens, there is no normative foundation on which to fall in order to arbitrate what counts as legitimate action. In other words, there is no ultimate lawgiver to whom states, groups or individuals can turn to settle what is considered to be a right relationship between actors.

This problem is especially evident when framed in terms of the secularisation of international order, a process by which the legitimation of international order gradually switched from recourse to God towards appeals to human will. As an illustrative example, Bull discusses the transition from a discourse of 'natural law' rooted in either a common God or a universal reason, to one of 'positive law' based on the actions of

[3] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp.3-4
[4] Ibid, p.8
[5] Ibid, pp.20-1
[6] Ibid

statespeople.[7] The issue is that without a transcendent lawgiver beyond humans themselves, almost any human action can be justified as legitimate. That this is not usually the case is testament to a prevailing normative concern in international order, but the fact that ethical norms have broken down sufficiently to allow, for example, the depredations of the Third Reich and Stalin's Soviet regime shows how destabilising and destructive a plural international order can be when weakened by competing claims to legitimacy whilst lacking a normative foundation. As Will Bain writes, "Auschwitz is, so to speak, the nihilistic end of the road of a world that is nothing but will and artifice, which is rescued by appeal to some transcendent value – human dignity or common humanity, for example – that restricts what can be done in the name of will and artifice."[8]

Bain's assertion includes five assumptions which inspire this thesis. First, the contemporary international order is a plural one. It is not just plural in the sense that it contains multiple actors and categories of actor, as noted above, but it is also normatively plural in that multiple values are used to justify claims to legitimate action within its boundaries. Second, pluralism is normatively justified by appeal to human will, which is itself considered a value insofar as it is a manifestation of human freedom. To illustrate this point, Robert Jackson, in his normative study of international order, considered state sovereignty to be philosophically derived from human freedom and, therefore, alongside the concomitant norm of non-intervention, to be the so-called *grundnorm* – or fundamental ethical norm – on which claims to legitimate action in international order rest.[9] Third, human will can be deployed towards ends which compromise the freedom of other humans, as well as the stability and normative end of international order; hence Bain's reference to Auschwitz as the "nihilistic end of the road of a world that is nothing but will and artifice." Fourth, a 'transcendent' value which imposes an obligation on humans to act towards each other in a certain way is needed in order to prevent the excessive destabilisation and destruction resulting from the unfettered application of human freedom. Bain finds such a transcendent value to be lacking in the current international order, because claims to transcendence are ultimately made through human will and, consequently, "their transcendent character is an artefact of the same freedom it is meant to regulate."[10] But, fifth, that transcendent value cannot entirely replace human will as a normative basis for international order without fundamentally altering its plural character by restricting the degree to which multiple actors can claim legitimacy based on their freedom alone.

To summarise, the problem is that in an international order legitimised by human will, there is no sufficiently transcendent value to root a theory of obligation which prevents one human will being imposed on another person without consent. Corollary to this is the notion that any such value which succeeds in limiting the

[7] Ibid, pp.26-36; as an illustrative example, the story in *The Anarchical Society* of the transition from natural to positive law is simplified, but it demonstrates the weakening authority of the appeal to God in normative justifications of international order

[8] Will Bain, *Political Theology of International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p.215

[9] Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.18

[10] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.217

destructive power of human will must necessarily restrict the human freedom upon which that will is based (the distinction here between will and freedom is that freedom is a state of existence, whereas will is the application of freedom onto the world through self-chosen action). Bain provides two examples of possible transcendent values which others have posited as a normative foundation for international order: common humanity and human dignity. The first has been explored to a great extent in IR literature and, specifically, normative theory. Of particular note is cosmopolitanism, a broad approach which contains multiple variations and owes much to political philosophy.[11] Bain suggests that common humanity may be impossible to use as a transcendent value to provide a normative foundation to international order because that order is, for better or worse, premised on human freedom and that freedom justifies human will to act *as distinct from* a common identity.[12] Other attempts are made to resolve this tension, such as communitarianism which, within normative theory, is another broad approach consciously rooting itself in human freedom and deriving a limited theory of obligation from that basis.[13] The English School (ES) is also known for its attention to the apparent normative conflict between human freedom and common humanity, expressed within its solidarist-pluralist debate; the solidarist side of the debate argues for a limited degree of obligation based on values derived from common humanity, while the pluralist side contests that a basic ethic of co-existence is all that can be concluded from an international order normatively justified by human freedom.[14] It is from the ES that Bain uncovers these normative tensions in international order and concludes that a transcendent value is lacking.[15]

The ES, perhaps more so than the former normative approaches to IR, focuses on how appeals (successful or not) to common humanity conflict with human freedom and the practical implications this can have in the form of, for example, armed humanitarian intervention. In so doing, the ES also grapples somewhat with the second of Bain's posited transcendent values: human dignity. Human dignity in this sense refers to the assertion that one of the fundamental purposes of international order ought to be to promote the development of the individual, though what that development consists of is debated between approaches. In that regard, Bull claims that "the ultimate units of the great society of all mankind are not states […] but individual human beings,"[16] and that "if any value attaches to order in world politics, it is order among all mankind which we must treat as being of primary value, not order within the society of states."[17] Another prominent ES scholar, Martin Wight, similarly noted of international order that "states are its prime and immediate members, even if there is a sense in which its ultimate members are men."[18] In this sense, human dignity is located not within a systemic or state-based level of analysis, but in the individual level of analysis

[11] See Chapter 2
[12] Bain, *Political Theology*
[13] See Chapter 3
[14] See Chapter 4
[15] See, for example: Will Bain, 'Rival Traditions of Natural Law: Martin Wight and the Theory of International Society', *The International History Review*, 36:5 (2014), pp.943-60
[16] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p.21
[17] Ibid
[18] Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), p.106

with single human beings. Despite these sentiments, though, the ES and normative theory in IR have focused very little on the individual level of analysis and therefore, compared to notions of common humanity, the idea of human dignity as a transcendent value remains undertheorised. Recently, some normative IR theories touch on ideas of human dignity, even if not explicitly so, notably Molly Cochran's adaptation of John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, as well as Chris Brown's focus on practical ethics.[19] However, these works remain outside the mainstream of normative IR theory. Furthermore, as this thesis will argue, though they represent important steps in normative theorising, they do not resolve the tension Bain identified in how transcendent values can act as a normative foundation in an international order based on human freedom. Any normative theory which tries to do so must explicitly grapple with the role of human freedom and how it can be preserved, even whilst being constrained by a normative foundation which imposes a theory of obligation upon humans – a seemingly insurmountable paradox.[20] This problem is not new to IR; indeed, it was put forward by Wight in the form of the question "how might international society be grounded in a plural world?"[21]

This thesis will argue that the tension between human freedom and a transcendent value is not, in fact, paradoxical; rather, current definitions of human freedom within normative IR literature are insufficient to synthesise the two. That is, if human freedom is reconceptualised then it can act as a transcendent value which provides a normative foundation for the plural international order. Secondarily, because of the understanding of human freedom used within the thesis, this argument results in a normative understanding of international order from the perspective of the individual, also referred to as the first image. The question is how this can be, specifically:

> How can the paradoxical normative relationship between human freedom and transcendent values be reconciled in the context of the plural international order?

The key terms in the question are essentially contested, and much of the role of the thesis is to provide an exegesis and critique of alternative definitions for those terms. For example, though a preliminary definition of the 'plural international order' was offered at the beginning of this chapter to frame the research question, alternative definitions will be compared to it throughout the thesis in order to highlight limitations which must be addressed and better answer the research question. Similarly, the paradoxical normative relationship between human freedom and transcendent value has been briefly discussed already to highlight a problem which spans multiple normative approaches to IR, each of which offers alternative definitions

[19] Molly Cochran, *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Chris Brown, *Practical Judgement in International Political Theory: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge, 2010); Chris Brown, 'The Practice Turn, Phronesis and Classical Realism: Towards a Phronetic International Political Theory?', *Millennium* 40:3 (2012), pp.439-56

[20] See, for example: Will Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws: Recovering the Normative in English School Theory', *Review of International Studies* 33:4 (2007), pp.557-75

[21] Martin Wight, quoted in Bain, 'Rival Traditions', p.944

which impact their response to it. Consequently, the definitions which this thesis uses will become apparent throughout the exegesis and critique which constitutes Part I. The reason for this is that, given the complexity of the literature surrounding this problem and the contested definitions of key terms, more care must be taken to locate this thesis within that literature and justify why it adopts the approach it does (as well as why it chooses not to adopt the approaches it doesn't). Nevertheless, some preliminary definitions can be summarised here which help limit the scope of this thesis before it approaches a broad topic within normative IR theory:

- First, a plural international order is (to risk repeating the opening of this chapter) a social arrangement of actors pursuing certain common goals and managing their relations through rules and institutions.[22] This order is one which lies beyond the scope of any single enforcing power such as a government. Its actors are diverse in that there are many of them and that they fall into multiple categories, such as states, classes, transnational entities or even individual humans. By implication, international order also contains a diversity of value judgements because each actor or category of actor will hold different interpretations of what are and ought to be legitimate goals and actions. No one actor or category of actor is necessarily more important than others at any point in time and, equally, certain actors may hold more authority to determine legitimate goals or actions than others within a particular period.
- Second, human freedom is – in very broad terms which will be clarified in Chapter 1 – a state of existence in which an individual's identity does not come from their membership of a group or some common defining characteristic. This implies a subsidiary aspect of freedom as freedom of choice, which is a necessary but not sufficient aspect of the deeper form of freedom used in the thesis.[23] This second understanding of freedom as freedom of choice is related to human will in that human will is to act according to a free choice.
- Third, a transcendent value is one which is the ultimate arbiter of all other values and action. When multiple values conflict, a transcendent value can be invoked to justify the pre-eminence of one over the other. It is the value from which the normative rightness of other values is derived. Examples include God, who in the Christian scripture acts as an authoritative lawgiver by virtue of His divinity; or reason, which is arguably accessible to all humans through their rational faculties and therefore allows them to discover a single common truth connecting them beyond their particular situations. Bain summarises a transcendent value as "a normative grounding that transcends the mere existence of common interests."[24]
- Fourth, the paradoxical normative relationship is that between human freedom and a transcendent value. As discussed above, for a value to be transcendent implies that it must exert some

[22] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp.3-4
[23] This definition of freedom, as explained in Chapter 1, is derived from Hubert Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*, Lecture Series, University of California Berkeley, Spring 2006
[24] Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws', p.562

> constraining force on human freedom in the sense of freedom of choice, because it prohibits certain choices as good or bad in relation to the ends it defines. But a transcendent value is required to prevent human freedom being misused and impinging on the freedom of others. Hence, the relationship between human freedom and a transcendent value is paradoxical in that one cannot be pursued without diminishing the other, and it is normative because it is fundamentally concerned with ethical criteria for action. It is a relationship because human freedom and a transcendent value interact such that what happens to one necessarily affects the other.

Again, these definitions are preliminary and therefore provisional. They will be expanded upon as part of the process of exegesis and critique of the normative IR literature which occupies Part I of the thesis. That said, from the preliminary definitions provided, it is clear that this thesis engages with normative IR theory and that it is less concerned with empirical theorising. The following section will therefore discuss in greater detail on where this thesis is situated within the IR literature and, specifically, how it relates to normative IR theory.

Methodology

Methodologically, this thesis engages in normative theorising within IR. It understands normative theory in the same manner as Cochran:

> that which "takes as its subject matter the criteria of ethical judgement in world politics and seeks shared principles for extended moral inclusion and social reconstruction in international practice […] It aims to move beyond the understanding of IR as a *modus vivendi* by illustrating reasons for obligation owed in international practice that cannot be attributed to self-interest alone."[25]

It does so by "asking questions about which relationships between individuals and states can be regarded as legitimate, and whether the boundaries or parameters in which those relationships are presently defined are ethically justifiable."[26] Normative theory is a broad approach which has two goals. First, it seeks to expand the breadth of sources which form the 'canon' of IR scholarship. If the ethical dimension is so important to the study of IR, then readings of past thinkers cannot be confined to those who explicitly mention the international sphere or society of states. Instead, moral and political philosophers must be engaged to highlight the normative assumptions underpinning IR theory and its related terms.[27] In that vein, a notable work of early normative theory is a volume on the political thought of the Western world –

[25] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.2
[26] Ibid, p.3
[27] Or Rosenboim and Liane Hartnett, 'International Political Thought and Historical International Relations' in Carvalho, Costa Lopez and Leira (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), pp.103-4

International Relations in Political Thought – which stretches back to Homer, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* it argues have been used "not only for historical facts but for ethical principles."[28] On the other hand, normative theory draws out the ethical dimension of all existing IR theories, combatting a perceived positivist bias by highlighting how even supposedly rational models are based on normative assumptions about what questions are worth asking and which data is worth analysing.[29]

This is not the only understanding of normative theory in IR. One approach, specifically termed 'international ethics', draws from applied ethics in arguing that "public policy should be guided and judged by the same principles that govern individual conduct."[30] In one sense, this does not differ much from Cochran's definition of normative theory above, in that both focus on "ethical judgement in world politics" and seek to expand normative study beyond the state to other actors such as individuals. Implicitly, both approaches also expand the number of thinkers able to be studied by normative IR scholars by not restricting the 'canon' to those who are explicitly oriented to the international realm. However, the term 'international ethics' is restrictive in other ways. Chiefly, it focuses on the *ethical*, that is on judgements of right and wrong action which, while not inherently undesirable, lacks the associated discussion of social relations within which those ethical judgements are made. International ethics is therefore less suited to grappling with the intersection of human freedom and transcendent value than a broader approach to normative theory such as Cochran's.

Alternatively, International Political Theory (IPT) covers many of the same considerations as normative IR theory as defined by Cochran. Drawing from political theory, IPT aims to "theorise, critique and diagnose the norms, practices and organisation of political action in the past and present, in our own places and elsewhere" in a manner which rejects the "self-consciously 'scientific'" positivist approach of both political science and IR.[31] IPT is therefore interested in the "classics of political thought."[32] This is not to say that IR lacks engagement with past political thinkers, but this engagement is limited by the discipline's insistence on separateness from political thought. Consequently, for much mainstream IR theory, "the resources of two and a half millennia of political theorising [are] reduced to Thucydides, a nod towards Hobbes and Rousseau, and a misreading of Machiavelli."[33] Though not entirely fair (the ES, for example, has a long but

[28] Thomas Sinclair, quoted in Chris Brown, Terry Nardin & Nicholas Rengger (eds.) *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.18
[29] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.1; Chris Brown, 'International Relations and International Political Theory' in Brown and Eckersley (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp.48-59
[30] Terry Nardin, 'International Ethics' in Reus-Smit and Snidal (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.595
[31] John Dryzek, Bonnie Honig & Anne Philips (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.4
[32] Brown, *Practical Judgement*, p.1
[33] Ibid, p.6

flawed history of engaging with a range of past thinkers),[34] this highlights the intellectual history orientation within IPT, through which it interacts with developments within IR (such as the 'historical turn' as coined by Duncan Bell)[35] and without (notably the 'international turn' in intellectual history, as noted by David Armitage).[36] An appreciation of historical political thought therefore reinforces IPT's focus on non-state actors – particularly individuals – within the international realm, insofar as it introduces alternative conceptualisations of the international into IR.

Additionally, IPT, though engaging with political theory, accentuates the differences between it and an internationally oriented approach. In the Anglo-American academy, political philosophy has been dominated by analytical philosophy. It is therefore notable that Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, the book which relaunched the project of political theory, is a largely analytical work which constructs a logical argument from first principles. Were such an analytical approach uncritically incorporated into IPT, it would firstly undermine efforts to confront positivist theory within IR by emphasising formal logic and social choice over the identification of norms and moral dimensions. And, secondly, it would collapse into prescription under the assumption that the application of logical methods could produce an optimal solution to any international problem.[37] As influential as Rawls's work was on political theory, IPT's goals require that it be tempered by an appreciation of change which is best captured through a historical perspective.

Importantly for this thesis, this reveals two things: firstly, that normative theorising in IR (under all its labels) is not the same as moral or political theory, certainly not from the analytical standpoint. And secondly, that a central part of its aim is to expand the breadth of literature used in IR. This is also an aspect of normative theory highlighted by Terry Nardin, who prefers the term 'international ethics':

> "Moral philosophy is systematic. Philosophers want to put the precepts of received morality into some sort of consistent order. They interpret morality as a system of general principles and try to discover a rational foundation for this system. Ethics, in the hands of the philosopher, turns into ethical theory. To some extent this is the unavoidable consequence of thinking methodically about ethical experience […] But it is nevertheless an error to think that an ethical outlook or tradition is, in essence, a theoretical system of general principles. Like the law, ethics involves principles, but it also involves the interpretation and application of these principles by particular persons in particular circumstances."[38]

---

[34] See, for example: Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant, and Mazzini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Edward Keene, 'Three Traditions of International Theory' in Navari and Greene (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), pp.178-9

[35] Duncan Bell, 'Writing the World: Disciplinary History and Beyond' in *International Affairs*, 89:1 (2009), pp.3-22

[36] David Armitage, 'The Fifty Years' Rift: Intellectual History and International Relations' in *Modern Intellectual History* 1:1 (2004), pp.97-109

[37] Mathias Albert and Anthony Lang Jr, *The Politics of International Political Theory: Reflections on the Work of Chris Brown* (Cham: Springer, 2019), p.6

[38] Terry Nardin, *Traditions of International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.2

Nevertheless, and despite the value provided by these alternative definitions, this thesis uses Cochran's understanding because of her focus on normative foundations and the metaphysical reflection this necessitates, both of which relate to questions of transcendent value and human freedom. Cochran – similarly to Bain's work which elucidated the problem the research question aims to resolve – moves the debate beyond the ontological concern of what ethical judgements *are* in international order, and towards an epistemological and metaphysical question of *how* to ground value claims in that order. For example, she argues that the starting point for normative theorising must be "asking questions about which relationships between individuals and states can be regarded as legitimate, and whether the boundaries or parameters in which those relationships are presently defined are ethically justifiable. However, it does not stop there, because its inquiry is guided by the aim of improving intersocietal relations by encouraging better forms of responsibility among persons."[39] She also notes, in reference to Andrew Linklater, that such an inquiry is fundamentally about change, or as Linklater writes, about "the capacity to overcome constraints which neo-realism imputes to anarchy."[40] Hence it is intimately tied to questions arising from Bain's work about how humans can transcend the contemporary *status quo* of a fragile international order based on human will and artifice. Indeed, Linklater summarises the normative conflict in IR in *Men and Citizens* as "a dichotomy between the sense of obligation to the state and a belief in obligations to humanity."[41]

All of these scholars begin with a 'concept of the person' (as Cochran refers to it in her work) and from there make ethical judgements about international order. For Linklater, ethical judgement depends on the deeply personal identification of a human as 'man' or 'citizen'.[42] Cochran derives a 'weak' but transcendental normative foundation from a pragmatic concept of the person.[43] And Bain – particularly in his later work on political theology – begins with a divine analogy which relates human beings to a transcendent God and is then extrapolated to understand how states relate to one another.[44] In other words, Cochran's understanding of normative IR theory complements the research question's focus on metaphysical paradox between human freedom and transcendent value, and relates this focus to international order. Importantly, she roots her approach in a 'concept of the person' from which all other arguments derive.

The result for this thesis is that it will employ four "modes of normative inquiry." These modes are identified by Brown and Eckersley, both of whom are associated with IPT, but they apply equally as well to Cochran's understanding of normative IR theory. No mode of inquiry is applied in isolation, and they frequently blur into one another, as becomes apparent in their definitions. They are:

---

[39] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.3
[40] Andrew Linklater, quoted in Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.3
[41] Ibid, p.5
[42] Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1990)
[43] Cochran, *Normative Theory*
[44] Bain, *Political Theology*

1. *Interpretation*, which Brown describes as "revealing and illuminating normative meaning" through a combination of exegesis and comparison.[45] Its aim is to identify different normative understandings, and it is therefore employed throughout the thesis. Part I involves in large part an exegesis of contemporary normative approaches to IR and compares them to a concept of the person as put forward by the philosopher Hubert Dreyfus to illuminate a normative gap in the normative IR literature.
2. *Critique* is an extension of interpretation. As Brown and Eckersley write, it "also seeks to reveal meaning, but in ways that expose and criticise rather than simply illuminate and enrich." By exposing a gap in the literature, this thesis engages in critique, but it does not do so in order to "[expose] self-serving, unjust, harmful or wrongful ideas and practices in world politics."[46] Rather, its critique of contemporary normative approaches is largely concerned with highlighting how they contribute additional layers of meaning to the research question while not being able to resolve the paradox entirely. This is not to accuse other approaches of "wrongful ideas," but to argue that they are ultimately concerned more with other issues in normative IR theory, despite their contributions to the thesis's argument.
3. *Evaluation and prescription* attempt to provide "answers to normative questions such as what is good or bad, how we should be and act in the world, and how we should order and regulate relations between sovereign or corporate entities, communities, or individuals."[47] Evaluation is to judge an idea or action against an explicit set of normative standards, which this thesis does by using a concept of the person as a baseline through which to discuss human freedom and transcendent value in international order. Evaluation can identify normative gaps in the literature and lead to prescription, or recommendations for change, which this thesis engages in by arguing for an alternative normative approach in Part II.
4. *Meta-normative reflection* "covers inquiry into the foundations of morality and ethics, and how we know when something is right, valid, good, or bad, and the sources of normative legitimacy. This includes critical reflection on methods of normative inquiry […] It also includes comparison and debates on the strengths and weaknesses of different traditions of normative inquiry in world politics and international law."[48] By engaging in questions of transcendent value, this thesis is unavoidably adopting a form of meta-normative reflection in the sense that Brown describes it. But, as noted above, this reflection also takes the form of interpretation, critique, evaluation and prescription, all of which come together to situate this thesis as a normative inquiry.

[45] Chris Brown and Robyn Eckersley, 'International Political Theory and the Real World' in Brown and Eckersley (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.5
[46] Ibid, p.6
[47] Ibid
[48] Ibid

This thesis also takes on the methodological imprint of those works with which it engages most heavily. For example, the concept of the person which it provides as the basis for further theorising is taken from Dreyfus's interpretation of Søren Kierkegaard, whose works are considered to be a forerunner of existentialism. Part II therefore draws on existentialist works which relate to this concept of the person, including those by Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus. Existentialist ideas consequently influence this thesis, though it is not in itself a work of existentialist philosophy. In part, that is because, as stated above, normative IR theory is not the same as moral or political philosophy. But it is also because this thesis is concerned more with how the ideas these thinkers posit can expose gaps in the contemporary normative IR literature than how they can be used to form a single, cohesive philosophical model. Indeed, diversity and disagreement between existentialist thinkers would make such an effort impossible within an IR thesis. Similarly, normative IR theories are discussed for their insight into normative issues in IR, none more so than the ES which informs the research question and is discussed in detail both in its own right and for its influence on Bain's work. This is unavoidable due to the extensive scholarship within the ES on theories of obligation in international order and the tension this creates with ideas of human freedom. However, this thesis is not ultimately a work of ES scholarship, in large part because while it builds on its contributions it also critiques some of the approaches common amongst its scholars.

The approach which influences this thesis the most is Bain's, specifically his use of political theology. This is perhaps inevitable given the research question grapples with a paradox explicitly raised in his work. But the thesis will not perfectly mimic Bain's method. That is because it is still fundamentally a work of normative theory, whereas Bain's approach to political theology is closer to intellectual history. However, there is an aspect of political theology (what Bain calls the "religious") which is more concerned with evaluation and prescription along the lines defined above, and which aligns with the method undertaken within the thesis. The links between political theology and this thesis will be outlined in Chapters 6 and 7, but its value to the thesis is broadly twofold:

1. Political theology identifies the fundamental normative tension in contemporary international order between human freedom and transcendent value. From this tension comes the research question.
2. Political theology reveals theological assumptions inherent in ideas of international order. This expands the range of authors whose work can be considered to contribute to normative IR theory, in this case leading to a discussion of a Kierkegaardian concept of the person.

Finally, recognising that the term 'normative' brings to mind the concept of social norms, it is worth explaining why this thesis does not engage much with constructivist literature. Constructivism – particularly agentic constructivism – reflects certain themes already evident in the thesis. Most obviously, constructivism focuses on the social relations between actors, including through social norms as "a standard

of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity."[49] These norms imply values towards which people act, including various interpretations of human freedom ranging from global human rights norms to those underpinning the anti-slavery movement.[50] Additionally, reflecting the inherently plural character of international order as defined above, constructivist scholars analyse not only the state but also non-state actors, from international organisations to advocacy groups and even individuals, all of whom can be constituted by norms and, in turn, create new norms.[51] With agency diffused across plural actors, each of whom contribute to the normative constitution of international order and of themselves, and with alternative values as the focus of inquiry, constructivism also touches on the tension which animates this thesis. In particular, the paradox between human freedom and transcendent values is imperfectly reflected in the agency-structure debate. This debate asks whether it is the structure within which an agent operates which constitutes the agent, or whether agents constitute the structure within which they act. To a degree, this reflects whether a transcendent value constitutes the rightness of action and defines a theory of obligation which affects human behaviour, or whether human freedom allows agents to act independently of any structure they reside within. The constructivist approach has been called a 'middle ground' insofar as it argues that agent and structure are mutually constituted, and so, despite differing approaches to the interaction between agent and structure within constructivism, it shares a desire of this thesis to explore the relationship between two terms rather than prioritising one over the other.[52]

However, constructivism has been criticised – even by those sympathetic to its approach – for the priority it gives to empirical research into identifying the location, emergence and spread of norms as opposed to the ethical interrogation of why certain norms are 'good' in the first place.[53] In a sense, this is not what constructivism seeks to do or is equipped to do, despite the fact that greater attention is beginning to be paid to confronting potential ethical biases in constructivist work. For example, Matthew Hoffmann, while arguing that it is possible to be an 'ethical constructivist', notes that constructivism "has no *a priori* conception of what is substantively good (morals) in world politics [because it] is not a theory of international relations, it is instead a general theory of social process that can be used to examine

[49] Martha Finnemore & Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change' in *International Organization* 52:4 (1998), p.891

[50] See, for example: Margaret Keck & Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Thomas Risse, Steve Ropp & Kathryn Sikkink (eds.) *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

[51] See, for example: Michael Barnett & Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the Word: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Deborah Avant, Martha Finnemore & Susan Sell (eds.) *Who Governs the Globe?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

[52] See, for example: Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics' in *International Organization* 46:2 (1992), pp.391-425; Emanuel Adler, 'Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates' in Carlsnaes, Risse and Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2013), pp.128-30

[53] Christian Reus-Smit, 'Constructivism and the English School' in Navari (ed.) *Theorising International Society: English School Methods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.67-9; Richard Price, 'The Ethics of Constructivism' in Reus-Smit and Snidal (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.317-26

international relations."[54] In other words, while constructivism is well suited to examine where different norms which might be considered transcendent values – such as human rights – emerge and how they spread, it is less well suited to answering the research question of how to reconcile such a transcendent value with human freedom, especially as this question implies an *ought* as opposed to an *is*. Where constructivism and other empirically-focused theories are referenced in the thesis is when their ideas have been used to make explicitly ethical arguments related to normative IR theories. For example, Jürgen Habermas is credited with having conceptualised a 'logic of argumentation' which has contributed to constructivism,[55] though his work is associated more with cosmopolitanism because it provides ethical prescriptions for action within international order.[56]

In short, this thesis is a work of normative IR theory. It draws on some ideas articulated originally by philosophers, theologians and empirical IR theorists, but those ideas have either been incorporated into normative IR theory (such as cosmopolitanism and communitarianism) or have only limited interaction with normative IR theory for the purposes of this thesis (such as constructivism or realism). Consequently, it develops its ideas through a close engagement with both the philosophical and IR literature; indeed, the four-part methodology of interpretation, critique, evaluation and reflection means that such literature is the core material focus of the thesis. Its contribution to this literature is to develop the existentialist position and normative IR theory into a more cohesive and coherent international ethic which is sequentially expounded at the end of each chapter as a result of close literary engagement. In other words, each chapter either reveals or refines further aspects of the thesis's research question which are then either resolved or taken a step further in subsequent chapters by reference to the appropriate philosophical or IR literature.

Structure

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part I begins by providing a concept of the person through an exegesis of Dreyfus's interpretation of Kierkegaard. This concept includes fuller definitions of human freedom and transcendent value. The remainder of Part I then interprets, critiques and evaluates contemporary normative IR theories to identify a gap in the literature in how these theories approach the research question but how they, nonetheless, contribute to understanding the multifaceted problems within the question. The aim of Part I is therefore to situate this thesis within the normative IR literature, to demonstrate its value to that literature, and to deconstruct the research question into its ontological, epistemological and metaphysical aspects in order to better answer it. Part II then attempts to provide the answer to the research question or, more appropriately, one potential answer. It does so by developing the Kierkegaardian concept of the person as proposed by Dreyfus in Chapter 1, demonstrating how this concept addresses all aspects of the research question – the ontological, epistemological and metaphysical – better than the theories discussed in Part I. However, it is not without limitations, most importantly its reliance on the language of

[54] Matthew Hoffmann, 'Is Constructivist Ethics an Oxymoron' in *International Studies Review* 11:2 (2009), pp.232-3
[55] Reus-Smit, 'Constructivism and the English School', p.62
[56] See Chapter 2

Christianity to provide a transcendent value, albeit conceived differently than in Bain's work. This limitation is addressed by interpreting and critiquing existentialist thinkers who, through their secular approaches, can provide a modification of Dreyfus's Kierkegaardian concept. The result is a concept of the person which offers one possible way of resolving the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value by redefining those terms existentially and applying them to the plural international order. Part II concludes by returning to the question of racial justice in order to show how the argument made in the thesis about the relationship between human freedom and transcendent value is reflected in the assertion of freedom and attempts to transcend the current norms of international order by racial justice movements.

To go into more detail, Chapter 1 begins the thesis with a concept of the person taken from Dreyfus's interpretation of Kierkegaard's works on the 'single individual'. This chapter is an exegesis of Dreyfus's concept, itself only one perspective on Kierkegaardian thought. The aim of Chapter 1 is *not* to contribute to or enter into debate with others in Kierkegaard studies, partly because this is an IR thesis, partly for reasons of space, and partly because of my own lack of philosophical training. That said, where more detail is needed than Dreyfus provides, other thinkers on Kierkegaard will be incorporated who reinforce the approach Dreyfus takes. Dreyfus's concept is used for three reasons: first, his definition of the Kierkegaardian individual involves resolving a paradoxical relationship which bears similarity to the paradoxical relationship in the research question between human freedom and transcendent value. Second, Dreyfus's approach provides related definitions of human freedom and transcendent value. And, third, due to Kierkegaard's training as a theologian, a Kierkegaardian individual is defined in part through theological language which relates to the puzzle identified at the beginning of this thesis. Consequently, Chapter 1 results in a concept of the person which includes a definition of the paradoxical relationship between human freedom and transcendental value which can be used as a normative baseline against which to judge contemporary normative IR theories – something that Brown considers vital to evaluation. It is situated at the beginning of the thesis because subsequent critiques of mainstream normative IR theories are more understandable with an understanding of Kierkegaard's thought, though these critiques are not dependent on the Kierkegaardian argument and therefore are not circular.

Chapter 2 interprets, critiques and evaluates cosmopolitanism to assess whether it can explain how to resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value better than the Kierkegaardian concept of the person, and how it can relate this paradox to the plural international order. It identifies both the contributions and limitations of cosmopolitanism in relation to the research question. Cosmopolitanism is represented for three reasons: first, though it originated in political theory, it is now considered one of the most prominent approaches to normative IR theory and has contributed much to the field. Second, its recognition of the tension between particular and universal values intuitively mirrors the paradox between human freedom and transcendent values and this relation is worth evaluating for its contribution to the research question. And, third, it provides a clear concept of the person which allows a direct comparison

with the concept put forward in this thesis. That said, cosmopolitanism is a broad family of approaches, and this chapter confines itself to interpreting, critiquing and evaluating two of them for reasons of space. The first is a neo-Kantian variant, inspired by Immanuel Kant and developed by thinkers such as Charles Beitz and Onora O'Neill. It derives a theory of obligation from a common human faculty for reason. The second is a communicative variant developed by Jürgen Habermas which roots common obligations in instrumental dialogue. Chapter 2 concludes that, despite its contributions to the research question, neither approach to cosmopolitanism can adequately answer the research question.

Chapter 3 follows a similar approach to the previous chapter, but it interprets, critiques and evaluates communitarianism. It is included in this thesis because its proponents argue it rectifies certain limitations within cosmopolitanism, largely by de-emphasising universal values and justifying the greater prominence of particular values in international order. In that sense, it provides greater normative agency to free individuals than does cosmopolitanism, while retaining theories of obligation within the community as a 'weak' transcendent value. It also contains explicit concepts of the person which can be related to the Kierkegaardian concept outlined in Chapter 1. Intuitively, communitarianism is therefore worth evaluating for its claimed ability to redress the imbalance identified in cosmopolitanism towards universal values. Communitarianism is also a broad set of approaches, only two of which are explored in Chapter 3. The first is Mervyn Frost's neo-Hegelian constitutive theory which treats the state as the contemporary locus of full human ethical development. The second is Michael Walzer's instrumental communitarianism which identifies 'thin' universal values shared across all societies but which are nonetheless less normatively powerful than 'thick' particular values derived from social relations within a person's community. Though Walzer in particular attempts to find a middle ground between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, this chapter concludes similarly to the previous chapter: communitarianism cannot resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value because it does not treat it as a paradox with epistemological and metaphysical facets.

Chapter 4 evaluates the ES, with particular reference to its internal debate between solidarists and pluralists. The ES engages with epistemological and metaphysical aspects of the paradox as well as its ontological manifestation in particular versus universal values. The ES is included despite the fact that the School's boundaries extend far beyond those of normative IR theories. The reasons for including it in this thesis are, first, that it explicitly relates the abstract issue of human freedom and transcendent value to international order. Secondly, it adds epistemological and metaphysical aspects to that issue and so better explains the research question than previously discussed theories, even if this does not result in the paradox being resolved. Thirdly, because of its recognition of a paradoxical relationship, the ES is concerned with locating a middle-ground ethics which they call a *via media*, a normative position which combines *raison d'état* as a guarantor of freedom within the state with some transcendent value which connects humans beyond instrumental considerations. Efforts to find a *via media* demonstrate how ES scholars have attempted to

resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value. The chapter concludes that those attempts, while illuminating the normative complexity of the issue more than cosmopolitanism or communitarianism, do not resolve the paradox because they remain sceptical of normative foundations and, therefore, transcendent values.

Chapter 5 and 6 turn to more marginal approaches, namely poststructuralism in Chapter 5 and phronetics, pragmatism and political theology in Chapter 6. Because much interpretation and critique of the normative context occurs in the previous chapters, less space is dedicated to the approaches in Chapter 6. All of these approaches are included, first, because they explicitly critique and evaluate the ontological, epistemological and metaphysical assumptions in normative IR literature about the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value. Second, they all offer a concept of the person which can overcome some of the limitations identified in the previous chapters. And, third, they are identified with prominent scholars in normative IR theory who have shaped the boundaries of the field and the specific problem with which this thesis engages. That said, Chapters 5 and 6 conclude that no single approach fully addresses the research question. Poststructuralism and political theology come close, with their appreciation of the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of the paradox, and their specific engagement with human freedom. Bain's approach in particular shares a common theological language with the concept of the person in Chapter 1 and is therefore suited to developing that concept into an international theory. Both, however, are limited by an anti-foundationalism and latent universalising tendency which means that while they can draw out an international interpretation of the Kierkegaardian concept of the person, they do not provide a full answer to the research question.

With Part I having identified the gap in the literature and shown the development of the issue within normative IR theory, Part II argues how the research question can be answered. It begins in Chapter 7 with a deeper interpretation and evaluation of Bain's political theology, providing more detail into the medieval debate over rival conceptions of God and the form of international order they imply. It compares this political theological debate with an interpretation of Kierkegaard's theology, with two aims: first, to show how, as with Bain's work, the Kierkegaardian concept of the person can be used to derive a concept of international order. And, second, to offer an alternative conception of God which makes a resolution of the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value possible. It does so by comparing and contrasting different interpretations of key terms between the two, which nevertheless share a theological basis. Though Kierkegaard offers a non-metaphysical God in contrast to the monist deity identified by Bain in the works he studies, there are limitations to Kierkegaard's political theology. Specifically, his theological language, though facilitating a fuller understanding of the problem within the research question, is also unsuited for normative prescription in a secular (or multi-faith) international order. Part II therefore continues by attempting to secularise Kierkegaard's work through French existentialists who were influenced by him.

Chapters 8 and 9 therefore attempt to overcome this limitation by providing an exegesis of Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's existentialist phenomenology and the normative theories of Beauvoir and Camus which partly stemmed from it. These thinkers reflect the concerns raised through the thesis but provide a secularised definition of the key terms of the research question which capture the nuances of Kierkegaard's approach without the 'religious' element. Chapter 9 specifically attempts to show how the synthesis between human freedom and transcendent value is attained in international order. Finally, Chapter 10 returns to the motivating example of racial justice in order to concretise the abstract discussion of the rest of the thesis. It argues that many of the features of the preceding discussion are evident in racial justice movements throughout history. Specifically, a strand of thought called 'black existentialism' has both influenced and been influenced by the anti-slavery, anti-colonial, anti-apartheid and BLM movements. This thought demonstrates *in the world* how human freedom and transcendent value can be synthesised as individuals assert their freedom in order to transcend an order whose own transcendence has proven to be arbitrary and oppressive. Racial justice is, in this sense, an example of individuals establishing themselves as normative foundations from which new transcendent values can be supported which contribute to the freedom of all. Through their actions, they put human freedom in a mutually supportive relationship with transcendent values and so demonstrate a resolution to the research question. Importantly, Chapter 10 is not a case study due to the literature-heavy methodology pursued in the thesis. Rather, it continues to engage with philosophical and IR literature to develop a coherent approach to normative IR theory, but it does so from the more limited perspective of racial justice in international order as an illustrative example which shows how the broader ideas developed previously in the thesis can be applied to concrete situations.

The journey to answering the research question is a long one, but it is necessary for two reasons. First, because this thesis approaches the impasse inherent in the paradox by redefining key terms, it must first explore the multiple definitions of those terms as discussed in the normative IR literature. Secondly, by incorporating approaches which are rarely used in IR – specifically, existentialism and Kierkegaard's proto-existentialism – the thesis must take time to relate these approaches and their language to the language and understandings of normative IR theory. There is much room for further study, such as through the application of this thesis's argument to feminism in IR or the exploration of alternative existentialist thinkers. There is also room for further questioning of which forms of international order might best represent existentialist approaches discussed below, drawing less on normative IR theory and more on political theory and mainstream IR approaches which this thesis avoids in order to limit its scope. However, this thesis will focus on the perennial puzzle in normative IR theory of the paradoxical relationship between human freedom and transcendent value.

Part I

Escape from Freedom

> "Modern man is still anxious and tempted to surrender his freedom to dictators of all kinds, or to lose it by transforming himself into a small cog in the machine, well fed, and well clothed, yet not a free man but an automaton."[1]

Chapter 1

A Concept of the Person

This chapter aims to offer a concept of the person which will provide the normative standard against which alternative conceptions of freedom in normative IR theories can be evaluated, contributing to their interpretation and critique in the remainder of Part I, as per Brown's schema laid out in the introduction. A 'concept of the person' also, according to Cochran, underlies all normative approaches to IR and is the basis of their subsequent concept of international order. The definition chosen is based in the works of Søren Kierkegaard, specifically an interpretation of those works by Hubert Dreyfus. This interpretation is not the only one; for example, Alistair Hannay specifically critiques it for its assertion that "the sheer need to find an identity" is more important than the idea that personal projects are "motivated by faith,"[2] and more broadly roots Kierkegaard in Christianity and commitment to Jesus Christ.[3] However, as stated in the introduction, Dreyfus's interpretation is chosen because it engages with themes of importance to the research question: the paradoxical nature of human existence, and understandings of human freedom and transcendence. The concept of the person is provided here for similar reasons that Kierkegaard provides his definition at the outset of *The Sickness Unto Death*. That is, this concept of the person is a provisional one, and the remainder of Part I is essentially a test to see whether it allows us to understand more about humans in relation to the research question than other normative IR accounts, as well as whether it explains anomalies within those accounts.[4] In that sense, this definition is also provisional and may require amendment as it is applied within the broader normative IR literature. In less academic terms, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating.

The chapter will proceed in three sections. The first section restates the paradox between human freedom and transcendent values which began this thesis, however it does so from a philosophical perspective. This

---

[1] Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), p.132
[2] Alistair Hannay, 'Kierkegaard on Commitment, Personality and Identity' in Mooney (ed.) *Ethics, Love and Faith in Kierkegaard: Philosophical Engagements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p.55
[3] Ibid, pp.48-55
[4] Hubert Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology: Kierkegaard's Account of the Self's Movement from Despair to Bliss' in Wrathall (ed.) *Religion After Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.90-1

perspective is tied to what is referred to here as the anti-foundationalist critique, something which motivated Kierkegaard's understanding of the human self and the related concept of human freedom. This critique is also the basis of postmodern approaches to IR which deny the validity of normative foundations, and so while Dreyfus and Kierkegaard do not explicitly ask questions about international order, the anti-foundationalist critique marks a common starting point for their work and for this thesis (as well as IR scholars concerned with normative questions, such as Cochran and Bain). The second section offers an exegesis of Dreyfus's interpretation of the Kierkegaardian self. It presents the self as an internal paradox between two factors which every person possesses but which traditional understandings have failed to resolve. Consequently, Kierkegaard asserts that most humans are 'in despair'. To escape from despair, a person must find a way to resolve their internal paradox. The third section therefore discusses how this is done within Dreyfus's interpretation. Specifically, Kierkegaard finds the cure to despair and resolution of the paradox in Christianity, a solution which also draws out the interaction of human freedom and transcendence.

The Death of God

This thesis began by noting how the secularisation of international order – that is, the change in how international order is legitimised away from recourse to God and towards recourse to human will – has undermined any theory of obligation between humans and thereby permitted the arbitrary imposition of one human will over another. In other words, international order lacks a transcendent value to guide human interactions, and the resultant inability to make value judgements threatens human freedom. This is paradoxical in two ways: first, because this secularised international order is justified by recourse to human will, which is a manifestation of a particular understanding of human freedom, it is human freedom itself which threatens human freedom. And second, a theory of obligation introduced to defend human freedom would necessarily curtail it by forcing constraints on human will through appeal to a transcendent value over and above that human will. This section will discuss the core point of that argument, the removal of a transcendent value to guide action, but it will avoid reference to international order. In doing so, it will show that the underlying concern of Kierkegaard and certain normative IR theories are shared, and hence demonstrate the value of incorporating an interpretation which derives from that common concern.

At the outset of the edited volume *Religion After Metaphysics*, Mark Wrathall notes that in modernity, a metaphysical God – "a supreme being that was the ground of the existence and intelligibility of all that is" – has become "increasingly implausible."[5] He also states that although the process of delegitimising a metaphysical God did not start with Nietzsche, it was Nietzsche's famous pronouncement of the 'death of God' that marked an inflection point where "it was clear that something important had changed in the form of life prevailing in the West."[6] Under a metaphysical God – that is, one which is foundational – humans

[5] Mark Wrathall, 'Introduction' in Wrathall (ed.) *Religion After Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.1
[6] Ibid

were conceptualised as being made in God's image and He therefore acted as a transcendent value which determined the degree to which they were free. If God, for example, were defined as reflecting a universal natural reason then human freedom meant to act according to pre-determined natural laws accessible by reason. On the contrary, if God were defined as an omnipotent being capable of bending the laws of nature at will, then human freedom was dependent on a divine power who "determined everything absolutely but did so in an utterly arbitrary and therefore unpredictable way."[7] Debates therefore existed over the precise form human freedom took, but it was assumed that this freedom was both defined by and subordinate to a God who existed as the authoritative legislator of what was right in the world.[8] In other words, God was the normative foundation for both individual and common action, and so the question of how to integrate a theory of obligation with human freedom was not considered a paradox.

The notion of the 'death of God' therefore indicated more than the increasingly secular outlook of a European world transitioning into modernity; it also exposed the loss of the transcendent value which had previously supported understandings of meaning and normativity in Western philosophy. Problematically, however, the knowledge and value claims which were established on the belief in a metaphysical God still existed. In other words, human interpretations about the world and themselves still contained a latent assumption that a foundational god-figure existed.[9] This allows humans to make value judgements based on human will but then justify it by recourse to some supposedly transcendent value.[10] The problem is that such a transcendent value does not exist and cannot be proven. Consequently, when one person acts according to such a justification, they risk imposing their value judgement on others and so restricting the freedom of those others. In this way, the loss of a transcendent value problematises human freedom by divorcing it from a theory of obligation and so resulting in the paradox outlined above.

In other words, the 'death of God' as the arbitrator of valid truths delegates that function to humans – they become the ultimate deciders of knowledge and value. However, unlike a single metaphysical God, humans are both numerous and imperfect. They therefore hold different interpretations of the world and give different meanings to different aspects of it. Even human reason cannot be used to completely resolve these differences because it was originally normatively justified as being derived from a universal divine reason. With the loss of the source of that divine reason, human reason is no longer normatively justified and supposedly objective terms and ideas become subject to reinterpretation. The newfound priority placed on subjectivity challenges prevailing forms of knowledge and value. For the purposes of this thesis, that includes challenges to the objective validity and normative justification for international order, but as this discussion shows, it is not confined only to questions of the international. In other words, the contemporary

[7] Michael Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), p.29
[8] See Bain, *Political Theology*, pp.52-3 for the link between this point and rival conceptions of international order.
[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), pp.108-9; 343
[10] See Bain, *Political Theology* – as will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, this is the same tension which Bain identifies in the contemporary international order, although he uses the theological language of immanent and imposed order.

international order must respond to challenges from alternative and equally valid subjective conceptions of order by justifying itself based on a foundational transcendent value, but it cannot do so because no such value can be objectively valid. This is the anti-foundationalist critique, and some the problems it raises. It is a cause for both pessimism and optimism.

The anti-foundationalist critique can result in optimism in the sense that the loss of a metaphysical God dramatically expands understandings of freedom by releasing humans from the limitations of being made (and, to a degree, acting) in God's image.[11] As Fyodor Dostoyevsky writes through the character Ivan Karamazov, "if God is dead, all is permitted."[12] Freedom therefore becomes more than merely acting in accordance with divine or natural law; it gives greater emphasis to personal choice and agency. Furthermore, by accepting this variety of alternative perspectives revealed by the loss of a metaphysical God, people can make "a normative choice in favour of a social and political order different from the prevailing order."[13] More pessimistically, though, any notion of human freedom, no matter how much more expansive, is gravely threatened by the lack of foundations on which to base it. Subjectivity means that each individual's interpretation of their freedom is fragile and open to challenge by other supposedly 'valid' truths. This can account for oppression in any interhuman relations insofar as powerful actors dominate the discourse of freedom in order to define it in terms beneficial to them and disadvantageous to others. This sort of oppression is a form of 'will to power' which Nietzsche predicts will occur when people realise that their traditional judgements of knowledge and value are unsupported by any normative foundation; it implies that freedom is a "privilege of the strong" in which the powerful impose their will on others.[14]

From this description of the anti-foundationalist critique and reactions to it, it seems as though the issues raised at the beginning of this thesis – by Bain in particular – are not only a matter for normative IR theory. The optimistic and pessimistic reactions to the anti-foundationalist critique suggest a tension in exercising human freedom in a world lacking a transcendent value which acts as a normative foundation, wherein one human will can justifiably subjugate another. And yet, even if a transcendent value can be identified, how can it be justified in a way which retains the expanded possibilities for human freedom which stem from the anti-foundationalist critique? For Bain, this concern is manifest in the fragility of international order, especially when evidenced in extra-ordinary actions which contest prevailing theories of obligation in "normal political life, expressed by the ordinary course of international law."[15] For Dreyfus and his reading of Kierkegaard, it is manifest in a "despairing analysis of the present age as nihilistic," resulting in the "[levelling of] all meaningful differences between the trivial and the important."[16] By this, he means that

[11] Wrathall, 'Introduction', p.1
[12] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Peaver and Volokhonsky (London: Vintage, 2004), p.589
[13] Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory' in Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p.210
[14] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), p.29
[15] William Bain, 'Political Theology and Historical International Relations' in Carvalho, Costa Lopez & Leira (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), p.204
[16] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.88-9

Kierkegaard saw the people of his age becoming "spectators" and being unwilling to make normative commitments in the face of a foundationless world. However, he also argues that Kierkegaard saw a way out of this paradox by "giving an account of the structure of the self that explains […] what is required for a meaningful life."[17] The next section explores how Dreyfus interprets this understanding of the self and, therefore, how a resolution to the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value can be identified in a Kierkegaardian concept of the person.

The Paradoxical Self

When Kierkegaard talks of the "[levelling of] all meaningful differences between the trivial and the important," Dreyfus argues that he goes on to offer a choice to humans: between remaining within the present age of meaningless distractions or making the "decision in existence" to discover a "new and better way of finding meaning […] in our lives."[18] Kierkegaard's understanding of the human self is, then, equally a description of the process by which a person can find such meaning in their lives – that is, to be able to make their own normative judgements; it is in this sense that I believe, following Dreyfus, Kierkegaard understands the highest form of freedom, that is the freedom to apply meaning to the world (though this will be discussed in greater detail in the third section of this chapter). His definition of the self is derived from Christianity, which Kierkegaard believes is the only understanding of the self which accounts for despair, a 'sickness' which he believes afflicts all humans regardless of culture or epoch.[19] As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Dreyfus argues that this is a provisional definition of the self which Kierkegaard then tests against other understandings for their ability to account for despair.[20]

The main alternative account of the self for Kierkegaard is one which originated in Greek philosophy. This account treats the self as an unstable combination of two conflicting factors: the body and the soul. Dreyfus further divides each of the factors into a set of epistemological, metaphysical and normative assumptions. Epistemologically, the soul represents an assumption that truth is universal across space and time and can be discovered through detached contemplation due to an innate human capacity for reason. An example of such a truth might be mathematics. Further, because humans share this innate capacity for reason which defines who they are, they are connected within the greater whole of humanity.[21] Metaphysically, this means there is only one objective, universal truth which is independent of the knower, and attaining that truth allows a human to free themselves from the subjectivity of their finite existence and unique socio-historical circumstances.[22] Human freedom, according to this account of the self, is to act in accordance with innate

[17] Ibid, p.89
[18] Ibid, p.89
[19] Ibid, pp.91, 102f
[20] Ibid, pp.90-1
[21] Penelope Mackie, *How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds and Essential Properties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.1-3
[22] Hubert Dreyfus, 'The Roots of Existentialism' in Dreyfus & Wrathall (eds.) *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), p.137

human reason by 'escaping' from the distractions of subjective concerns.[23] Normatively, Dreyfus argues that the soul values and gains meaning from detached meditation and the rejection of perception, intuition, emotion, bodily impulses, folk wisdom and tradition.[24] He therefore summarises the soul as representing the **infinite**, **eternal**, and **possible**.[25]

The body, by contrast, is emphasised more by Judeo-Christian scripture than Greek philosophy. Epistemologically, it represents subjective knowledge in that the body is situated in the world and in a unique socio-historical context. Knowledge is therefore attained through tradition, emotion and commitment to an individual's particular situation. For example, in scripture, the Jewish people gain their knowledge of the world through either direct communication with God or from traditional ritual; these subjective forms of knowledge then defined their practitioners as Jewish, distinct from wider humanity.[26] Metaphysically, this suggests there are multiple valid truths across time and space. This doesn't only mean that different people hold different conceptions of truth, but that one person's truth can develop over time. Change is therefore an integral feature of human existence.[27] Yet humans cannot change without constraint, as they are bound by their situatedness; hence the body involves a degree of necessity which binds them to their particular context.[28] Normatively, Dreyfus says this implies that the body gains meaning from what is valued by a particular human within their particular time and place. Consequently, the body is summarised as representing the **finite**, **temporal**, and **necessary**.[29]

The Greek account, by treating the self as a combination of these two factors, recognises that the body and soul are contradictory and that the self is consequently unstable. That is, one cannot fulfil the infinite, eternal and possible whilst also fulfilling the finite, temporal and necessary. The pursuit of one must come at the detriment of the other. As Dreyfus writes:

> "[O]urs is a uniquely conflicted culture, the product of two powerful and opposed traditions. As heirs to the Greeks we have learned to *think* that the only access to truth is by means of detached and disinterested contemplation, so *truth is objectivity*. *The universal is higher than the individual*, so each person must subordinate his or her selfish interests to universal moral

[23] Ibid, pp.137-8
[24] Hubert Dreyfus, "'What a Monster Then is Man": Pascal and Kierkegaard on Being a Contradictory Self and What to Do About It' in Crowell (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.97
[25] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*
[26] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.138
[27] Ibid, p.139; David Novak, *Athens and Jerusalem: God, Humans and Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), pp.82-5
[28] This mirrors the earlier discussion of Kierkegaard's "system for life itself" being knowable only "for God." It is also implied in the fact that the Greek term *physis*, meaning 'nature', has no equivalent Hebrew translation. The closest is *misphat*, meaning 'way' or 'custom'. Steven Smith, 'Leo Strauss: Between Athens and Jerusalem' in *The Review of Politics* 53:1 (1991), p.80
[29] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*

> principles. Ultimate reality is being not becoming, and to *reach eternity you have to get out of time*. But we also *believe* that truth is involved, personal commitment to something or someone specific, and so is essentially *subjective*; that each person must do what God requires of him or her so the *individual* is *higher than the universal*; and that time is the locus of all that is meaningful so that *eternity must somehow be achievable in time*."[30]

The Greek solution to the contradictory factors which form the self was to treat only one factor as essential. For Greek philosophy, life is a journey of clarification: to determine which of the factors is essential to the self, and to focus on fulfilling that factor's needs while treating the needs of the other factor as superficial.[31] In much Greek philosophy, this meant that the soul was treated as the essential element of the human self and so the epistemological, metaphysical and normative elements which it prioritised were exaggerated. Conversely, some philosophers (Dreyfus gives the example of Lucretius) believed the body to be essential and so emphasised its situated needs to the neglect of the soul.[32]

Regardless of which factor is treated as essential, Dreyfus notes that, starting from Blaise Pascal, an alternative understanding of the self emerged. As he puts it:

> "[for] a long time, thinkers argued over which set of factors was essential. Stoics, Augustinians, Cartesians, and idealists claimed that the soul was the essential self; Epicureans, Hobbes, and other sorts of materialists took sides with the body. But finally Pascal saw that there were two conflicting traditions in the West. He saw that 'the God of Abraham and Isaac was not the God of the philosophers' and that the Greek tradition of detachment could never decide which factors were the essential ones, while according to the Judeo-Christian tradition *both* sets of factors were essential."[33]

Pascal's understanding, then, similarly treated the self as a combination of two contradictory factors – the body and soul – but argued that both factors were essential and that meaning and value are found when humans live in the tension between the two, expressing both simultaneously. That is, the human self necessarily experiences being pulled in two opposite directions: towards the infinite, eternal and possible on the one hand, and towards the finite, temporal and necessary on the other.[34] Submitting to one and neglecting the other is therefore to annihilate an essential part of the self.[35] Pascal instead suggested that individuals must try to exist within the paradox of the body and soul, exhibiting both *despite* their apparent incommensurability. In his own words: "we do not display greatness by going to one extreme, but in

[30] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.139 – emphasis in original
[31] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', p.91
[32] Dreyfus, 'Pascal and Kierkegaard', p.98
[33] Ibid
[34] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. Trotter (Blacksburg: Virginia Tech, 2001), §434
[35] Ibid; Dreyfus, 'Roots', pp.140-1

touching both extremes at once, and filling all the intervening space."[36] For Dreyfus, Kierkegaard's understanding of the self follows a similar approach to Pascal's. Drawing inspiration from the Judeo-Christian tradition rather than Greek philosophy, Kierkegaard viewed the self as a synthesis between body and soul, whereby each factor requires the other and the two become mutually supporting. He referred to this as a "dialectical relation" in which one factor cannot be fulfilled without simultaneously fulfilling the other.[37] This approach very much leans into the idea of the self as a paradox, but one that must be resolved by appeal to both seemingly incommensurable factors, rather than the annihilation of one or the other.

As a result, Kierkegaard's definition of the self is "a relation between two things" and, moreover, "a relation which relates to itself."[38] What does this mean? For Dreyfus, a "relation between two things" is the fact that the self contains two factors, the body and soul. This is what Kierkegaard describes as the relationship between "the infinite and the finite, […] the temporal and the eternal, […] freedom and necessity."[39] All of these elements are essential to the human self despite their seeming incommensurability. So far, this seems similar to Pascal's understanding of the self. But what Kierkegaard adds is the claim that the self is a "relation which relates to itself." This means that a person is defined by how they choose to react to the fact that they are a paradox of two incommensurable factors. In other words, a self must take a stand on the fact that it is a paradox.[40] In Heideggerian terms, the self is "distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it."[41] To summarise, a self is a paradoxical relation between body and soul which understands that it is a paradoxical relation and chooses to act towards that fact in a certain way.

Taking this understanding of the self as a baseline, Dreyfus explains how Kierkegaard assesses alternative approaches to the self for their ability to explain how to synthesise the two factors and so resolve the paradox between body and soul. He does so by presenting three "spheres of existence" – or ways of living – before arguing that if a person tries to fully embrace any of these ways of living, they will fall back into the levelling of the present age. Ultimately, he concludes, it is impossible for any of these approaches to explain how to synthesise the factors within the self because they are defined by Greek philosophy according to terms which prioritise the soul, inward meditation and detachment.[42] These alternative approaches – the "spheres of existence" – are described by Dreyfus as:

- *Unwilling despair*, or spiritlessness, wherein a person recognises that the self is a contradiction which must be faced, but chooses to live in the distractions of the present age in order to avoid having to

[36] Pascal, *Pensées*, §353
[37] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.91-2
[38] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Hannay (London: Penguin, 2008), p.9
[39] Ibid
[40] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.141
[41] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie and Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962), §4.32
[42] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', p.89

synthesise the two factors.[43] Dreyfus notes that, for Kierkegaard, "the most important diversion in his time was the public sphere, where one could discuss events and people without ever having to take responsibility for one's views."[44] In a sense, there is no normativity in this sphere as people absolve themselves of moral responsibility.

- *Willing despair*, wherein a person recognises that the self is a contradiction which must be faced, but rather than treating the factors as a synthesis they treat them as an incommensurable combination, attempting to make one factor absolute. They therefore fail to synthesise the two factors. This takes two forms:
    - A *negative unity* reflects Greek philosophy insofar as the person treats one factor as essential and prioritises its needs to the detriment of the other.[45]
    - A *positive unity* reflects Pascal's thought insofar as the person treats both factors as equal and tries to live in the contradiction, but Kierkegaard argues they cannot because they are not redefining the factors as a mutually supporting synthesis.[46]

For Dreyfus, anyone who attempts to combine – rather than synthesise – the two contradictory factors in the ways above fails to become a self with a "stable, meaningful life." That is, they experience a feeling wherein "life isn't working for you and, given the kind of person you are, it is impossible for things to work for you; that a life worth living is, in your case, literally impossible."[47] This is Dreyfus's description of the Kierkegaardian notion of **despair**, or the state of not being a self with both factors synthesised.[48] Importantly, when a person realises that they are in despair, they also realise that they were *always* in despair without knowing it because they were living in distraction. In other words, upon realising that they have not synthesised the factors of the self, a person also realises that they had never synthesised the factors and so have always been in despair even if they were not aware of being so. The only certain way to no longer be in despair is by facing it and being cured.[49] This cannot happen solely through the efforts of the individual concerned: "the self cannot *by itself* arrive at or remain in equilibrium and rest."[50]

---

[43] Ibid, p.92; Kierkegaard, *SUD*, p.49. See also: Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987)
[44] Dreyfus, 'Pascal and Kierkegaard', p.100
[45] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.142; Kierkegaard, *SUD*, pp.59-80; Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.480; Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part II*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp.133
[46] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.92-3
[47] Ibid, p.94
[48] The Danish for 'to despair' is *at fortvivle*, deriving from 'to doubt', *at tvivle* (the prefix *for-* implies an intensification of the original meaning). In the broadest sense, this relates to the notion that those in despair doubt their selfhood, their identity and their significance or meaning – Gregory Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996), pp.71-2
[49] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', p.94
[50] Ibid, pp.93-4 – my emphasis.

This begs the question, what is the cure to despair? For Dreyfus, Kierkegaard is claiming that it is Jesus, "God in time as [an] individual man."[51] Jesus was the first person to reveal that the self is a synthesis rather than a combination and, moreover, he was the object of commitment which allowed his disciples to synthesise the self. What that means is that the self can only relate to itself (that is, take a stand on being a contradictory set of factors) by relating to something outside of itself.[52] That is why the Greek definition of the factors is insufficient to synthesise the factors, because it is predicated on total detachment from the world of the body and so cannot relate to something outside of itself.[53] On the contrary, Kierkegaard goes on to argue that the cure to despair and the way of becoming a self is to redefine the factors – the body and soul – in terms of a total commitment to the world which allows the individual to be truly free.

The Cure for Despair

The most prominent example of how to overcome despair in Kierkegaard's writings, according to Dreyfus, is that of romantic love. Through an unconditional commitment to another entity, made in love, an individual can synthesise the two factors of the self, overcome despair, and thereby provide for a meaningful life which gives them the ability to make normative judgements while avoiding the levelling distractions of the present age.[54] In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard tells the story of a "lad who loves the princess" and so defines himself in relation to that relationship. In other words, the lad takes a stand on the fact that he is a contradiction of factors by redefining them in terms of the unconditional commitment he has made to the princess.[55] As Dreyfus writes, "thanks to it, he knows who he is and what is relevant and important in the world. […] In such a case, the person becomes an individual [as opposed to a member of the crowd] defined by his or her relation to the object of his or her unconditional commitment."[56] The unconditional commitment need not be made towards another person; a "specific individual, cause or vocation" can perform the same role of redefining the factors such that they give an individual an identity separate from others.[57] Moreover, this unconditional commitment is not simply a compulsion or infatuation for, as Dreyfus notes, "that would not be an expression of freedom" so much as it would be a reaction to a causal input; consequently, the individual would not be making a "decision in existence" to escape from aesthetic distractions and take responsibility for their own normative judgements. Only by freely choosing to unconditionally commit to an entity which defines "the whole of one's life's content" can that which was previously impossible become possible: synthesising the two factors such that they reinforce one another and form a self in equilibrium.[58]

---

[51] Søren Kierkegaard, quoted in Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', p.95
[52] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.95-6
[53] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.144
[54] Ibid
[55] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Hannay (London: Penguin, 1985), p.70
[56] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', p.96
[57] Ibid
[58] Ibid

An unconditional commitment, then, is a concrete entity existing in the world which a person loves without qualification. That person's every action is directed towards fulfilling their unconditional commitment, and so the commitment gives the individual their identity as distinct from other humans; it forms "the whole of one's life's content."[59] Dreyfus provides nine characteristics which define an unconditional commitment:[60]

1. It makes someone an individual rather than a human amongst other humans, insofar as it is a unique commitment which gives the individual their unique meaning and identity.
2. It gives the individual an infinite world beyond the finite world, insofar as the individual defines all finite objects by relation to the commitment. Thus the commitment is everything, and becomes infinite.
3. It cannot be rationalised or made intelligible because it is based on love rather than reason. Consequently, the individual cannot communicate their commitment to others.
4. It is not based on objective fact, insofar as the individual is 'called' to their commitment subjectively. That is why Kierkegaard says that "truth is subjectivity."
5. It is accidental, in that an individual cannot predict what their commitment will be because it is not a universal ethic derived from reason.
6. It is necessary, in that an individual needs the commitment in order to give meaning to their life. Hence, this is a subjective, involved necessity as opposed to the necessity of objective facts.
7. It is eternal, insofar as the commitment is made by the individual at a moment *in time* but against which they judge all past and future actions. Prior to this, life would be constantly reinterpreted in each new instant.
8. It is irreversible, in that an individual cannot abandon their commitment after having made it without also annihilating their human self, given the commitment is also their life's meaning.
9. It is directed towards a finite entity because an infinite entity (like some concept of utopia) is not achievable in this life, and therefore is not necessary. The commitment, on the other hand, must be necessary.

If the unconditional commitment to another entity is the *means* through which a person escapes despair and becomes a self, what is the *way* by which the unconditional commitment achieves this? It does so by redefining the two paradoxical factors such that they cease to be paradoxical, moving away from Greek philosophical definitions and towards those rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Recall that the body is finite, temporal and necessary, whereas the soul is infinite, eternal and possible.

[59] Kierkegaard, *FT*, p.70
[60] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*

1. The previously incommensurate *infinite* and *finite* are synthesised as the individual commits infinitely to a finite entity – the unconditional commitment. Through this finite entity, located concretely in the world, every other entity that has existed or will exist (the infinite) is given meaning. In short, the finite commitment gives meaning to infinite possible worlds and therefore takes on infinite importance.[61]
2. The previously incommensurate *eternal* and *temporal* are synthesised as the individual commits eternally to a temporal entity. The instant in time at which one makes their commitment becomes the moment against which all past and future moments are interpreted. Whereas most humans can freely reinterpret their past as new events in their life unfold, the individual interprets eternity in relation to a single moment in time, and so eternity is given meaning *within time*.[62]
3. The previously incommensurate *possible* and *necessary* are synthesised as the individual accepts the necessity of their defining commitment to their meaning and identity. But one retains the possibility of choosing how to relate to their commitment, either by abandoning it out of fear for the risks of failing to attain it or by embracing it in its full vulnerability. In other words, the individual freely chooses that which is necessary to their very being.[63]

The latter synthesis between the possible and the necessary suggest one facet of human freedom in the Kierkegaardian approach. Even though an individual's unconditional commitment may be fixed, they can choose how to adapt it to infinite possible situations, up to and including choosing to abandon their commitment even though that will deprive them of their identity and selfhood. As Dreyfus puts it, "in anything less than total loss and subsequent world collapse, one has to be able to adapt to even the most radical changes in the defining object."[64] This implies that freedom of choice is one aspect of human freedom in the Kierkegaardian approach, but it is not the only aspect, not least because it does not offer a positive criterion for action.[65] Hence Dreyfus identifies a more radical aspect of freedom in Kierkegaard's work: the "freedom to change one's world, i.e. to change one's identity. To be born again *and again*."[66] This freedom stems from the synthesis of the temporal and eternal. Once it becomes possible for eternity to *begin* in time, it also becomes possible for eternity to *change* in time. That is, the instant at which an individual makes their unconditional commitment, they retrospectively change the value of all that has been and will be or, in other words, they apply new value to eternity. This, it seems, is the freedom to give meaning to one's world because the unconditional commitment locates eternal meaning within the temporal world and so allows the individual to define their world eternally based on the finite, temporal object of their commitment.[67] Going back to the Judeo-Christian tradition and emphasis on the body, "[for] the Greeks

[61] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', p.98
[62] Ibid, p.97
[63] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, pp.478-84; Dreyfus, 'Pascal and Kierkegaard', pp.105-7; Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.98-9
[64] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.145
[65] Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses*, p.156
[66] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.145
[67] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*

nothing is radically new. People as they grow realize their potential, like a tree growing from a seed. For the Christians, on the other hand, radical transformation of the self is possible. People can be reborn; they can become new beings."[68]

What brings the human self together, then, is an infinite passion for something finite outside of the individual's self, a conclusion Kierkegaard reaches by reference to Christianity insofar as Jesus – "God in time as the individual man" – is the finite entity to which Christians relate to overcome despair.[69] However, the unconditional commitment does not necessarily need to be Jesus. Jesus's function is primarily to have revealed that both factors of the self are equally essential and can (and indeed must) be synthesised. By being a *finite* manifestation of God *in time* which nonetheless makes the *infinite* and *eternal* possible, Jesus replaces the metaphysical conception of God with the idea that "all is possible" – that the factors of the self must originally have been in "right relationship from the Hand of God" and therefore a seemingly impossible resolution to their paradoxical relationship is, in fact, possible.[70] For the individual, this means that, by overcoming despair, they are "grounded transparently," which Dreyfus says means "[to act] in such a way that what gives you your identity comes through in everything you do."[71] That is, the individual's actions are determined by the meaning they give to the world through their unconditional commitment. In other words, their unconditional commitment provides a transcendent value which gives meaning to their life in a world which is otherwise meaningless by allowing them to make normative judgements. This involves a free choice to unconditionally commit to the object of infinite passion in the first place and, more than this, a free choice to commit in such a way that they define their world according to that commitment.[72]

To elaborate, Jamie Aroosi discusses this Kierkegaardian sense of freedom in a way which I believe reinforces Dreyfus's interpretation. He argues that the idea of being 'reborn' means that an individual, in synthesising the self, is not merely a continuation of their former being but has brought a form of non-being into existence. The possible has become actual.[73] The possible always existed but as a form of non-being, as opposed to the actual which exists as being. When a person in despair takes a stand on being a self, they are imagining not only what currently exists (the actual) but also what might exist (the possible), and therefore they are imagining the future. Even something which seems so absurd as to be considered impossible by the standards of the ethical – for example, synthesising the paradoxical self – becomes possible by the fact that the individual imagines its being.[74] This, according to Aroosi, is freedom insofar as it allows an individual to "exert control" over their future by acting towards a certain possibility. They are

[68] Dreyfus, 'Pascal and Kierkegaard', p.98
[69] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.99-100
[70] Ibid, pp.100-1
[71] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.147
[72] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.100-1
[73] Jamie Aroosi, *The Dialectical Self: Kierkegaard, Marx, and the Making of the Modern Subject* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), p.92
[74] Ibid, pp.92-3

not only acting *in time*, they are taking the future – the eternal – and, by acting towards it such that it comes into existence, they are enacting *eternity in time*. In a sense, all humans are always free because even if they do not consciously act according to a possible future, or if they believe the future they are acting towards to be determined for them, they are still actualising a possibility. But the individual, by acting towards the future according to their unconditional commitment in order to escape despair, is taking responsibility for their choice of which possible future to act towards.[75] They are finding their own meaning in an otherwise meaningless life and thereby making their own normative judgements. As Aroosi puts it, the individual is no longer a "passive witness to a history independent of [their] free actions" but can conceive of the future as something dependent on their free choices, and from this stems moral responsibility.[76] "In this light," he says, "we find another articulation of emancipation as the self-appropriative task of accepting responsibility for a process of actualisation, or freedom, in which we are always already engaged."[77]

However, to return to Dreyfus, the idea of an unconditional commitment being an absolute which gives an individual their meaning and redefines their normative outlook raises concerns – the same concern that Bain noted in relation to international order. Specifically, because an individual's unconditional commitment is unique to them, known only by them, and unintelligible to anyone, how is it possible to distinguish an individual with an unconditional commitment from an incoherent madman imposing their will on others? Dreyfus highlights Kierkegaard's Biblical example of Abraham being asked to kill his son, Isaac, because of his unconditional commitment to "some absolute we can call God."[78] Kierkegaard's point is that Abraham is in anguish, as Dreyfus writes, "not simply [because] he loves his son" but also because "if he kills Isaac, he would be putting himself as an individual with his own relation to the absolute above the ethical. But ethical principles are universal, that is, they are binding on everyone everywhere and they require that no one make an exception of him or herself."[79] The ethical is a shared normative language which allows people to make sense of their actions. In other words, an ethical framework allows people to justify their actions to themselves and others. This need not be a universal ethical framework across all time and space, but can apply as the ethical framework of the group within which a person acts. And, importantly, despite this idea having more in common with Greek philosophy, Kierkegaard sees the value in an ethical framework as allowing people to "recognise and resist" their base subjective compulsions – one's "so-called subjectivity" characterised by "superstitions, obsessions, compulsions, prejudices and the like" – and adopting social responsibilities.[80] Only by escaping this base subjectivity derived from "accidental particularity" can a person identify the true object of their unconditional commitment, which constitutes a higher form of subjectivity. But because this higher subjectivity also requires an individual to make an

[75] Ibid
[76] Ibid, p.92
[77] Ibid, p.93
[78] Dreyfus, 'Roots', p.147
[79] Ibid
[80] Ibid

exception of themselves, philosophical language cannot distinguish it from selfishness.[81] Thus, to return to the example of Abraham, "from the ethical point of view, in the shared public language in which we understand ourselves and others, Abraham is a criminal."[82] And yet he is still considered a great man in the Judeo-Christian tradition because there is a sense in which he exhibits a higher subjectivity which cannot be explained through philosophical concepts.

Consequently, Dreyfus elaborates on Kierkegaard's criteria for identifying an individual who has synthesised the self and is freely giving meaning to their world, as opposed to a person who is acting based on compulsion, impulse, or some other form of lower subjectivity. Dreyfus categorises these criteria as three negative and one positive:

1. An individual synthesising the self must be free in the sense of possessing freedom to choose how to relate to their unconditional commitment; they cannot be driven to act but must be able to "refrain at any moment" and "repent the whole thing as a temptation."[83]
2. An individual synthesising the self must respect the ethical by critically reflecting on their impulses. As Dreyfus puts it: "[he] can't just say 'I'm a superior person and so I don't have to respect the ethical'."[84]
3. An individual synthesising the self cannot establish some new *ethical* principle. As Kierkegaard writes: "the true Knight of Faith is always [in] isolation; the false knight is sectarian." Their unconditional commitment is theirs alone.[85]
4. The positive criterion is that "individuals who respect the ethical and yet feel that their unconditional commitment requires them freely to go against it feel, paradoxically, that what they are doing is the most despicable thing they could possibly do yet also the best thing they have ever done. From an everyday ethical point of view all suspenders of the ethical are crazy."[86]

To put this in more concrete terms, Dreyfus alters the prior example of the "lad" who loves a "princess." Instead, he considers the alternative case of a homosexual "lad" in 19th-century Denmark. The ethical language of the day would frame this as immoral, as would the lad himself. And yet, if he loved a "prince" unconditionally, he would have to pursue what he considers to be an utterly wrong action. Living according to the ethical would be a temptation in the sense that the lad would not have to live in anguish at his actions. As it is, to suspend the ethical and follow his unconditional commitment, the lad "would have to live with the anguished and paradoxical sense that his love is the best thing he ever did, while being at the same time

[81] Ibid
[82] Ibid, p.148
[83] Ibid
[84] Ibid
[85] Ibid
[86] Ibid, p.149

the worst."[87] That love is a transcendent value insofar as it arbitrates what is right for the lad and guides his actions, even when alternative values conflict. However, it is based in human freedom as defined by the freedom to choose to commit to the lad's unconditional commitment such that it gives meaning to "the whole of [his] life's content" and, therefore, to normatively judge. The Kierkegaardian concept of the person suggests that resolving the internal paradox of the human self is related to resolving the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value and, consequently, that this resolution occurs within the individual. It also suggests that combining the two is not an escape from the anguish which raises the desire for a transcendent value, but that human freedom in the Kierkegaardian sense results in anguish as one of its necessary manifestations.

[87] Ibid, pp.148-9; Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*

Chapter 2

Cosmopolitanism

The Kierkegaardian understanding of freedom raises a number of issues for IR scholarship which are not new to the field. Epistemologically there is the recognition of subjective knowledge and value claims as being at least as valid as objective ones, if not more so. Ontologically this translates into a debate about the balance between universal and particular values. And metaphysically both of these debates are impacted by and, in turn, impact where foundations of value are located: in transcendent values or human freedom. The first chapter tied these issues together in a Kierkegaardian concept of the person which argues for the need to synthesise two elements of the self – the soul and the body – in order to appropriately understand and address the research question and the paradox between transcendent value and human freedom. The following chapters will explore three different approaches which are widely recognised within normative IR theory as contributing to the study of human freedom and transcendent value. Each of these approaches engages directly or indirectly with the epistemological, ontological or metaphysical questions raised above but, as this thesis argues, none are able to account for the paradoxical normative relationship as effectively as Dreyfus's Kierkegaardian understanding does. The first of these approaches is cosmopolitanism, of which two variants are discussed in this chapter: a neo-Kantian variety and a more critical communicative cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism – at its broadest – assumes that human beings are not only the ultimate members of international order but also its immediate units. Through their shared humanity and agency, humans impact international order by promoting normative and, subsequently, political change, albeit gradually. That change is directed towards a universal end: the *civitas maxima*, or cosmopolitan society in which rights are granted by virtue of one's humanity rather than one's citizenship of a state. In short, cosmopolitanism declares that humans should be treated as ends in themselves rather than as means, and international order ought to be reconstituted to reflect that aim. Free humans become the source of the transcendental cosmopolitan *civitas maxima*. This approach is most closely associated with Kantianism. More recently, though, Jürgen Habermas's communicative theory of action has tried to clarify how universal values are identified through impartial dialogue, a variant of cosmopolitanism which attempts to mediate between universal and particular values, thereby recognising the tension between transcendental value and human freedom. This chapter will assess both approaches, concluding that they remain overly committed to objective universal truths, either openly or latently, and therefore fail to incorporate human freedom into international order in synthesis with a transcendental value.

Kantian Cosmopolitanism

Kantian cosmopolitanism encompasses scholarship which engages with the international thought of Immanuel Kant, most notably in his essay *Perpetual Peace* but also in his moral philosophical works.

Contemporary thinkers do not only draw on Kantian thought, but this classical variant of cosmopolitanism is largely associated with him.

A. Kantian Cosmopolitanism and International Thought

Kantian cosmopolitanism necessarily engages with the paradoxical relationship between human freedom and transcendental values in international order. As Kant wrote, cosmopolitanism is "a theory which is based on the principle of right as determining what the relations between men and states ought to be; and which lays down [that] a universal international state may be introduced thereby."[1] Kant believed that free humans could be rightly related to a transcendental value in international order because of his underlying philosophical idea that humans share a common nature based on universal reason. Human reason is identifiable through the history of humankind, which is one of gradual progress towards ideological homogeneity facilitated by a tendency towards the ever-more peaceful reconciliation of differences.[2] This trend demonstrates, according to Kant, that reason is universal and accessible to all humans (though it is not always accessed by them) and that human freedom is to access that reason and act according to it. The highest normative precept available through reason is what Kant calls the categorical imperative: the ethical injunction that any action an individual undertakes must be able to be willed to apply to all other humans – that is, ethical action must be universalisable.[3] Importantly, the categorical imperative is not a rule for normative action so much as a principle through which such rules can be determined. Hence it is through the categorical imperative that Kant determines that humans ought to be treated as ends rather than means in all social relations, including international politics, and that the free exercise of human will ought not to impinge on another's freedom. He also uses it to identify the harm principle, the idea that individuals who are in a position to harm others have a normative responsibility to live together peaceably, which he argues is best achieved through the adoption of a civil constitution.[4]

From a philosophical basis in universal reason, the categorical imperative and the harm principle, Kant constructs his international thought, which is most famously advanced in *Perpetual Peace*. In it, he recommends that individuals within states strive for domestic reform towards a constitutional republic, by which he meant a state with a legal separation of powers between the executive and legislature. It did not necessarily entail democratic rights for the state's citizens.[5] Constitutional republics ought subsequently to federate together, sharing common 'cosmo-political' rights between all humans. These rights – including the right to unimpeded international travel and peaceful intercourse – would ideally replace national

[1] Immanuel Kant, quoted in Wight, *Seminal Thinkers*, p.75
[2] Andrew Linklater & Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.160
[3] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Gregor & Timmermann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.34
[4] Linklater and Suganami, *Reassessment*, p.173
[5] Immanuel Kant, 'Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', trans. Colclasure, in Kleingeld (ed.) *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp.74-6, 78-81

identities with a global one, manifested in and strengthened by such interhuman activities as trade and commerce.[6] A federation of republics would spread naturally because it would be the outcome of universal human reason, resulting in "a gradual and unbroken series of changes" to international order.[7] Kant's international vision is therefore not necessarily as disruptive as the idea of a federation of republics first sounds. Indeed, because it seeks only incremental expansions of freedom and requires that such change be imposed peacefully by all humans, it can arguably be accommodated as a long-term goal within the contemporary international order.[8]

That said, without cautious reflection in applying universal reason, more disruptive and potentially oppressive change is possible under the Kantian argument for two reasons. The first is that universalisable duties can be misapplied. Despite the universal accessibility of reason, some humans can improperly apply rational thought and so act unreasonably. If those humans control the apparatus of a state then they can justify the imposition of ideological conformity on their own citizens and their neighbours by claiming they are defending a universal ethical duty. This is doctrinal imperialism rather than cosmopolitanism, and it replaces the freedom to debate and use reason with the enforcement of particular values.[9] We might say, to return to Kierkegaard's thought, that the reliance on objective truth (i.e. on the soul) is not tempered by a recognition of subjective truths (i.e. the body) as co-existing in the world; in other words, that the cosmopolitan society overemphasises the transcendence of certain values over human freedom. Kant sought to address this possibility by emphasising how all humans ought to be treated as ends in their own right, not as a means through which others can impose change on the international order. Notably, he saw his cosmopolitanism, based on the primacy of individuals, as a way to object to the cruelties of colonialism and defend the right for 18th century China and Japan to remain in isolation. The establishment of a federation of republics in, say, Europe could never justify the imposition of European values on other communities outside of that federation.[10]

And yet it is still inevitable, in Kant's reading, that those other communities will eventually accede to the federation of republics because they are, by virtue of being collections of humans, reasonable, and reason dictates that they ought to pursue the duties laid down by the categorical imperative. Consequently, there is a tension in Kantian cosmopolitanism between the presumption that humans ought to and will embody universal values, and the recognition that international order is comprised of multiple communities which exhibit particular values. The universalisability of eternal, abstract values is recognised as problematic by Kant when applied to the human experience of multiple particular situations, but because his mode of thought lionises such universals he concludes that they will override human situatedness. In short, Kant's

[6] Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', pp.82-5
[7] Wight, *Seminal Thinkers*, p.72
[8] Linklater & Suganami, *Reassessment*, pp.162-3
[9] Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (London: Continuum, 2002), pp.43, 263-5
[10] Linklater & Suganami, *Reassessment*, pp.162-3; Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', p.70

political thought overemphasises the infinite, eternal and possible to the neglect of the finite, temporal and necessary. The result is a theory which, in the name of universal conceptions of freedom, threatens particular freedoms enjoyed by communities and, ultimately, individuals.

Two contemporary philosophers have attempted to resolve this tension. The first, Charles Beitz, draws heavily on John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, which itself builds on Kant's argument that individuals are the immediate units of international order and that they can identify universal values by employing reason. But Beitz includes Rawls's idea of the veil of ignorance as a device to mediate any clashes between universal and particular values. Specifically, he argues that particular values can be reconciled through reasoned conversation in order to expose the universal ethical principles underpinning them.[11] Reasoned conversation incorporates Rawls's veil of ignorance as a tool with which individuals can ignore "their society's history, level of development and culture, level of natural resources, and role in the international economy" to more easily access their universal human reason.[12] Beitz refers to this as impartiality, meaning that no single particular value is given preference to the others when debating what duties the categorical imperative bestows upon individuals. It attempts to remove power relations and socio-historical biases from normative debate by extracting individuals from their unique context and assimilating them into an abstract aggregate of humankind. In short, the veil of ignorance eradicates individuals' unique identities based on their situatedness. Beitz determines that his approach to Kantian cosmopolitanism would result in a universal duty to reconfigure international order such that the least advantaged individuals would be afforded the greatest benefits and would gain the protection of universal rights – that is, redistributive justice.[13] However, his approach arguably falls foul of Kant's fears of doctrinal imperialism. By transforming unique individuals into idealised 'blank slates', Beitz is able to project onto them a particular conception of reason which undermines their agency, denying them the ability to act differently from what he proposes. He imposes potentially alien particular characteristics upon them in the name of universality.

Onora O'Neill, who also pursues a Kantian approach, argues that Beitz falters by not only abstracting individuals but also idealising them. She agrees that abstraction is a necessary process for reconciling particular and universal values because it removes individuals from their unique socio-historical contexts and the attendant power relations. But she notes that it is easy to fall into idealisation, whereby the conception of an abstracted individual necessarily implies certain values which themselves turn out to be particular. For example, she claims that when Beitz abstracts individuals away from their situation, he assumes that they will value mutual independence. He then derives a normative prescription which values a division between public and private spheres, elevating civil-political rights to the former while relegating

[11] Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp.176, 181-2
[12] David Mapel, 'The Contractarian Tradition in International Ethics' in Mapel & Nardin (eds.) *Traditions of International Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.193
[13] Beitz, *Political Theory*, p.181

alternative values to the latter.[14] The solution for O'Neill is to abandon the veil of ignorance. Instead, normative debate must occur in total recognition of participants' particular contexts. Only then can Beitz's goal of impartiality be achieved, which O'Neill retains as a way of mediating particular values towards universal ones.[15] This approach may be closer to Kant's, as he believed that certain normative duties such as the harm principle could be reached by allowing philosophers to debate freely and so influencing national governments to amend their behaviour in the direction of universal reason.[16] But O'Neill's interpretation still fails to address the main tension in Kantian cosmopolitanism: that the existence of universal reason as necessary to a human being's identity denies them their unique unconditional commitment and, hence, their freedom is subordinated to transcendent values. Kant, Beitz and O'Neill all presume that universal values exist prior to any normative debate, so the act of debating is not the assertion of individual agency so much as the revelation of a higher authority and its application to particular situations.[17]

This critique is perhaps even more applicable to those cosmopolitan thinkers who approach international order not on its own terms, but as the domestic realm writ large. Simon Caney, for example, divides cosmopolitanism into two broad approaches: those which prioritise distributive justice and those which prioritise democracy. Cosmopolitan distributive justice arguments, he says, are underpinned by a logic in which humans transfer their previous identifications with the nation or state onto an increasingly globalised world. Values should, therefore, be transcendentalised in order to reflect the scale of modern human connections.[18] Theories of cosmopolitan democracy, conversely, emphasise freedom more than justice-based arguments, but their focus is on freedom from external forces and the defence of that freedom through political rights and institutions – his subsequent focus on supranational institutions suggests a move towards a world government that replicates domestic state structures on an international level.[19] In both cases, Caney suggests that the same processes and institutions which define individuals as citizens of states – as parts of a more normatively important whole – should essentially remain, that is, that the relationship should still be one between "the governed and the governors," but that this should be extended to the global level rather than remain rooted within bounded states.[20] Hence he notes that an underlying principle of cosmopolitan arguments is that "in the modern globalised world, global processes, institutions and trade *determine persons' opportunities and prospects*."[21] Daniel Butt takes these principles of abstraction and idealisation further when he extends the scale of values not only spatially but historically, too: "modern day individuals are connected to historic injustice insofar as they benefit, and others suffer, from its effects."[22]

---

[14] Onora O'Neill, *Justice Across Boundaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.86-9
[15] Ibid, pp.97-8
[16] Kant, 'Perpetual Peace', pp.93-4; Linklater & Suganami, *Reassessment*, p.162; Wight, *Seminal Thinkers,* p.73
[17] Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.42
[18] Simon Caney, 'Cosmopolitanism, Democracy and Distributive Justice', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 31 (2005), p.31
[19] Ibid
[20] Ibid, p.60
[21] Ibid, p.31 – my emphasis.
[22] Daniel Butt, *Rectifying International Injustice: Principles of Constitution and Restitution Between Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.195

He consequently argues in favour of compensation for the actions of Western countries during the colonial era. In one sense, then, by attempting to justify the scope for the expansion of freedom in international order, these thinkers undermine the primacy of individuals as agents within that order. They therefore deprioritise human freedom through a focus on rational conceptions of distributive justice instead. This is not to say that their contributions are not valuable in, for example, identifying the historical normative legacy of colonialism, but that in relation to the research question they over-prioritise transcendent values with regard to human freedom and annihilate the relationship between them.

B. Kantian Cosmopolitanism and Human Freedom

This tension in Kantian cosmopolitanism stems from a more fundamental discussion in Kant's works on the nature of human freedom. Kant's anthropological approach (that is, directed towards humans rather than international order) is more nuanced than the above description of Kantian cosmopolitanism suggests and reflects some of the issues raised in Chapter 1. But when we examine this approach in the Kierkegaardian terms previously discussed, it is clear that Kant does not leave sufficient room for subjectivity in his thought and therefore fails to synthesise the two aspects of the self: the soul and the body. Consequently, Kantian cosmopolitanism cannot achieve the Kierkegaardian understanding of freedom as being in synthesis with transcendental value.

Kant's influence on Kierkegaard is evident in some aspects of his thought (though Kierkegaard was more concerned with refuting Hegelianism than Kantianism). Most notably, there is an imperfect relation between the two aspects of the self and Kant's noumenal and phenomenal realms. The two dichotomies do not perfectly map onto one another, but Kant's noumenal realm reflects the universalisable reason inherent to all humans, while his phenomenal realm reflects their sensory experience of the world as it is presented to them. This is similar to the two ways of approaching human experience that Dreyfus identifies in Kierkegaard's thought, namely the soul and the body. Importantly, however, the distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal does not necessarily imply the separation of subjectivity and objectivity which is central to Kierkegaard's thought. Nevertheless, the two realms are vital to Kant's understanding of freedom. That is because the phenomenal realm – or "the course of nature" – is one of absolute causality in which every action "is the connection of a state with a preceding one in the world of sense upon which that state follows according to a rule."[23] Consequently, there are no normative questions in the phenomenal world, only objective facts which do not inherently possess a normative character: "we cannot ask at all what ought to happen in nature, any more than we can ask what properties a circle ought to have."[24] By contrast, the noumenal realm is one of freedom in the sense that actions do not "stand under another cause

[23] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Guyer & Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.532, 540
[24] Ibid, p.540

determining [them] in time in accordance with the law of nature."[25] The noumenal realm is therefore not only the realm of freedom of choice but also of normative questions, which are ultimately apprehended as categorical imperatives as discussed above.[26]

This suggests that Kant's phenomenal realm is akin to a state of base subjectivity in which humans are driven by animal impulses of attraction and repulsion in a purely causal manner. The phenomenal world is therefore subjective insofar as these impulses are wholly situated in a particular human's spatio-temporal experience. The noumenal realm, then, is actually a realm of objectivity, in which human recognition of their essence as rational beings connects them together in 'humanity', sharing objective truths which are intelligible to all across time and space. The problem of human freedom, for Kant, comes from the fact that humans exist in both the phenomenal and noumenal realms simultaneously. Consequently, humans are not capable of living perfectly according to the normative commands of the categorical imperative because they are inherently imperfect or, in other words, because it takes an exemplary will to do so. Kant's argument is that even if humans can determine the normative commands of a categorical imperative they will not necessarily pursue right actions because they possess the freedom to choose alternatives which they may be called to by the animal impulses of the phenomenal world.[27] If freedom is thought of *only* as the freedom to choose, then by exercising that freedom to choose to accept the causal impulses of the phenomenal realm, humans are actually sacrificing their freedom. This is akin to Kierkegaard's concept of unwilling despair, where the effort and angst of taking a stand on the divided self is too much for some humans to accept, and so they retreat back to a distracted life which does not require them to take normative responsibility for their actions.

For Kant, a perfect will, by contrast, would recognise the rational force of normative commands stemming from the categorical imperative as absolute and would have no choice but to follow them: "for a *holy* will: the 'ought' is out of place here, because volition is of itself necessarily in accord with the law."[28] Consequently, for Kant, the highest achievement that a human can achieve – what is considered to be holy in the sense of according with God's actions – is to act in such a way that there is no choice but to pursue the normative commands of the categorical imperative. That is, humans ought to fully assimilate into objectivity, defined as "grounds that are valid for every rational being as such."[29] This presents two problems. Firstly, it implies more clearly than in Kantian international thought that normative action is incompatible with freedom, as Kant understands it. And secondly, though Kant recognises the simultaneous pull of subjective situatedness and objective universals, he does not synthesise them into a

[25] Ibid, p.533
[26] Immanuel Kant, 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals', trans. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.67-9
[27] Immanuel Kant, 'Metaphysics of Morals', trans. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.524-5
[28] Kant, 'Groundwork', p.67, emphasis in original.
[29] Ibid

mutually-supportive whole as Kierkegaard does. Rather, he retains an understanding of subjectivity as animal impulses and thereby concludes that the only way to escape it is to embrace objectivity as much as the human will can allow it. In Kierkegaardian terms, this is the Greek approach to creating a negative unity, in that Kant successfully escapes from unwilling despair by making the soul superior to the body and thereby annihilating one aspect of the self. Consequently, Kant neglects the necessary elements of the body within human experience. A synthesis is impossible in such a situation, and so human freedom is sacrificed in the name of transcendental value.

More fundamentally, Kant's understanding of the phenomenal world as a deviation from the reality of humans as rational beings in the noumenal world constrains his understanding of freedom. He at most achieves a form of freedom of choice. But he restricts the choice to 'good' (the pursuit of universalisable normative commands under the categorical imperative) and 'evil' (the pursuit of subjective impulsive desires stemming from the phenomenal realm). In other words, the categorical imperative presents the rationally right action to humans, who are free insofar as they can then choose not to act rightly – "that action is *permitted (licitum)* which is not contrary to obligation; and this freedom which is not limited by any opposing imperative, is called an authorisation."[30] By terming all subjective desires as 'evil', Kant precludes the possibility for further human development to a higher form of subjectivity defined by the Kierkegaardian unconditional commitment, and therefore shuts out the idea of human freedom, as understood by Kierkegaard, as being in a positive relation with transcendent values. For Kant, the divine will is that which accords perfectly with the rational dictates of the categorical imperative and cannot, therefore, disobey any law. For Kierkegaard, the divine will is that which, in pain and in full knowledge of its absurdity, breaks the normative commands of the categorical imperative in order to attain a higher subjective truth. Put differently, for Kant freedom does not condone any breach of normative rules while Kierkegaard sees freedom as necessitating such a breach.[31]

At the core of this tension in Kant's work – that is, the tension between human freedom and transcendental value – is the issue of synthesising the two realms of human experience. As discussed in this section, Kant's noumenal and phenomenal realms are just as incommensurate as the soul and body are in Kierkegaard's initial definition of them. But whereas Kierkegaard can employ the concept of the unconditional commitment to translate the two aspects of the self into terms which *are* commensurable, Kant retains the philosophical language of the infinite, eternal and possible. Consequently, he cannot escape the basic problem that humans are an unstable combination of factors. Specifically, Kant claims that:

1. Every human experiences subjective desires within the phenomenal realm of causality, and these deterministic desires remain a valid option when humans exercise freedom of choice.

[30] Kant, 'Metaphysics', p.377 – emphasis in original.
[31] This element of Kierkegaard's thought is explained in more detail in Chapter 7.

2. Normative obligations derived from the categorical imperative provide objective reasons for acting based on rationality rather than subjective desires.
3. Humans are always torn between subjective desires and objective normative laws when exercising their freedom of choice.[32]

In other words, by separating out the phenomenal and noumenal realms and defining them in different terms, Kant precludes the possibility of their synthesis and so makes the deeper Kierkegaardian form of freedom – the freedom to define one's own world according to one's unconditional commitment and take moral responsibility for one's actions – impossible. Insofar as human freedom, for Kierkegaard, is reached through God, Kant's understanding of God is telling. Divine freedom is simply the ability to act rightly at all times and in all places, and that is because God does not exist in the phenomenal realm but entirely in the noumenal.[33] And this is Kant's highest good – the freedom to do what is not right is, therefore, evil.[34] Under Kant's universalistic approach, subjectivity ceases to be freedom and instead becomes deterministic; freedom is achieved in the universal, at which point choice becomes a sign of weakness rather than individual strength. As Simone de Beauvoir noted in her critique of Marxism, but which is relevant here: "if it is true that the goal and meaning of action is defined by human wills, these wills do not appear as free. They are the reflection of objective conditions by which the situation of the class or people under consideration is defined […] Subjectivity is reabsorbed into the objectivity of the given world."[35] In international order, then, Kantian individuals are nothing but shades of objective reason, and this concept of the person accentuates rather than resolves the paradox between human freedom and transcendental values.

Communicative Cosmopolitanism

Communicative cosmopolitanism is based primarily on Habermas's communicative theory of action. It is as much a reaction to Frankfurt School critical theory as it is a conscious development of Kantian cosmopolitanism. Communicative cosmopolitans, thanks to their basis in critical approaches, are conscious of the potential for objective reason to justify a transcendent value which acts as an oppressive force against human freedom and they therefore attempt to synthesise objectivity with the reality of multiple particular values in international order. This view is espoused in IR most notably by Andrew Linklater and Richard Shapcott.

[32] Immanuel Kant, 'Critique of Practical Reason', trans. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.200, 206-7; Markus Kohl, 'Kant on Determinism and the Categorical Imperative' in *Ethics* 125 (2015), p.347
[33] Immanuel Kant, 'Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason', trans. Wood & Giovanni, in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.82
[34] Ibid, p.94
[35] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Frechtman (New York: Open Road, 2018), p.19

A. Communicative Cosmopolitanism and International Thought

Unlike the critical theories from which he drew inspiration, Habermas accounted for a normative foundation in international order through his communicative theory of action, which accepts the application of universal reason by human beings. However, he alters the definition of reason to include the process of learning through which conflicts between opposing particular views are mediated.[36] By this, Habermas means that parties to a normative conflict attempt to consensually regulate their disagreement by determining how their particular values can be synthesised into a single end. That end is then deemed to be universal because it is reciprocated by all participants. Moreover, it is arrived at through a dialogue which is non-strategic and therefore less concerned with self-interested calculations of power relations.[37] Consequently, the normative force of any values arrived at through dialogue is separate from the utility of those values to a particular situation, and Habermas thereby retains the Kantian imperative that other individuals must be treated as ends in themselves rather than as means. There are clearly some overlaps with Marxist material development in Habermas's account of communicative action. For example, the dialogic process mirrors the historical dialectic and its resultant synthesis. But whereas material development is arrived at through strategic action in accordance with impersonal historical forces, normative development for Habermas is reached by individuals consciously crafting their own universal values out of their particular situations.[38] Insofar as this differs from Kantian cosmopolitanism, it doesn't treat universal values as revealed to human beings through reason. This dynamic is reversed, with humans forging those values by their own will, suggesting a far greater role for human freedom understood in Kierkegaardian terms.

That said, universal reason does play a role in Habermas's theory of communicative action. It is the mutually accepted belief that all humans are capable of sharing universal reason that underpins non-strategic dialogue by acting as the basis for equality and reciprocity between participants. The recognition of equality and reciprocity are then elevated to the level of procedural norms of communicative action.[39] Once equality is achieved, it allows participants in an ethical debate to "[extirpate] those relations of force that are inconspicuously set in the very structures of communication and that prevent conscious settlement of conflicts, and consensual regulation of conflicts," a long-term process which he refers to as rationalisation.[40] This is, admittedly, an ideal type of communicative action which is impossible to replicate in the context-laden international order. But as an aspirational statement it allows Habermas to identify certain practical rules for individual action in international politics. Specifically, he advocates the peaceful strengthening of domestic and international institutions which promote equal and reciprocal dialogue, particularly the

[36] Ibid, p.204
[37] Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p.98
[38] Kimberly Hutchings, 'Dialogue Between Whom? The Role of the West/Non-West Distinction in Promoting Global Dialogue in IR', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39:3 (2011), pp.641-2
[39] Ibid
[40] Habermas, *Communication*, p.99

freedom of communication in the public sphere and the legal protections of constitutional democracies (he cites the European Union as an example of an individual-oriented "post-national constellation").[41] This is broadly in keeping with Kant's desire for a federation of republics guaranteeing the freedom for philosophers to debate openly but, as mentioned previously, arrived at through human involvedness in the world rather than universal revelation.[42] Habermas consequently incorporates the finite, temporal and necessary elements of the body more than Kantian cosmopolitans, particularly by raising epistemological elements (concerning situation, tradition and human involvedness as sources of values) to the same level as objective truth and values.

The Habermasian mantle has also been adopted by IR scholars, notably Linklater. For Linklater, as with Habermas, communicative action theory is a way to espouse certain universal values without succumbing to poststructuralist critiques that universalising language necessarily contains the potential for domination.[43] Rather, "dialogue is not confined […] to maximising consensus within the normative parameters which dominant groups take for granted. One of its key purposes is to widen social parameters by making it possible for individuals to expand the realm of possible disagreements which political communities have often suppressed in the name of the totalising project."[44] Just as Habermas highlights the procedural nature of communicative action, Linklater treats the universal as a process rather than a *telos*. Where he differs from Habermas, though, is his rejection of dialogue as a rationalising process. Linklater argues that this "decorporealises" humans and undermines their agency as subjects; he instead focuses on emotional drivers of dialogue, such as responses to harm (returning somewhat to early Frankfurt School critical theory, which emphasised the threat of "moral injury.")[45] Linklater can't be called a cosmopolitan without reservation, for he incorporates many ES approaches too, including a historical inquiry into how different international orders have regulated the interaction between competing values. But he shares many cosmopolitan aspirations. One is the belief that international order can be reconfigured if humans adopt cosmopolitan rather than national identities, a move that would expand the scope of freedom by promoting political responsibility for other humans.[46]

Linklater's engagement with Habermas is particularly notable for its exposure of a hidden universal reason which belies the assertion that humans craft their own universal values through communicative action. That is, Habermas does not actually escape the key tension in Kantian cosmopolitanism: that universal reason

[41] Davide Schmid, 'The Poverty of Critical Theory in International Relations: Habermas, Linklater and the Failings of Cosmopolitan Critique', *European Journal of International Relations* 24:1 (2018), pp.204, 209
[42] See, for example: Thomas Risse, 'Let's Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organisation* 54:1 (2000), pp.1-39
[43] Schmid, 'Critical Theory', p.211
[44] Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p.96
[45] Andrew Linklater, 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals With an "Emancipatory Intent"', *Review of International Studies* 33 (2007), pp.144, 146
[46] Schmid, 'Critical Theory', p.212

diminishes individual agency. Specifically, his rationalisation process is closer to Beitz's Rawlsian mediation than to a procedural norm. That is because he treats the 'post-national constellation' as a natural historical development of the international order and, in so doing, predetermines what the outcome of communicative action ought to be. The ideal political dialogue is a rationalising one, but rationalisation requires a movement towards a *telos*, whether or not humans are aware of what that *telos* is. Habermas identifies that *telos* as a series of prescriptions for international order which appear to be accommodated within extant institutions of international order, thereby limiting the extent to which his theory advocates the freedom to deviate from transcendental values.[47] Indeed, his description of the rationalisation process is very similar to the Rawlsian veil of ignorance. Both are mechanisms by which individuals reject particular socio-historical contexts in order to reach an end that is accessible to all who exhibit universal reason.[48] As Michael Walzer notes, Habermas's theory possesses "an entirely decent liberal or social democratic thickness."[49] Nor does Linklater avoid such problems. Throughout his works, he also incorporates a narrative of natural evolution towards higher forms of social relations. This initially takes the form of a three-stage progression towards a post-national cosmopolitan order in which all individuals are treated as equals, but is replaced by an end goal of an interconnected but 'thin' cosmopolitanism of transnational advocacy networks.[50] For both Habermas and Linklater, the reversion to a theory of progress, no matter how much it explains and advocates the improvement of human welfare, conceptually undermines human freedom by treating a universal *telos* as a transcendent value towards which human will naturally progresses. Like the Kantian cosmopolitanism from which it draws inspiration, communicative cosmopolitanism fails to adequately relate human freedom to transcendental value in a stable relationship reflected in international order.

Shapcott provides an alternative reading of communicative cosmopolitanism in IR which addresses the same issues as Habermas and Linklater but which moves away from their Kantian-inspired reaction to critical theory. Instead, Shapcott incorporates the dialogic theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer.[51] In this regard, Shapcott notes Gadamer's assertion that "the principle that all are free can never again be shaken."[52] Gadamer's concern is with human freedom and he therefore provides a greater role for the bodily factor of the self insofar as he emphasises historical situatedness and multiple truths.[53] His aim is to offer an account of reciprocal understanding which mirrors Habermas's communicative theory of action while avoiding the assimilatory implications of cosmopolitanism. Essentially, Gadamer tries to relate the

[47] Amy Kim, 'The Vicissitudes of Critique: The Decline and Re-emergence of the Problem of Capitalism', *Constellations* 21:3 (2014), p.369
[48] Hutchings, 'Dialogue Between Whom?', p.642
[49] Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1994), p.12
[50] Linklater, *Men and Citizens*, p.201; Andrew Linklater, *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.258-60
[51] Gadamer's approach is philosophical hermeneutics rather than any form of cosmopolitanism; Shapcott, however, attempts to integrate Gadamer's works into a communicative cosmopolitan framework in IR.
[52] Hans-Georg Gadamer, quoted in Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue*, p.180
[53] Ibid, p.132

individual to international order through peaceful discourse while preserving individual freedom. This is a promising attempt at synthesis, as evidenced in the name of Gadamer's approach: philosophical hermeneutics, which suggests a conscious effort to balance the philosophical aspects of the soul and theological aspects of the body (hermeneutics originally referring to the interpretation of theological texts).

Humans, for Gadamer, are 'thrown' into a specific situation. This means that they inhabit a world over which they have heretofore had no control in shaping but in which they must act – it is impossible for humans not to act in the world. Consequently, when humans act, they do so according to the traditions and prejudices of the situation into which they are thrown and they therefore perpetuate those traditions and prejudices.[54] Gadamer calls this the hermeneutic circle, a means by which humans necessarily perpetuate and strengthen their particular values. The hermeneutic circle suggests stasis, with human beings doomed to act according to their particular situation. Gadamer confronts this stasis, though, with reference to intersubjectivity alongside other humans.[55] Specifically, he makes dialogue the central form of interhuman interaction. For Gadamer, dialogue is a way of disrupting the hermeneutic circle, as encounters with others force the expansion of that circle's bounds to incorporate other forms of understanding, reaching a fuller appreciation of the world.[56] Unlike Habermas's communicative theory of action, in which dialogue is tied to the unfolding of the universal in a Hegelian historical dialectic, Gadamerian dialogue requires that multiple truths be maintained but re-interpreted in accordance with the acknowledgement of other truths. Mediation need not necessarily occur, and so the assimilatory aspects of Habermas's approach are avoided.[57] Thus, the hermeneutic circle and Gadamerian dialogue are not the self-realisation of the soul, but the situated understanding of the body. As Georgia Warnke writes:

> "If our attempts to understand ourselves and to consider how we ought to act proceed only on the constantly shifting ground of an ongoing history, we cannot hope to transcend that history. Moreover, if what and how we understand changes, it is not clear that we can appeal to an unchanging human nature or human reason for our moral foundations."[58]

Consequently, Gadamer espouses a practical ethics influenced by Aristotle's separation of intellectual reason from practical reason (indeed, Aristotle was the classical Greek philosopher who came closest to balancing transcendent values with human freedom, according to Dreyfus.)[59] Practical ethics suggests that no universal end is achievable when a community attempts to determine its normative values. What defines a community is not the normative ends it reaches but the means by which it seeks to reach those ends –

---

[54] Georgia Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics' in Dostal (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.79-80
[55] Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue*, p.131
[56] Christopher King, 'Gadamer, Levinas and the Hermeneutic Ontology of Ethics', *Philosophies* 4:3 (2019), p.48
[57] Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', pp.81-2
[58] Ibid, p.82
[59] Novak, *Athens and Jerusalem*, p.87; Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*

that is, what form of action it takes to determine its values.[60] Given human situatedness, then, human beings within a community must acknowledge their unique socio-historical context in order to understand how any normative solution to a particular issue would be implemented.[61] This suggests that participants to the dialogue do not come together with the equality and reciprocity of Habermasian dialogue, but with the recognition that the issue at hand impacts all involved by affecting their self-understanding. The subject of the dialogue is not the other human being, but the claim put forward by that other.[62] There is, then, no appeal to fixed foundations but to the participants' situation – their traditions, particular values and self-understandings – with an aim to incorporating another's situation such that the participants can modify the considerations they make when applying their values in the future. Because the other is not the subject, the outcome does not have to be a single mutually-agreed truth for all participants, but a more complete self-understanding which differs between all involved.[63] For example, Gadamer critiqued the US approach to the Soviet Union as insufficient to overcome conflicts of interest: "always insisting on human rights, insisting that they must accept parliamentary democracy in order to industrialise fully, that reveals only our own preoccupations, which do not reflect their history."[64]

This is the chief difference between Gadamerian and Habermasian dialogue, allowing Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to address the potential for universalism within a dialogic approach. The outcome for international order is much closer to a pluralist conception than a universalist one. Rather than humans mediating their conflicts towards a single objective truth, Gadamer suggests that humans determine through dialogue what is right *for them* in a specific situation and then use that answer to contribute to their wider understanding of humanity. That wider understanding then affects how particular situations in the future are interpreted.[65] In a sense, this is the act of feeding subjective truth back onto objective understandings of the world. Gadamer uses the example of domestic law: a judge deems in a particular case that a law is outdated and rules against that law. In determining what is normatively right in that particular moment, the judge has also established a precedent which informs future understandings of the law when similar (but not identical) cases are tried by other judges.[66] In international terms, Warnke therefore asks: "how are genocide and ethnic cleansing still possible after the Holocaust?"[67] Her point is that humans determine genocide to be wrong not because they are compelled by some universal natural law which holds sway over them, but because their understanding of the world is informed by a history in which the Holocaust occurred and was judged to be normatively wrong in that moment. International legal norms,

[60] Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue*, p.153
[61] Ibid, p.154
[62] King, 'Hermeneutic Ontology', pp.48-9
[63] Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', p.86
[64] Hans-Georg Gadamer, quoted in Robert Bernasconi, 'You Don't Know What I'm Talking About: Alterity and the Hermeneutical Ideal' in Schmidt (ed.) *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue and Phronesis in Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995), p.179
[65] Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue*, p. 154
[66] Ibid, p.155
[67] Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', p.81

such as the Genocide Convention, therefore hold normative force in international order even if a universal end is rejected, because individuals' hermeneutic circles overlap on this issue based on a common experience.

Nonetheless, the final step of Gadamer's dialogic process – the incorporation of other understandings into one's hermeneutic circle – raises the prospect that human situatedness is ultimately neglected in favour of a universalisable outcome (at least under Shapcott's interpretation of Gadamer). This derives from Gadamer's characterisation of humans as naturally communicative creatures. From this, his limited definition of discourse necessarily restricts the degree to which humans can interact and so prescribes their future as falling within a narrow range of options.[68] Habermas made a similar point, focusing his critique on the inability for Gadamerian dialogue to account sufficiently for material and power relations, and how communicative action might be approached strategically as well as non-strategically. Habermas, by contrast, situated his communicative theory of action alongside structural explanations of material development, accounting for the social forces acting on individuals.[69] Similarly, Robert Bernasconi also identified a universalising element in Gadamer's approach which undermines its claims to explain particular human relations to social order. According to Bernasconi, Gadamerian dialogue is predicated on each participant assuming that the other ought to change whilst acknowledging that such an outcome will not happen.[70] Consequently communication is not necessarily directed towards understanding, as Gadamer proposes, but can instead be intended to justify a human's self-understanding and defend against any alternative possibilities – hence the futility often faced by victims of oppression when they seek to change their oppressor's behaviour by widening their horizons of understanding, only to be confronted by intransigence.[71] By not predicating discourse on equality and reciprocity, as in Habermas's theory – indeed, by removing other individuals as subjects and replacing them with the situation – Gadamer is inadvertently permitting language to be manipulated as a tool through which to objectify and subjugate others. Though not explicitly universalising, objectification does undermine an individual's subjectivity and hence their freedom. The Kantian dictum that all humans must be treated as ends rather than means is therefore lost in Shapcott's incorporation of Gadamer into communicative cosmopolitanism.

This leads to a second critique of Shapcott's Gadamerian approach: that it is too conservative. The basis of this criticism is easy enough to spot in the hermeneutical circle, which ties humans to the traditions and prejudices of their circumstance and so influences them towards stasis. And despite Gadamer's insistence that intersubjectivity forces a broadening of those humans' self-understandings, the above criticisms suggest that interhuman interaction can reinforce conservative tendencies as much as it can overcome them. In this

[68] John Williams, 'Pluralism, Solidarism and the Emergence of World Society in English School Theory', *International Relations* 19:1, p.32
[69] Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue*, pp.184-5
[70] King, 'Hermeneutic Ontology', p.2
[71] Bernasconi, 'Alterity', p.192

sense, Shapcott's Gadamerian approach can be treated as a conservative version of Habermas's communicative action theory. Habermas is more inclined to radical change towards expanding freedom, as he argues that normative force is not derived from whether an action reflects a human's self-understanding or what a community's values mean for a particular situation. Rather, it is derived from whether the action is inherently just, which in turn requires that a human's interests in espousing it are universalisable.[72] Habermas is arguing for a normativity which relates to a good life for all, not a good life for an individual or specific group.[73] In relation to that argument, Gadamer's is deemed insufficiently committed to radical change. Complicating this criticism somewhat is the view that Gadamer's conservatism may be exaggerated. Williams, for example, in his effort to reconceptualise ES pluralism, notes that Shapcott may have overcome the conservative tendencies in Gadamer's approach to draw out a more solidarist interpretation – hence his ability to compare Gadamer more constructively with Habermas and communicative cosmopolitanism.[74] And Warnke believes that Gadamer, in defining the "hermeneutical task" as "a questioning of things," espoused individual recognition of the limits of one's own understandings and a respect for difference and tolerance which is a necessary predicate for individual freedom.[75]

B. Communicative Cosmopolitanism and Individual Freedom

Communicative cosmopolitanism is a conscious response to the poststructuralist critique of the 'death of God'. Habermas's approach in particular was a reaction against the early Frankfurt School critical theorists, especially Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Their "philosophy of despair" portrayed 20th century Marxism as a "singular logic of evolution" begetting "the hellish vision of a 'totally administered society' in which all individuality and every sphere of social life would be absorbed by rational calculus."[76] Specifically, Adorno and Horkheimer argued in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* that 'enlightenment reason' is a paradox insofar as it "is predicated on domination […] and that domination is predicated on rationalising itself."[77] That is, enlightenment is the use of reason both at an individual and societal level such that humans will achieve a rational self-determination, recognising that they themselves create the rationality which undermines their individual freedom.[78] Habermas's communicative theory of action, when set against this critique, is partly an attempt to rescue a positive role for Kant's political-normative project in the contemporary international order.[79] He was particularly concerned with the need to confront the potential

[72] Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', p.87
[73] Ibid, p.88
[74] John Williams, *Ethics, Diversity and World Politics: Saving Pluralism from Itself?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.17-8
[75] Warnke, 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics', pp.98-9
[76] Schmid, 'Critical Theory', p.201
[77] Amy Allen, 'Reason, Power and History: Re-Reading the Dialectic of Enlightenment', *Thesis Eleven* 120:1 (2014) p.16
[78] Justin Evans, 'The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as Parody of Anti-Enlightenment Thought' in *Constellations* 27 (2020), p.484
[79] Robert Delahunty & John Yoo, 'Kant, Habermas and Democratic Peace', *Chicago Journal of International Law* 10:2 (2010), pp.437-40

for doctrinal imperialism which Kant identified in the tension between universal and particular values and which Adorno and Horkheimer, through an analysis of historically situated forms of oppression, believed to exist in the irresolvable paradox of rationalisation.[80]

There are two interpretations of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and broader Frankfurt School critical theory of particular relevance to a discussion of freedom. The first is the recognition that an over-reliance on universalist objective thought – that is, in Habermas's approach, strategic dialogue – contains within itself a logic of oppression which in pessimistic readings is inevitable and in sympathetic readings is the contingent reality of how the Western world developed.[81] This interpretation recognises the paradoxical relationship between transcendent values and human freedom and, in rejecting transcendental values, commits entirely to human freedom. In other words, Adorno and Horkheimer denied that objective thought holds any value to human experience given its oppressive tendencies. Instead, they embraced a purely subjective perspective, albeit one which is closer to animal impulses than it is to Kierkegaard's subjectivity of unconditional commitment. This is, essentially, the 'death of God' in poststructuralist thought and the resultant emphasis on the Nietzschean will to power. This interpretation would be akin to a Kierkegaardian negative unity in which Adorno and Horkheimer commit fully to the body over the soul. A second interpretation holds that the logic of domination in transcendent values is not inherent to transcendence and that there are positive, emancipatory outcomes to be had from the use of universal, objective reason. However, transcendent values and human freedom are so incommensurable that a synthesis between them (which would moderate the oppressive logic and facilitate emancipation) is impossible. This interpretation resembles a Kierkegaardian positive unity in which Adorno and Horkheimer fail to synthesise the two factors and so fall into fatalism. Indeed, they did eventually adopt a "political quietism which degenerate[d] into conservatism in the face of the rise of the new social movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s," suggesting a degree of fatalism.[82]

Adorno and Horkheimer, then, took what appeared to Habermas to be an extreme position in which transcendent values derived from objective reason were, either necessarily or contingently, an existential threat to human freedom. In other words, by rejecting Kant's overemphasis on the infinite, eternal and possible soul, the Frankfurt School had embraced the finite, temporal and necessary body too much. The key to this pessimism was their understanding of reason as the historical process of rationalisation. Max Weber and his disciple, György Lukács, understood rationalisation as a paradox in which humans are simultaneously emancipated *and* reified as objects.[83] Adorno and Horkheimer adopted this tension as the crux of their critique of contemporary political and international order. But rather than resolving the

[80] Allen, 'Reason, Power and History', p.17
[81] Ibid, pp.14-5; Evans, 'The *Dialectic of Enlightenment*'
[82] Ibid, p.14
[83] Albrecht Wellmer, 'The Critique of Critical Theory: Reason, Utopia and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', *Praxis International* 2 (1983), p.88

paradox – which they largely believed to be unresolvable despite hopes to the contrary – the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* only revealed it in its historically situated form.[84] Habermas's reaction against the Frankfurt School can therefore be seen as an effort to go beyond Adorno and Horkheimer, to resolve the paradox of rationalisation and thereby to reclaim a positive emancipatory role for objective and universal reason against its oppressive potential. In essence, Habermas was trying to restore Kant's emphasis on human freedom through reason against the poststructuralist critique. Consequently, he argued that Adorno and Horkheimer had misunderstood rationalisation by conflating material and normative development. Habermas separated the two and claimed that reason operates differently in each case: it takes the form of strategic dialogue in the material realm and non-strategic dialogue in the normative realm. Rationalisation can therefore proceed towards a universal end of freedom without inadvertently subjugating humans to the forces of production, as the Frankfurt School had feared.

In this sense, Habermas is a foundationalist who bases normativity in international order on communicative reason (or, in other words, non-strategic dialogue) between human beings. He argued that the anti-foundationalism of Adorno and Horkheimer had "definitively stripped [reason] of its validity claim and assimilated [it] to sheer power," and consequently "power and validity claims enter into a turbid fusion" which leads to "the destruction of our critical capacities."[85] This is, in other words, the will to power resulting from the 'death of God' and, for Habermas, it meant that "it is no longer possible to place hope in the liberating force of enlightenment."[86] The problem is that neither Habermas nor other communicative cosmopolitans are resolving the paradox of rationalisation; instead, they are dissolving it entirely by ignoring one of its terms, specifically emancipation. That is, rather than synthesising emancipation and reification into a higher form of dialectic (such as Kierkegaard's subjective truth), they are instead subordinating emancipation to reification by saying that it is only through objective reason that freedom can be achieved. Emancipation ceases to exist in its own terms, and Habermas instead offers two forms of reification – material and normative, or strategic and non-strategic. The same is evident in Linklater's Habermasian approach and in Shapcott's attempt to incorporate Gadamer's more explicitly strategic philosophical hermeneutics into communicative cosmopolitanism.

This has three implications for communicative cosmopolitanism's ability to address the paradox of transcendent value and human freedom in international order. First, by emphasising objective reason – even if it is non-strategic – communicative cosmopolitanism denies the possibility of human freedom which requires a subjective truth. Secondly, by presuming a *telos* towards which the communicative rationalisation process is directed, it denies the possibility of the freedom to choose one's ends (which underpins the deeper form of freedom elucidated in Chapter 1). And third, by insisting on the universality of values

[84] Allen, 'Reason, Power and History', p.14
[85] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.89
[86] Ibid, p.85

derived from communicative processes, it normatively devalues certain individuals based on their historical and geographical situatedness and therefore potentially deprives them even of the freedom of political rights. This takes two forms:

1. Geographically (and, by extension, racially), Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that within communicative cosmopolitanism "those who identify as the inheritors of the project of European modernity view those who do not as in some way less evolved, less developmentally mature than 'we' are, in the sense that they have not yet learned something that 'we' have already learned. In this way, it seems to encourage, at least tacitly, the view of non-modern, non-European peoples as 'human embodiments of the principle of anachronism'."[87]
2. Historically, Fyodor Dostoyevsky's famous novel-within-a-novel, *The Grand Inquisitor*, argues that if there is a *telos* towards which human reason is naturally headed, then only those humans who happen to live at the historical point at which that *telos* is achieved will reap the full benefits of its attendant individual and political freedoms. Consequently, the normative value of every preceding generation is devalued insofar as those humans become nothing more than instrumental rungs on the ladder of progress.[88]

Communicative cosmopolitanism does not appreciate the nature of subjectivity sufficiently to resolve not only the paradox of rationalisation, but the paradox between transcendent values and human freedom in international order.

Conclusion

Cosmopolitanism, in both its Kantian and communicative variants, grapples with some of the important issues surrounding transcendent values and human freedom in international order. Specifically, it understands the tension between universal and particular values and how the two must be synthesised to provide a full account of freedom. However, its conception of subjectivity and objectivity are insufficient to do so. Under Kantian cosmopolitanism, subjectivity is confined to the base animalistic impulses of pain and pleasure rather than a higher subjective truth of the unconditional commitment, which is necessary for achieving human freedom. In communicative cosmopolitanism, subjectivity is replaced with different forms of objectivity. Consequently, the soul and its emphasis on objective, universal truths and values remains dominant across cosmopolitan approaches, limiting their ability to account for human freedom as a form of agency distinct from social or structural pressures. Cosmopolitanism does elucidate the issue of universal and particular values which adds depth to the relationship between transcendental values and human freedom, but it is incapable of resolving the essential paradox between those two concepts.

[87] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.238
[88] Dostoyevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, pp.246-64

Chapter 3

Communitarianism

During the 1980s and 1990s, normative theory emerged in IR, seeking to "[address] the moral dimension of international relations and the wider questions of meaning and interpretation generated by the discipline."[89] One of the earliest marks made by normative theory was to introduce into IR a debate from political theory between liberals and communitarians. In terms of IR, this eventually became the debate between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, with communitarians arguing in favour of the particular values which appeared to be neglected by existing cosmopolitan approaches. Though this dichotomy has since been criticised for inadvertently attempting to translate all IR theory into these terms, communitarian thinkers did present philosophical arguments which sought to normatively root particular values in international order and, in some cases, thereby centre human freedom as a transcendent value of that order. In this sense, communitarian approaches recognise the co-existence of universal and particular values, similarly to cosmopolitanism, but prioritise the latter instead of the former. This means that they differ ontologically with cosmopolitanism but do not necessarily depart from the cosmopolitan epistemology which views objective facts as being superior to subjective commitments. Communitarians therefore root their particular values in universal, objective knowledge, preventing them from recognising the higher form of subjectivity which Kierkegaard deems necessary to support truly particular values. In essence, then, communitarians are broadly in agreement with cosmopolitans, though they define the universal differently – as the community rather than the *civitas maxima*.

The epistemological reliance of communitarians on objective knowledge is evident in their analytical approach. Broadly, communitarians assume that ethical life is facilitated by or developed within the bounds of a political community which, in the contemporary international order, tends to be the state. The existence of multiple independent states reflects the existence of various particular values. As Molly Cochran notes, this can be justified in two different ways. The first is a neo-Hegelian justification which sees the state as itself being an ethically significant actor because it represents the natural evolution of human freedom. This argument is made by Mervyn Frost in what he calls a 'constitutive theory' of IR. The second approach taken by communitarians is an instrumentalist one which defends the state not as ethical in itself, but as an entity which facilitates human ethical interactions. Cochran equates this approach to Michael Walzer who, she notes, straddles the divide between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism. The problem with both of these approaches is that they conceive of freedom here in terms of an ethical universal and therefore they do not recognise either the subjectivity of the Kierkegaardian unconditional commitment or the more fundamental understanding of human freedom this deeper subjectivity results in. Consequently, someone

[89] Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.3

like Walzer, who tries to balance the co-existence of universal and particular values, cannot achieve synthesis because he does not simultaneously attempt to balance objective knowledge with subjective truth. Communitarian arguments are made using philosophical language which prioritises the infinite, eternal and possible soul and so cannot escape appeals to a universal and, concomitantly, transcendent values. This chapter will analyse both of the aforementioned approaches – Frost's constitutive theory and Walzer's instrumentalist argument – to identify their prioritisation of transcendent values in relation to human freedom. When accounting for human freedom, then, this chapter concludes that a focus on particular values cannot be enough to address the research question.

Constitutive Theory

Constitutive theory is a neo-Hegelian approach which begins from the level of the particular human and attempts to extrapolate a normative foundation for the state-based international order from that. Frost justifies the state as the entity within which freedom reaches its greatest development and, additionally, that this requires states to be free within the wider international order. Constitutive theory betrays its analytical approach in how it understands freedom and how it arrives at it from the standpoint of objectivity.

A. Constitutive Theory and International Thought

Constitutive theory is Frost's response to the debate between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism, arguing in favour of the former. Specifically, Frost claims that particular humans actualise their freedom within the bounds of the sovereign state. He therefore attempts to balance universal and particular values by defining humans as particular rights-holders, but by claiming that those rights are achieved in relation to other humans by coming together within a community which recognises their universal humanity.[90] Despite ending at the universal, Frost begins from the level of particular individuals and may therefore provide a way of incorporating human freedom into international order in synthesis with transcendent values. He defines humans fundamentally as *acting* creatures whose meaning derives not from some essential and universal human nature, but from their actions. Because humans are social animals, this means that they are defined by what they choose to do in relation to others: "to be an actor […] is to be constituted as such within a specific social practice."[91] Freedom for Frost, then, is associated with being a rights-holder, and rights are understood as the entitlement to act within a social practice. In other words, "to claim a right is to articulate a certain kind of reason justifying an action and constraining the actions of others."[92] Frost is, therefore, defining humans and freedom along Hegelian lines, following a threefold division:

[90] Mervyn Frost, *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Alex Bellamy, 'Pragmatic Solidarism and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention', *Millennium*, 31:3 (2002), p.477
[91] Mervyn Frost, 'Constitutive Theory and Moral Accountability: Individuals, Institutions and Dispersed Practices' in Erskine (ed.) *Can Institutions Have Responsibilities?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.87
[92] Frost, *Ethics*, pp.138-9

1. Personal freedom is the individual's ability to choose ends undetermined by others or by essential natures. Personal freedom is threatened by the existence of humans in communities alongside others, and so Hegel asserts that within a social order personal freedom is achieved by allowing individuals to exercise control over a set of entities which lack a will of their own – in other words, private property. Personal freedom is therefore achieved by securing a private sphere of action for individuals in which they can pursue their own self-determined ends without social hindrance.[93] This form of freedom is concerned primarily with the freedom from external constraints and, consequently, is associated with political rights such as private property.
2. Moral freedom involves determining one's own ends not merely arbitrarily – as with personal freedom – but according to a set of principles which have themselves been chosen by the individual. These principles are determined using reason, through which an individual "*ought* to have *insight* into the good, make it his *intention* and bring it about by his activity."[94] To be able to live according to one's principles requires that an individual live within a social order – both domestic and international – which they accept as normatively right; in this way, individuals normatively constitute the international order.[95] Consequently, for an international order to be normatively acceptable, it must be conducive to moral freedom and, because freedom is based on reason, it must be rational. This form of freedom is the freedom of choice and, specifically, ethical choice.
3. Social freedom occurs when the laws of the social order are perceived as aligning with individuals' moral and personal freedom, and therefore cease to be constraints on action and become actualisations of those freedoms within the social world. This also implies that the social order itself must be self-determining – that is, free – and so an international order must be one in which the relevant units possess sovereignty.[96] There is no direct equivalent to this form of freedom in the Kierkegaardian outline, as it seems to fall under the definition of willing despair instead, specifically a negative unity in which the soul (through its connection to a world of other rational humans) is prioritised over the body. For Kierkegaard, this form of freedom would be necessary to live in the world with others, but because it would define humans through their social relations, it would not transcend his own understanding of freedom as outlined in Chapter 1.

Within the international order, Frost asserts (in agreement with Hegel) that social freedom is achieved in a state which both guarantees personal and moral freedom and which is itself free in relation to other states – in other words, is sovereign. Given his understanding of freedom as self-determination within different social spheres, Frost emphasises contemporary human rights as necessary to freedom. Specifically, he

[93] Georg Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), §4-5, 12
[94] Georg Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. Wallace, Miller & Inwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), §507 – emphasis in original.
[95] Ibid, §503
[96] Hegel, *PR*, §142-57

favours the rights to private property, freedom of association and conscience, and security of the person. He refers to these as 'settled norms' which possess a degree of universal normative applicability while resting on the normative foundation of the particular human, as conceived of in a Hegelian sense of personal freedom. In other words, for particularity to be accepted and respected, states must abide by such 'settled norms'. The overall picture of constitutive theory is one in which the normative foundation of international order is particular humans who actualise themselves by realising their full rational potential – that is, their freedom – within the community (and the dominant rational community in the contemporary international order is the sovereign state which abides by settled norms). Particular values are given meaning within the universal. In other words, a person's self-determined values are made intelligible to others through the rational community, and those others can then perceive that person as a rights-holder who is entitled to their freedom.

B. Constitutive Theory and Individual Freedom

Being based on Hegel's thought, constitutive theory is unlikely to adequately address the paradox between transcendent values and human freedom in international order; indeed, Kierkegaard's definition of human freedom was formed largely in reaction to the dominant Hegelianism of his age. Specifically, there are two problems with constitutive theory of note to this thesis. The first is its failure to address the anti-foundationalist critique which makes the problem of freedom so central to normative theorising in IR. Insofar as poststructuralists also argue that anti-foundationalism highlights the oppressive tendencies of human interactions, constitutive theory fails to account for structural oppression in international order which undermines claims to freedom of all kinds. Rather, because Frost's critique of international order arises from within that order, he is limited to the 'settled norms' – or universal, objective truths – which are defined by that order. In other words, Frost begins from the *status quo*, assuming the existence of the state, and then asks how it can act as a normative foundation by providing for the freedom of particular humans. Inherent in this approach is the Hegelian idea that because humans exist within the practices they attempt to critique, they can only engage in internal critique. Internal critique does not rule out the possibility for change of a specific order, but it does impose a high threshold for change in that so long as competing normative claims can be reconciled within the existing framework then there is no pressing need for altering existing institutions.[97] Consequently, Hegel's historical idealism perceives a dialectical progression of history as individuals realise their freedom in ever more rational communities. The normative foundation is then the *telos* of history itself, a universal objective reference point against which to judge differing moralities (which, indeed, Hegel does in his distinction between the four world-historical realms: "(1) the Oriental, (2) the Greek, (3) the Roman, (4) the Germanic.")[98] Particular humans are therefore defined by the universal

[97] Steven Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.10
[98] Hegel, *PR*, §353-4

telos, and Hegel's system removes the opportunity for human freedom as a deviation from systemic, cause-effect pressures.

Frost does not retain Hegel's teleological focus, dispensing with the idea of a fixed, universal *telos* as a normative foundation for international order and human history. He does, however, retain a historical perspective in which the normative foundation of international order is the currently existing institutional framework within which a discourse occurs. Because history is not static, this foundation is constantly shifting. For Frost, then, the normative foundation of international order is a weak quasi-foundation which cannot sustain strong moral claims.[99] Yet his constitutive theory *does* make strong moral claims, specifically to 'settled norms' of human rights and state sovereignty. Consequently, there is little critical engagement with the accusation that "the conception of agency, or of ethics more generally, that dominates […] human rights theory is drawn from the ethical tradition of the politically dominant Western, liberal powers. […] Political hegemony cannot be allowed to equate to ethical authority."[100] In other words, without a strong normative foundation against which to judge the rightness of the current institutional framework, Frost assumes the normative justifications for the *status quo* in international order. While not insensitive to change, he normatively prioritises the *status quo*, downgrades the role of particular humans in pursuing normative change, and therefore leaves little room for human freedom in his conceptualisation of international order.

The second problem with constitutive theory in accounting for human freedom is similar to the earlier critique of cosmopolitanism in that Frost does not reconcile universal and particular values so much as subsume particularism within the universal. This subjugation of particular values is not as evident as in contractarian theories which explicitly claim that humans surrender their inalienable rights to an all-powerful sovereign.[101] But constitutive theory, when applied to the contemporary international order, gives normative precedence to human rights which effectively presuppose a universal practical association of humans whose legitimating discourse is one of innate essences which define a human as such. If the basis of social freedom, for Hegel, is personal freedom, and if personal freedom "involves the dissipation of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever,"[102] then the universalisation of human rights achieves the *telos* of history at the cost of destroying that which is particular about individuals. Indeed, through the concept of universal objective reason, the translation from personal to social freedom is not one of reconciling the two so much as transforming the particular human into an element of the universal by defining them in rational, intelligible terms and consequently merging them with a broader community.[103] Frost's own words capture the difficulty in reconciling the universal and particular through the human

[99] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.106
[100] Peter Sutch, 'Global Civil Society and International Ethics: Mervyn Frost's Restatement of Constitutive Theory', *Review of International Studies*, 26 (2000), p.486
[101] Frost, *Ethics*, p.138
[102] Hegel, *PR*, §5
[103] Hegel, *PM*, §258

being: "to be constituted as an actor of this or that kind within some practice is to be set up with a prescribed menu of courses of action open to one."[104] In other words, the faculty for self-determination inherent in the Hegelian view of freedom is curtailed through integration into a rational whole, which prescribes one pre-determined course of action. This limitation also feeds back into the Hegelian preference for the *status quo* insofar as it seals off alternative courses of action which might diverge from contemporary institutions. The fact that the superiority of rationality over individual choice is asserted at two levels – the state and the international order – only strengthens the forces of universalisation within Frost's constitutive theory.

While ontologically distinct from cosmopolitanism, Frost's constitutive theory falls into the same epistemological trap which fails to overcome the anti-foundationalist critique of international order. His attempt to defend particular values is not supported by a simultaneous explication of subjective truth, and so he must rely on an ultimately unjustified objectivity which, though inherently universalising, is expected to act as the foundation of particular values and human freedom. Indeed, by adopting the Hegelian model, Frost assumes that subjectivity is inferior to objectivity – in his hierarchy of different definitions of freedom, personal freedom is inferior to moral and social freedom, and the former is equated with subjectivity while the latter are associated with the identification of objective truths. For Kierkegaard, this would be to misunderstand the character of subjectivity; while the animal impulses of a lower form of subjectivity may indeed result in a lower level of freedom (or a lack of freedom, insofar as it constitutes unconscious despair), there is a higher subjectivity which transcends the universal values of moral and social freedom. Those latter two Hegelian terms are, for Kierkegaard, simply two variations of the universal. Essentially, Frost, while attempting to balance the ontological aspect of human experience in terms of universal and particular values, neglects the epistemological aspect of objectivity and subjectivity, and therefore the metaphysical aspect of the existence of a normative foundation. He does not address the full range of the interaction between the soul and body in human experience, and so cannot resolve the paradox between transcendent values and human freedom at the level of international order.

Instrumental Communitarianism

Walzer, while retaining the communitarian focus on defending particular values, attempts to balance them with universal values through an instrumentalist approach which recognises the importance of a 'thick' community within a 'thin' universal humanity. He roots all values in the shared language used to assign importance to social goods and contends that empirical differences in the language used to interpret those goods and their worth between communities necessitates the prioritisation of particular values over expansive universal values.

[104] Frost, 'Moral Accountability', p.89

A. Instrumental Communitarianism and International Thought

Walzer does, on the one hand, move away from a certain epistemological focus on objective thought in his theorising. He takes the aim of normative theorising to be to engage with the world as it is, requiring him to abandon attempts to take a detached, impartial perspective in favour of empirical examples rooted in their socio-historical context. This, for Walzer, is the only way to interpret how moral decisions are actually made. Consequently, Walzer begins not from the perspective of a universal common humanity, but of a particular community located in time and space.[105] Furthermore, unlike Frost's emphasis on the state from the outset, Walzer does not believe that a community must necessarily equate with the state. His earlier work focuses more on defending the importance of particular values in and of themselves, rather than their manifestation through the state.[106] Instead, for Walzer, any community can justifiably act as the source of particular values because communities – regardless of the specific form they take – are groups of people who share a language and set of interpretations about the social goods which are to be distributed between them.[107] Unlike the universal reason which lies behind Frost's conceptualisation of the state, then, Walzer's perspective is instrumental insofar as communities are a means towards the practical end of distributing goods amongst humans. The community serves that role in a way that universal humanity cannot because its boundary is limited to those members who share common understandings about what form the distribution of goods should take. This is, in essence, a moral language which develops over time through shared traditions and experiences, creating a sense of membership based around common values which is distinguished from non-members who interpret social goods through different values.

The instrumental approach appears to take subjective understanding seriously insofar as it is directed towards finite goods, located within a specific temporal context which is necessary to the experience of a community's members. By implication, objective knowledge derived from shared human reason is not as powerful (in the sense of normatively determining right action) as in either cosmopolitanism or as in Frost's constitutive theory. Ontologically, appeals to universal values cannot therefore hold as much normative force as appeals to a community's particular values because the latter "have members and memories, members with memories not only of their own but also of their common life. Humanity by contrast, has members but no memories, so it has no history and no culture, no customary practices, no familiar lifeways, no festival, no shared understanding of social goods."[108] This is the root of Walzer's distinction between 'thick' particular values and 'thin' universal values. He does not doubt that universal values are an empirically identifiable feature of human experience. This is because humans do still recognise one another as fellow humans and therefore exhibit a limited degree of empathy towards one another, even if that recognition is

[105] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p.xiv
[106] Toni Erskine, 'Qualifying Cosmopolitanism? Solidarity, Criticism, and Michael Walzer's 'View From the Cave'', *International Politics* 44 (2007), p.133
[107] Walzer, *SJ*, p.29
[108] Walzer, *TT*, p.8

not as powerful as for members of a smaller local community.[109] In other words, humanity is a community like others, albeit on a far greater scale which means that the density and strength of interactions within it are less when compared to smaller-scale communities.

Walzer believes this thin commitment to humanity to be evident in two universal values, specifically the right to life and the right to liberty. These rights constitute the two social goods which all communities and, therefore, all humans believe should be distributed equally; in other words, the rights to life and liberty can be translated across all moral languages regardless of community or socio-historical context.[110] The existence of these values is most apparent in war. Walzer argues that war is considered to be so horrific – an international crime, of sorts – because it threatens this globally shared interpretation of the equal distribution of life and liberty. Thus Walzer identifies a basic level of normative agreement which holds universally despite its grounding in the particular values of communities. In this way, he attempts to synthesise universal and particular values and, because of his avoidance of universal reason, also touches on the need to balance objective knowledge with subjective experience.

This attempted synthesis is referred to by Walzer as 'reiterative universalism', by which he means a mutual accommodation and respect for difference which emerges from the experience of multiple particular values. Where those particular values overlap, there is room for universal values. And as particular values change, the meaning of universal values also changes, or is reiterated. Hence, Walzer's theory explains the existence of universal rights of life and liberty while remaining grounded in the socio-historical context of multiple particular communities.[111] There is no further explanation as to why life and liberty are the two values which Walzer singles out as having universal appeal, other than an apparently empirical observation of international order which eschews the *a priori* reasoning of cosmopolitanism and constitutive theory: "if they [universal values] are not natural, then we have invented them, but natural or invented, they are a palpable feature of our moral world."[112] Nevertheless, just as particular values need not necessarily be associated with the state, in Walzer's thinking, his theory could also accommodate other universal values if further empirical observation identified them.

So far, Walzer's instrumental communitarianism has focused on the role of communities as sites of normativity rather than particular human beings. But Walzer's assertion that communities are the immediate units of international order is based on an understanding of what it means to be a human. Walzer claims that humans are 'culture-producing' creatures, as opposed to acting creatures as in Frost's constitutive theory. By this, Walzer means that humans make their world by assigning meaning to it – that is, humans

[109] Ibid
[110] Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 5th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2015), pp.xxvii, 53-4
[111] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.65
[112] Walzer, *JUW*, p.54

interpret the world around them. Values derive from humans interpreting certain social goods as 'good' and others as 'bad'. When humans encounter others with shared understandings, they form a community. And when they encounter others with different understandings, they recognise and respect their common culture-producing capacity. This is what makes freedom a value – attempting to impose one's values on others who disagree with them extinguishes their ability to produce culture and therefore denies them their meaning as a human.[113] In other words, Walzer bases his approach in particular humans who are defined by their differentiation from one another. Communities are vehicles for differentiation because they possess the ability to self-determine, that is to decide, first, what their shared understandings and values are and, second, who their members are. In other words, communities are important because they set membership boundaries based on values which are arrived at by the common interpretations of their culture-producing members. Communities are the defenders of particular values and, by extension, of human freedom. In this sense, communities are a social good in themselves because were they to be removed then humans would lose their ability to produce culture, which requires differentiation. A universal humanity, on the other hand, because it lacks any differentiation, would undermine what it means to be a particular human being.[114]

Despite the basis in a conception of particular humans, Walzer's approach does unconsciously prioritise the state. Cochran notes that if the community protects the inherent human capacity to produce culture and is defined by its ability to set boundaries, then the state must be the ultimate form of the community in the contemporary international order. That is because territory has become such a necessary aspect of boundaries in the modern world and is now inherently related to the state, whose authority is the only defence of territorial borders. Furthermore, the state helps to defend the universal right to liberty insofar as it balances other, sub-state communities through which humans produce culture, such as "churches, universities, families and so on."[115] The ability of the state to do so is central to its ability to maintain its own survival as a stable and coherent entity. The maximalist normative goals which Walzer says reside in communities tend to specifically reside in states, in the contemporary international order. Consequently, despite an openness to alternative forms of community, Walzer's theory instrumentally justifies the state as the ultimate *extant* community; indeed, Walzer notes that with regards to the universal rights to life and liberty, "state rights are simply their collective form,"[116] suggesting that though not inherently so, the state is in fact the guarantor of what it means to be a human. This suggests that despite his vehement defence of particular values, rejection of objective and universal human reason, and basis in a particularist conceptualisation of humans, Walzer's instrumental communitarianism encounters tensions when attempting to synthesise the universal and the particular, the objective and the subjective and, therefore, transcendent values and human freedom.

[113] Walzer, *SJ*, p.314
[114] ibid
[115] ibid, p.44; Cochran, *Normative Theory*, pp.60-1
[116] Walzer, *JUW*, p.54

B. Instrumental Communitarianism and Individual Freedom

While he does not provide an *a priori* justification for why freedom is a universal value, Walzer does define freedom analytically based on his particularist conceptualisation of human beings. Specifically, because humans are in part defined by their difference from others, freedom is conceived as freedom from coercion, which applies as much to states (the "collective form" of freedom) as it does to humans. Moreover, as noted above, Walzer arrives at this understanding of freedom without resorting to either Frost's logic of moral development or Hegel's rational *telos*. But this does not mean that Walzer fully escapes objective thought. Instead, he avoids one form of it while relying on another instead. Specifically, Walzer's justification for communities – and especially the state – as guarantors of a culture-producing human nature defines humans in terms of a universal essence and explains communities by reference to an instrumental reason which is universal in its scope. He therefore narrows the scope of human choice, reiterates the importance of the *status quo*, and consequently cannot conceive of freedom as anything more than already-existing empirically-observable political rights. Rather than synthesising transcendent value and human freedom, then, Walzer, by insufficiently countering the epistemological imbalance towards objective thought, is reinforcing the universal within his ontology of international order. This problem is exacerbated – or perhaps caused – by his explicit anti-foundationalism which offers no normative foundation against which to judge potential normative changes beyond the *status quo*. Consequently Walzer's instrumental communitarianism is not so much defending particular values against universal values, but replacing one form of the universal – the *civitas maxima* – with another – the community. In neither case is there the potential for synthesis which is necessary for a transcendent human freedom in international order.

At the basis of Walzer's theory is a concept of the person which is unsuitable for an account of synthesis, and therefore retains the incommensurability of transcendent value and human freedom. He defines humans as culture-producing creatures who interpret their world by assigning meaning to entities within it. This is a part of human experience, as Part II of this thesis will argue, but it is not its sole or fundamental aspect. Making it so overemphasises the objective thought which is necessary to make values intelligible to others and, therefore, to form the shared moral language which is the definition of the community. Despite the community's unique socio-historical context, then, membership requires a human to mediate their own values with others and to follow the social norms which define them as a member of that community. And because culture production is an essential human characteristic – an abstract human nature, in other words – it determines human behaviour and the limits of normative goals absolutely. In this way, the same distinction which Walzer makes between thin universal commitments and thick particular commitments is replicated at a lower level: a human's thick commitment to their own values co-exists with a thinner commitment to their community, but Walzer instead requires that humans – as culture-producing creatures – subordinate their own values to their community. When framed like this, the community becomes another

level of the universal, rather than a "radically particularist" entity.[117] Specifically, linking back to Frost's neo-Hegelian constitutive theory, the community "assume[s] a 'we' who all belong to a shared historical continuity of meaning; [it] assume[s] *Sittlichkeit*."[118] That is, it makes a common language of meaning and morality an essential characteristic of being a human. Instrumental communitarianism may, therefore, usefully explain how an individual escapes their base subjective impulses and enters an ethical relationship with others, but it does not acknowledge a Kierkegaardian higher form of subjectivity which allows an individual to freely define their own meaning.

The focus on shared ethical language over a unique unconditional commitment is another way of saying that Walzer prioritises objective knowledge at the expense of subjective truth, as evidenced by a reliance on empirical observations of the world. Yet his approach lacks a foundation for both his knowledge claims and his normative assertions, opening him up to the anti-foundationalist critique. Walzer acknowledges his anti-foundationalism when he writes that his is a "practical morality" and that "for the moment at least, practical morality is detached from its foundations, and we must act as if that separation were a possible (since it is an actual) condition of moral life."[119] But by accepting his anti-foundationalism and combining it with a defence of particular values, Walzer risks promoting a morally relativist position which cannot support some of the normative claims he makes. Again, Walzer defends his approach as a form of 'connected criticism' which cannot be separated from his community's socio-historical context, making any detached understanding impossible.[120] But this, once again, appears to be his way of leaning into anti-foundationalism while maintaining the resultant baseless normative claims. Of particular concern in this regard is Walzer's promotion of liberal democracy as the best form of the state (and, as noted above, his implicit assumption that the state is the ultimate form of community in the contemporary international order). Walzer justifies this claim by arguing that democracies limit the coercive tendencies of communities, including the state itself as well as smaller communities within the state. But without a normative foundation to rest upon, this argument *assumes* the "maximalist imposition" of values "particular to Walzer's own American, liberal, democratic moral world."[121] The same applies to Walzer's claim that life and liberty constitute universal rights, with the concept of rights being taken from his own Western community and applied to others.[122] In short, Walzer's anti-foundationalism means that he cannot base his claims to particular values on any secure basis, and his subsequent reliance on empirical observations imparts a conservative tendency which limits freedom to the provision of political rights within the boundaries of the state.

[117] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.63
[118] Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue*, p.48
[119] Walzer, *JUW*, p.xxvii
[120] Erskine, 'Qualifying Cosmopolitanism', pp.134-5
[121] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.72
[122] Ibid, p.73

Walzer's defence of the state-based *status quo* and his resultant conservatism has more in common with Frost's constitutive theory than the cosmopolitan elements which he draws on. It stems from his anti-foundationalism, as the lack of a foundation against which to judge normative claims prevents an assessment of demands for change in international order. And this further hinders any account of human freedom insofar as individuals are free when they act in ways which breach the accepted norms of a society and inspire changes to the *status quo*. Instead, Walzer must relate his arguments to the extant international order as it can be empirically observed. Rather than arguing how it might change in order to resolve the paradoxical relationship between transcendent values and human freedom, then, he argues why international order exists in its current form. This is indeed what Walzer's practical philosophy intends to do, so it is not surprising that his theory provides more normative force to the state than alternative forms of community.[123] But this means that his communitarianism is not well placed to account for human freedom in international order as opposed to transcendent values, and this ultimately stems from his overreliance on objective thought, which undermines his focus on particular values. That is, objective thought treats some form of universal as the end goal of theorising – in this case, shared moral languages within bounded communities. Subjective truth, on the other hand, requires an individual to pursue an unconditional commitment which deviates from their community's moral language and is, for that reason, unintelligible to others. That is simply incomprehensible to an approach which relies on fundamentally on common understandings.

As noted, then, Walzer explains a freedom of political rights. There is, additionally, a notion of freedom of choice in his work; despite being rooted in objective knowledge and so prioritising the universal, Walzer's recognition of multiple communities co-existing suggests that the universal can be interpreted differently. This applies both at the level of the state, where each state defends particular shared understandings, and beneath the state, where smaller groups exist within the wider community. In that sense, Walzer's communitarianism sees the potential for greater freedom of choice than in cosmopolitanism or even as in Frost's constitutive theory. However, in the normative force he applies to the state as the ultimate form of community in the contemporary international order, and the specific conception of the ideal state as a liberal democracy, Walzer's theory does not necessarily embrace the full potential for freedom of choice which his theory otherwise would permit. Additionally, he does not treat freedom of choice as a basis for a deeper form of freedom which allows humans to take moral responsibility for their actions as in the Kierkegaardian outline. Within these limitations – and with regard to the specific problem of transcendent value and human freedom in the international realm – Walzer's instrumental communitarianism demonstrates that any attempt to balance universal and particular values is insufficient without an appreciation of epistemological concerns of objectivity and subjectivity, and a metaphysical understanding of the implications of anti-foundationalism. The Kierkegaardian concept of the person, with its separation of soul and body, is comprised of all of these elements, and so a synthesis must involve all three. Without

[123] Walzer, *TT*, p.69

accounting for all of them, a full account of human freedom cannot be effectively introduced into normative IR theories. The best one can achieve is the universal. Véronique Pin-Fat puts it well when she says that Walzer offers "a universality for strangers (the thin) and a universality for members (the thick)."[124] Far from being "radically particularist," then, Walzer offers an alternative, lesser form of the universal as compared to cosmopolitans.

Conclusion

Though ostensibly committed to a defence of particular values and the ontological conception of international order as a defender of such values, communitarian approaches fail to appreciate the epistemological and metaphysical issues of doing so. They are therefore unable to fully synthesise transcendent values and human freedom in international order. Constitutive theory, for example, relies as much on universal reason as does Kantian cosmopolitanism, while instrumental communitarianism, while highlighting the weakness of universal bonds of common humanity, nevertheless defines humans according to a universal nature which compels them to act according to an instrumental reason. When combined with an explicit anti-foundationalism, this subordinates individuals to their communities – especially the state – and minimises opportunities for change which would be a manifestation of the exercise of human freedom. In short, communitarians, perhaps because of their close interaction with cosmopolitanism, do not sufficiently differentiate objectivity and subjectivity and therefore do not distinguish universal and particular values. Instead, their particular values are simply alternative forms of the universal which perform the same function of subordinating human freedom to transcendent values and trapping humans in Kierkegaardian despair rather than releasing them into the higher subjectivity which would allow them to exercise human freedom in synthesis with those transcendent values.

[124] Véronique Pin-Fat, *Universality, Ethics, and International Relations: A Grammatical Reading* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.86 – she means this positively, whereas this thesis takes that point to be a negative in relation to individual freedom.

Chapter 4

The English School

The ES is well-equipped to discuss the paradoxical normative relationship between transcendent value and human freedom. It treats humans as the ultimate, if not immediate, units of international order and, unlike cosmopolitanism, it does so in a historically-oriented way which recognises the situatedness of those human beings. The ES also recognises the importance of the normative dimension of international order alongside its empirical reality, and it plays an important role in debates about a normative foundation for that order, based in transcendent values. These themes were present in the debate between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, but the ES approaches them in a way which appears to balance the competing demands of transcendent value and human freedom. In that way, it may be better suited to explain their paradoxical relationship within international order. This is particularly evident in a long-standing preoccupation of ES scholars; as Bull asked, is there "a need to liberate thought and action from [international order's] confines by proclaiming new concepts and normative principles that would give shape and direction to the trends making against the existing system?"[1] This question recognises both the impulse for human freedom as the subjective desire to break free of the prevailing social norms of international order, and the tendency to abide by those norms as reflections of objective and universal rules.

Within the ES, the most common framework through which to approach this question is the debate between pluralism and solidarism. These two perspectives have been described as incommensurable insofar as they each assert transcendent values for international order which undermine the values of the other, and those values fall into the broader debate between universalism and particularism. This matters to discussions of human freedom as well because it consciously directs ES scholarship towards the *tension between* universal and particular values in international order rather than an assumption that one ought to be prioritised over the other. The ES therefore also provides a potential theoretical basis to explore the paradoxical relationship between transcendent value and human freedom in IR. Moreover, recent scholarship has moved beyond the apparent incommensurability of pluralism and solidarism towards historical and normative efforts at exploring the links between them. This is an important first step in IR scholarship towards synthesising the two. That said, the ES does fall short of incorporating human freedom into their concept of international order because its various theorists continue to prioritise infinite, eternal and possible transcendent values. In other words, despite the avowed focus of pluralist scholars on particular values, they do not offer a sufficiently developed understanding of subjectivity to avoid maintaining a universalistic tendency. Consequently, their efforts at synthesising universal and particular values prove to be inadequate in accounting for the relationship between transcendent value and human freedom in international order.

[1] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p.266

This chapter will proceed in three sections. Because the ES explores the potential for overlap between competing understandings, it cannot be as neatly divided into clear concepts as the previous two chapters. Instead, it will begin by offering a brief overview of the debate between pluralism and solidarism as commonly understood and will relate these approaches to the language of transcendent value and human freedom. The nuances and similarities between these apparently incommensurable positions will then be drawn out in two subsequent sections which chart the historical development of ES thinking and the universalist tendencies which pervade the approach. The second section will therefore explore the Christian pessimist influence in early ES thought and the natural law theories which resulted from it. The third section will outline the anti-foundationalist backlash and moral scepticism in later ES thought. It will conclude that the historical legacy of these periods of ES thought is a latent preference for objective, universalist thought which undermines claims to focus on human freedom in international order. The ES, though it provides many conceptual tools with which to introduce human freedom into IR in synthesis with transcendent values, does not succeed in doing so.

Pluralism and Solidarism

The debate between pluralists and solidarists is fundamentally one of tensions between universal and particular values *within* the state-based international order, which is referred to in the ES as the international society. As with the co-existence of the soul and body in Kierkegaard's concept of the person, ES scholars accept that both universal and particular values are present in international order, and so the question is about the degree to which each is empirically evident and normatively desirable. Importantly, because both sets of values are already present in international order, that order need not undergo the sort of radical change associated with the exercise of unfettered human freedom. In other words, because of their emphasis on the normative potential of the extant international order, neither solidarists nor pluralists are predisposed to recognise the value of breaking the norms and rules of that order as a free individual would feel compelled to do in Kierkegaard's thought. This is most evident in Bull's definition of the two approaches, which Bain refers to as "the classical account of pluralism and solidarism."[2] Bull describes pluralism as assuming that states "are capable of agreeing only for certain minimum purposes which fall short of that of the enforcement of the law."[3] Conversely, solidarists espouse the "solidarity, or potential solidarity, of the states comprising international society, with respect to the enforcement of the law."[4] The emphasis on international law, and the underlying assumption that states "conceive of themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions,"[5] means that both accounts begin from a transcendental premise embodied in the international society. Identity in that society is granted by accepting and observing its normative prescriptions, rather

[2] William Bain, 'The Pluralist-Solidarist Debate in the English School' in Navari & Green (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p.159
[3] Hedley Bull, 'The Grotian Conception of International Society' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p.52
[4] Ibid, p.52
[5] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p.13

than by self-determination according to a unique unconditional commitment. In the contemporary case, that identity is determined by statehood – states are the immediate objects of international law and humans are recognised only according to their relation to the state. The fundamental premise of the ES account – pluralist or solidarist – is therefore rooted in the infinite, eternal and possible of the soul.

That is not to say that the ES can be lumped with cosmopolitanism and communitarianism and their *unconscious* incorporation of the universal. Certainly, by accepting the normative value of common norms and institutions, the ES shares a moral-philosophical focus which is more explicitly explored in those two approaches and through which they depart from, say, realist approaches in IR. But by tempering this with deference to states and the existing institutions of international society, the ES distinguishes itself from cosmopolitanism's preference for radical change towards an international order based on collective humanity. And by taking seriously the scope for change based on normative demands, it differs from communitarian approaches which treat the state-based international order as a morally justified rational construct. The result is that both pluralism and solidarism consciously represent a *via media* between empirical and normative theorising which, by its very nature, has blurred boundaries. Similarly, the boundaries between pluralism and solidarism are not wholly clear. The debate between them therefore focuses as much on areas of overlap and, as stated above, the question of degree than on points of divergence. This is promising, because it suggests that despite the universalist predisposition of the ES, there is much more scope to explore within it the possibility for subjective accounts more typical of particular values than would be the case in cosmopolitanism or, latently, in communitarianism. This openness might be summed up by Robert Jackson's question, "what shall take precedence when the pluralist norms of state sovereignty come into conflict with solidarist norms of human rights?"[6] In this question, he simultaneously accepts the coexistence of universal and particular values, recognises their paradoxical (and seemingly incommensurable) nature, and commits to understanding how these two necessary features of human experience relate and interact. It is the same sort of question that motivated Kierkegaard to clarify the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity and, hence, between the soul and body.

This tension between universal and particular values is in part represented by the fact that both pluralists and solidarists share the belief that empirical and normative analyses of international order cannot be heuristically separated.[7] Consequently, there is a conflation in the ES between objective facts derived from observation of the international order with normatively desirable goals. The normative foundation is an objective one, but it is also historically contingent as these 'facts' constantly change. This is the basis of the question of degree, which asks which normative goals should be given precedence at any particular moment

[6] Jackson, *Global Covenant,* pp.379-80
[7] Molly Cochran, 'Hedley Bull and John Dewey: Two Middle Grounders in a Pragmatic Approach to the Nuclear Dilemma' in Navari (ed.) *Ethical Reasoning in International Affairs: Arguments from the Middle Ground* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.177

in time. For pluralists, the key point is that international order is centred around independent agents – primarily statespeople – who share procedural norms of recognition and interaction, and these norms ensure that international politics exhibits mutual respect and tolerance regardless of the absence of a common authority.[8] Though this initially seems similar to Habermas's communicative theory of action, these statespeople act strategically precisely because they are defined by their relationship to the state rather than their relationship to humanity as a whole. Hence, rather than dialogue, pluralists highlight institutions as structured forms of interaction between statespeople sharing common norms and rules. These institutions include, for example, international law, the balance of power, diplomacy, great power relations, and war – to cite Bull's original list.[9]

These common norms, rules and institutions in pluralist thought contribute to the ability of statespeople to maintain a *minimum* degree of order in the international realm, understood as the tentative preservation of a limited goal of co-existence.[10] That minimum degree of order is perceived as normatively desirable. Partly this is because it is reflective of the common norms of state action and therefore represents shared values as practised in the international order. But international order is also normatively desirable, to Bull, because it embodies certain values which he treats as "elementary, primary or universal."[11] These values include those which are "the common goals of all social life," not just those of international order.[12] Bull goes on to say that "order among mankind is something wider than order among states; something more fundamental and primordial than it; and also, I should argue, something morally prior to it."[13] The pluralist approach, then, treats international order as a means to facilitating the greater end of human welfare, with individual humans being "permanent and indestructible in a sense in which groupings of them of this or that sort are not."[14] The pluralist conception of international order is therefore one of tension between particular concerns for individual human welfare within and beneath an international 'society' of universal (or universalisable) values.

By contrast, solidarists treat co-existence as something more extensive than the minimalist order outlined in pluralist accounts. Solidarists argue that the common values of international order are more extensive than those suggested by pluralists and are more representative of individual demands for change stemming from human freedom, something which is especially evident in the international discourse on human rights. The greater importance of common values means that the universal aspect of international order is accentuated, justifying the subordination of particular values when the two come into conflict. For example, Bull's original definition of solidarism emphasised international 'police action' as a justifiable (to solidarists)

[8] Jackson, *Global Covenant*, p.16
[9] Bull, *Anarchical Society* – subsequent scholars have argued for expanding the list of institutions dramatically.
[10] Ibid
[11] Ibid, pp.16-19
[12] Ibid, p.19
[13] Ibid, p.21
[14] Ibid

breach of state sovereignty by other states.[15] Unlike the pluralist values of tolerance and mutual respect between states stemming from procedural interactions, solidarist ethics implies the exercise of power to coerce adherence to a conception of freedom based around political rights.[16] And while pluralists might contend that this degree of forceful change is threatening to the thin order already achieved by states, some solidarists argue that their approach provides greater stability to the international order by accepting and incorporating otherwise debilitating forces of change, such as globalisation or transnational human rights.[17]

The solidarist emphasis on a freedom of political rights results in an interesting dynamic between humans and states. Free humans are drivers of change in that their demands for normative change, by transcending state boundaries, result in action to ensure that state practice coincides with emerging common norms of international order. This arguably provides greater agency to humans than pluralist accounts, which concentrate agency in a specific class of humans, namely statespeople. However, because solidarists still see the value of a state-based international order, individual demands for change are only enforced through states which, given the importance of international law, are the only entities legally justified to use force to such ends. Furthermore, because solidarists ascribe normative force to individual demands for change only to the extent that they span a global 'world society' (as distinct from the state-centric 'international society'), the values thus espoused are as universal as pluralist values of order. In essence, despite a more superficial engagement with individuals, solidarists subordinate them to a higher universal *of humanity* in the same way that pluralists subordinate individuals to the higher universal *of the state*. Solidarism is, in this regard, philosophically closer to cosmopolitanism than is pluralism, and so shares many of its universalising tendencies.

Despite these differences, pluralists and solidarists have much in common – hence they are two wings of the ES, rather than distinct schools of IR. Both recognise that instability in international order comes in part from the interaction between universal and particular values. Both also conflate normativity with empirical observations of state behaviour, leading to a "more pragmatic and empirical than moral-philosophical" approach.[18] This has two main implications: firstly, neither offers a convincing reason *why* the values they espouse are fundamental to international order, thereby succumbing to the anti-foundationalist critique. Secondly, both pluralism and solidarism are constrained by the limitations of the contemporary international order. Despite their historical account of alternatives to a state-based international society, they cannot easily escape the dialogue between statespeople and certain important non-state actors. The ES, therefore, has a conservative tendency which, by giving humans value primarily through their relation to the state, hinders them in considering the role of human freedom as a

[15] Bull, 'Grotian Conception'
[16] Kai Alderson and Andrew Hurrell, *Hedley Bull on International Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p.67
[17] Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Williams, *Ethics, Diversity and World Politics*
[18] Molly Cochran, 'Charting the Ethics of the English School: What "Good" is There in a Middle-Ground Ethics?', *International Studies Quarterly* 53:1 (2009), p.292

transcendence of the accepted norms and institutions of international order. Even solidarists, who are more permissive of individual change than pluralists, perceive of it occurring within a continuing state-based order (indeed, this is one of the main differences between solidarists and cosmopolitans). This conservative bent need not be inherent to ES accounts of international order, and human freedom can be incorporated into the approach. But the framing of IR as an incommensurable debate between pluralism and solidarism distracts from their common flaws. In other words, rather than focusing on the issues of anti-foundationalism and conservatism in both solidarism *and* pluralism, the ES emphasises the question of degree instead.

The ES provides a useful entry into normative IR theory for discussions of transcendent values and human freedom in international order. But the internal debate between seemingly incommensurable pluralist and solidarist approaches must be surmounted. The origins of this apparent incommensurability may be in part due to the prevalence of specific issues, particularly armed humanitarian intervention, which portray the practical implications of the debate in a zero-sum manner: either state sovereignty is breached or, if not, human rights are neglected. This has the effect of oversimplifying a complex normative discussion.[19] It may also be because neither wing of the ES is entirely empirically justified in their conclusions. Bain notes that "the society of states has never been tolerant in the way that pluralists claim and it cannot be unified in the way that solidarists want."[20] Consequently, false narratives cement exaggerated claims on both sides. Fundamentally, though, the lack of philosophical investigation into *why* pluralist or solidarist values are inherent to international order prevents the two wings from constructively moving forward together. In other words, without an appreciation of the normative foundation of their stances, they rely on ultimately groundless arguments derived from conflicting empirical analyses. The common theme of the importance to international order of both universal *and* particular values is thereby obscured. A solution may then be to adopt a Kierkegaardian synthesis which recognises the value of objective, universal, solidarist values alongside subjective, particular, pluralist values. Indeed, the history of ES thought suggests that some form of synthesis – if not the specifically Kierkegaardian one – was a concern of many scholars, but that these attempts failed to overcome the anti-foundationalist critique and thereby retained an element of conservatism inimical to human freedom.

Natural Law

Natural law approaches in the ES are rooted in the Christian outlook of its early thinkers, particularly Wight. These perspectives attempt to balance between universal and particular values by exploring different obligations held by humans towards themselves, their state and to wider humanity. However, this attempt at combining the universal and particular, though it is relevant to the need to synthesise transcendent values and human freedom in international order, falters because it lacks a normative foundation and consequently

[19] Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws', p.558
[20] Ibid, p.559

cannot conceive of particular values as representative of subjective truth in the same way that Kierkegaard's framework does. Natural law theories therefore distinguish between varying degrees of universal values, rather than objective universal values and subjective particular values. They cannot account for human freedom in synthesis with transcendent value.

A. Natural Law and International Thought

Even before Bull established the terms 'pluralism' and 'solidarism', ES scholars discussed and attempted to resolve the tension between universal and particular values in international order. As part of a project of "more structural thinking in international politics,"[21] they sought to integrate what they perceived to be amoral power politics with a religiously inspired 'good life' (which resembles the human welfare on which pluralism was later based). Wight termed the power political element 'realism' and the good life, albeit in secular form, 'revolutionism'. The synthesis of the two was termed 'rationalism', and he argued that each of these terms represented distinct traditions of international thought.[22] Within the three traditions, Wight argued that rationalism was a *via media* between a realist characterisation of transcendent values as "non-existent, bogus or delusory" and a revolutionist belief that normative issues are "simple."[23] Instead, rationalism emphasises the "infinitely complex, bewildering and perplexing" nature of normativity in international order.[24] By accepting the complexity of moral issues in international thought, Wight established indistinct boundaries for his rationalist approach, allowing it to incorporate elements of both realist *raison d'état* alongside a belief in common moral bonds between individuals characteristic of revolutionist Kantian philosophy.[25] In other words, Wight's rationalist project can be seen as an early attempt to coherently represent the competing impulses toward universal and particular values in international order, and therefore resembles to some extent the problem between the soul and body in Kierkegaard's thought.

The productive outcome of the rationalist approach was, for Wight, a theory of natural law which constituted "the discovery of an alternative positive position which. . . embodies the notion of a middle course, of a possible accommodation between moral necessity and practical demands."[26] However, in heavily qualifying his approach, Wight was doubtful whether international order had the potential to incorporate a natural law doctrine which could synthesise power politics and cosmopolitan norms. He worried specifically that the security achieved under international order could be threatened by the radical

[21] Herbert Butterfield, quoted in Roger Epp, 'The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics and Its Central Figures' in Navari & Green (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p.26
[22] Wight, *Three Traditions*
[23] Wight, *Seminal Thinkers*, p.33
[24] Ibid
[25] The degree to which Kant is actually a revolutionist was debated at the time and to this day. Wight, however, included him in the revolutionist tradition. See: Cochran, 'Middle-Ground Ethics'
[26] Wight, quoted in Ian Hall, *The International Thought of Martin Wight* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p.122

change required to advance universal values. Wight, in this case, reflected a conservative tendency which led some of his students to consider him a straightforward realist who "rejected all ideas of progress toward a more peaceful and just international order."[27] In presenting international order as based on the empirical reality of inter-state co-operation and co-existence, Wight established universal values as being, at best, in conflict with particular values and, at worst, incommensurable with them. He focused on the order of the *status quo* as something to be defended against radical change and therefore normatively restricted the ability for change to impact the practical demands of the power political international order. In terms of freedom, despite the recognition of universal desires, Wight overemphasised the particular values of sovereign states and, in so doing, reduced the scope for a synthesis between them and universal values on equal terms. Without synthesis, there can be no human freedom.

Nevertheless, Wight's original conception of a *via media* which synthesises realism and revolutionism wasn't *necessarily* state-centric or conservative. Central to his rationalism was the natural law theory of the 17th century Dutch legal scholar Hugo Grotius. Though not a perfect stand-in for Wightian rationalism, Grotius's thought contributed to the *via media* by integrating a state-based power political approach to positive law with an individual-oriented approach to natural law, combining particular values in the first with universal human reason in the second.[28] Grotius's natural law theory applies in the specific context of the legitimate use of force in international order and, in simple terms, assumes that when statespeople consider how to behave they balance common principles of right conduct derived from human reason with the voluntary procedural law of states derived from their political will. In other words, statespeople combine universal human reason with particular values of *raison d'état*. The conscience of an individual statesperson, therefore, mediates between what is morally right under natural law and what is accepted by state practice. Moreover, Grotius's theory applies not only to statespeople, but to particular human beings too, who must make similar calculations when determining whether or not to go to war on behalf of their state.[29] (Interestingly, Wight himself was a conscientious objector during the First World War.)[30]

This "political morality,"[31] as the name suggests, is more broadly a recognition of individual demands for normative change against the 'amoral' procedural law-making of the state-based international order. It also tempers revolutionist over-reliance on universal human reason by recognising that such reason is at best partially applied within the minds of statespeople, having to be balanced by particular concerns to that ruler's state and existing state-based positive law. Here, then, Wight offers an approach which may be better

[27] John Garnett, quoted in Hall, *International Thought*, p.13
[28] Bull later adopted Gierke's international political theory and subsumed Grotius's *jus gentium* into a broader *societas gentium*, thereby politicising Grotian legal theory and conflating it with rationalism more widely. See: Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.34-7
[29] Wight, *Seminal Thinkers*, pp.43, 53
[30] Hall, *International Thought*, pp.32-3
[31] Martin Wight, 'Western Values in International Relations' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp.127-8

able to synthesise universal and particular values and thereby provide a way for individuals to rebel against the normative prescriptions of the state-based international order. That would be, in other words, an international theory which incorporates human freedom as a normative foundation insofar as all state actions require the normative assent of free humans. In terms of IR theory, Wight distinguishes his rationalism from realism insofar as he insists on the inherent normativity of international order and, moreover, on the role to be played in that order by individuals: "the Grotian mode of thought with its premise of the individual's sociability and responsibility to the judgement of society tends in the upshot to make the individual conscience the engine, the animating impulse of politics."[32]

B. Natural Law and Individual Freedom

But despite the *potential* for individual freedom in the Grotian account, it is not *actually* incorporated into Wight's international thought. That is for two reasons: firstly, the individual in Grotius's natural law theory is defined by human reason rather than by a unique unconditional commitment. They are not, therefore, achieving human freedom by suspending the norms of international order in favour of their particular values; rather, they are reaching a higher form of the universal which promotes the universality of humanity over the universality of *raison d'état*. This is clear in Wight's assessment of Grotius as making the individual "[responsible] to the judgement of society," in other words necessarily a part of some wider entity through which they are defined. Secondly, Wight does not embrace human freedom but instead adopts a tragic perspective which is pessimistic about the capacity of the individual to act freely within international order. This pessimism was rooted in his Christian faith. Wight believed in the Nietzschean proclamation of the 'death of God'. Specifically, without a common Christian God to act as the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong, the secular optimistic belief in human progress lacked the foundations to withstand amoral behaviour represented in the realist law of self-preservation. Rather, the co-existence of these optimistic and amoral beliefs created a 'crisis of modern politics', culminating in the glorification of the state as the vehicle of human progress and self-preservation and, as its logical end, the totalitarian and ideological regimes of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia.[33]

Fear of these regimes and of a broader reversion to nihilism partly accounts for Wight's insistence that normativity must play a role in international order and his attempts to discover a *via media* between unfettered realism and revolutionism. But he also saw how universal ideas could be hijacked by the state to devastating ends and was therefore concerned about theories of natural law being used to undermine the state *as a defender of particular values*. Hence, Wight adopted a specifically Grotian conception of natural law as a way of bolstering "the individual's sociability and responsibility to the judgement of society." This was his way of accounting for the possibility that individual demands for normative change based on universal

[32] Wight, *Seminal Thinkers*, p.53
[33] Hall, *International Thought*, p.70

values might lead to violence when expressed within an amoral international realm, given the power concentrated in the state.[34] What makes this perspective tragic is that such demands for change are well-intentioned – that is, they stem from normative desires from human beings which represent supposedly universal values – but because they face alternative particular values as represented by multiple sovereign states, they are met with resistance. The outcome is the regression of normative debate into international power politics to determine whose values ought to dominate, and so appeals to a universal human reason can instead descend into violence when confronted with the reality of international order.[35]

The tragic account of normativity within a power political international order further distinguishes the ES – particularly its pluralist wing – from cosmopolitanism. Wight specifically critiques the Kantian approach (or, at least, his understanding of it in the form of revolutionism) as failing to account for the inevitability of war. Consequently, Kant's belief that a peaceful international anarchy could be achieved through gradual change led by individual appeals to universal values is, at best, normatively idealistic and, at worst, risks undermining the fragile order already achieved by procedural law-making between statespeople. This argument has continued to influence ES thinking with, for example, James Mayall representing a similarly pessimistic view.[36] It means that some strands of ES thought have arguably more in common with realist scholars, especially those contemporaneous to Wight. Hans Morgenthau, for example, also recognised that international order cannot easily sustain universal values as framed within a theory of natural law. His solution was for statespeople to adopt a personal morality which espouses prudent moderation in pursuit of *raison d'état*, thereby limiting the excessive tendency towards ideological despotism *and* amoral self-preservation.[37] The point is that Wight's Christian pessimism – as well as the permeable boundaries between rationalism and realism – encourages a state-centric conservatism that values the *status quo* and the pre-existing norms of the international society. This undermines human freedom in two ways: firstly, it concentrates normative force in statespeople while disempowering particular human beings; and, secondly, it understands freedom only as something achievable within the socially-accepted norms of international order. In other words, there is no space in the pessimistic account to act according to an unconditional commitment without undermining the very values of the order from which one is trying to escape. This hampers the possibility for normative change which is central to human freedom as understood by Kierkegaard.

Nevertheless, Wight was more sympathetic towards particular values than universal ones, even if those particular values were equated with the state and *raison d'état* (what, in Kierkegaardian terms, is simply

[34] Ibid, pp.131-2
[35] Mervyn Frost, 'Tragedy, Ethics and International Relations' in Erskine & Lebow (eds.) *Tragedy and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.22
[36] Linklater & Suganami, *Reassessment*, p.164; James Mayall, *World Politics: Progress and its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp.6, 28
[37] Stefano Recchia, 'Restraining Imperial Hubris: The Ethical Bases of Realist International Relations Theory', *Constellations* 14:4 (2007), pp.531-56

another, lesser, universal – as noted in the chapter on communitarianism). The best response Wight could develop to the 'death of God', then, was to treat mutual accommodation and tolerance between states as values in themselves, albeit of a more fundamental form insofar as they guarantee states the ability to practice their own particular values. The normative foundation of mutual accommodation and tolerance was, for Wight, found in Grotius's theory of natural law, which accepted those values but secularised them such that they could be applied in the modern age. Instead of God as the normative foundation, then, Grotius was "concerned with the fundamental principles of human social life as they can be rationally deduced."[38] The focus on rational social life is the normative core of the Wightian *via media* insofar as a universal reason avoids the potential for nihilism in unfettered realism, and a pluralistic society prevents the possibility of ideological despotism in revolutionism. In other words, Wight's Grotian approach attempted to balance universal and particular values by asserting the inherent normativity of international order as rooted in individuals, while restricting the agency to forge values to those who also appreciate the burdens of *raison d'état*, namely statespeople.[39]

The problem, as noted above, is that in attempting to synthesise universal and particular values into a natural law theory of international order, Wight instead reframed particular values as an alternative form of universal values. That is, if universal values represent humans escaping from their base and animalistic subjective impulses and accepting a common normative framework alongside others, then both human reason and state-based *raison d'état* are variants of the same concept. Specifically, human reason defines people in relation to their ability to identify and manifest a supposedly universal humanity which is inherent to them as humans – hence the 'natural' aspect of natural law. *Raison d'état*, on the other hand, replaces humanity with the political community, specifically the state, in which people are defined as citizens who are aggregated into an abstract national interest. In both examples, human freedom is restricted insofar as humans are not normatively permitted to define themselves as separate from the universal in question – either humanity or the state – and if they do, then they are necessarily in tension with the universal. Their actions will therefore fall outside of a common normative framework and will be unintelligible to others, so long as international order is defined as permitting actions derived from only human reason or *raison d'état*.

And yet, there is still a tension in Wight's natural law theory. Because human reason and *raison d'état* are two different understandings of the universal, they cannot co-exist. That is, if one pursues values derived from human reason, one must at some point neglect values derived from *raison d'état* even if they sometimes coincide by chance; in other words, they are incommensurable. This is particularly evident in the context of Wight's use of Grotius, which concerns force in international order. An individual is forced to decide whether to support their state and go to war, or support their common bonds of humanity and

[38] Wight, *Seminal Thinkers*, p.37
[39] Robert Jackson, 'Martin Wight, International Theory and the Good Life', *Millenium* 19:2 (1990), p.262

conscientiously object and their decision will define them as, in Linklater's words, "men or citizens."[40] Indeed, while Linklater reflects the normative division within the ES when he writes that individuals must choose between a "particular moral community" or "the rights and duties which necessarily govern [all humans],"[41] the state does not perform the role of a "particular moral community" so much as a vessel of the universal which subjugates humans under the guiding principle of *raison d'état*. At the heart of this normative tension is Wight's acceptance of the death of God. If international order lacks a transcendent value with the foundational authority to define what other values are or are not universal, then there is no way to determine whether a particular value is actually a manifestation of broader universal values or not. Consequently, competing claims to universality can be made and, if their ends are incommensurable, conflict will ensue to determine the most valid through power politics. Wight, then, was aware of the problem; indeed, his theory was a response to the question of "how might international society be *grounded* in a plural world?"[42] But his *via media* fails to provide that grounding, merely supplementing one conception of the universal with another and so exacerbating the normative conflict of international order. The result is the limiting of freedom to political rights at least, and at most the freedom to choose between allegiance to the state or to a common humanity. Human freedom in the Kierkegaardian sense, however, is denied.

Despite the influence Wight had on the ES, his natural law theory was not the only perspective in the School's early years. Donald MacKinnon, for example, also adopted a theory of natural law. But unlike Wight's *via media*, MacKinnon conceived of natural law as a moral veto wherein individuals could compel statespeople to forego actions which offend the common good.[43] It therefore granted more agency to humans in relation to the state than Wight's approach. Indeed, Wight noted that MacKinnon's idea of a moral veto granted "the governed" the ability to check the procedural power of "the governors" within international order.[44] This is not to say that it empowered individuals with agency. On the one hand, the normative impulse of human beings is a form of universal human reason which is directed towards a common end distinct from utilitarian calculations of statecraft. On the other, statespeople are still the primary agents through which normative impulses are transmitted into international order, leaving a significant role for *raison d'état* in the application of individual demands for change. MacKinnon's theory of natural law does, however, suggest that greater change is possible in international order than Wight allowed for, and in this he was supported by another early ES scholar, Desmond Williams. Nevertheless, on the fundamental issue of human freedom, both thinkers considered individuals to be "neither fully free nor fully determined"[45] and therefore, while attempting to provide a concept of the person upon which to base their understanding of international order, were not able to overcome a bias toward state-centrism. This is

[40] Andrew Linklater, 'Men and Citizens in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 7:1 (1981), p.23
[41] Ibid, p.24
[42] Bain, 'Rival Traditions', p.944 – my emphasis.
[43] Donald MacKinnon, 'Natural Law' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966)
[44] Wight, 'Western Values', p.123
[45] Cochran, 'Middle-Ground Ethics', p.208

because they failed to address the basic problem that Wight set out: the lack of a normative foundation for international order. MacKinnon's natural law theory therefore fails to justify why, when they come into conflict, human reason should take priority over *raison d'état* (or vice versa). It becomes another case of two alternative claims to universality competing within the minds of statespeople, and is a flaw which has been perpetuated in later incarnations of the ES under the debate between pluralism and solidarism, as noted above.

Herbert Butterfield – another early ES scholar – rejected natural law theories entirely due to the difficulty of integrating them into power political approaches to international order. Instead, he argued that the common impulses connecting individuals are directed towards the empirically-verifiable values necessary for sustaining a well-ordered society.[46] This perspective still holds that the secularisation of international order has removed its normative foundation and any transcendent values stemming from that foundation, but goes a step further in claiming that no normative foundation can subsequently be identified by philosophical reasoning. Rather, the empirical analysis of international order shows that its peaceful maintenance is as close to a universal goal as can be deduced. Hence, Butterfield argued that "an international order is not a thing bestowed upon by nature, but is a matter of refined thought, careful contrivance and elaborate artifice."[47] It is notable that he made this point in an essay on the history of the balance of power; it emphasises procedural interactions between statespeople and is less accommodating of individual demands for change than MacKinnon, Williams or Wight. Though this approach does remove the problems of explicitly universal values being used to undermine state sovereignty, it more clearly subordinates individuals to *raison d'état* and concentrates agency in statespeople. It also fails to answer how normative conflicts will be resolved if two states both claim that their values are universal and cannot overcome their differences through procedural practice. This does not make Butterfield a realist. Despite his differences with those thinkers who tried to introduce theories of natural law into international thought, he agreed with them that the issue was less about placing absolute limits on action and more about discovering how to accommodate normativity within a power political environment. In the Christian context of the early ES, this became conflated with the tragic question of "whether or not it was within the capacities of man to change human society, and international society in particular, for the better."[48] Given the broadly pessimistic answer offered by these thinkers, the tendency was to be grateful for the minimum degree of international order already achieved and so to value that order as an end in itself, without the normative foundation to explain why or the drive to advance ideas of individual freedom.

In sum, early ES scholars recognised the difficulty of explaining the interaction between universal and particular values. This framing, though it can be mapped onto the tension between the philosophical and

[46] Ibid, p.209
[47] Herbert Butterfield, 'The Balance of Power' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p.147
[48] Cochran, 'Middle-Ground Ethics', p.205

theological modes, is not as sophisticated because it lacks the fuller discussion of objectivity and subjectivity despite assuming a greater role for the former. Consequently, natural law theories in particular, but also Butterfield's more empirical analysis, conflate particular values with one form of the universal. They therefore establish the apparent incommensurability between the two and close off the possibility for synthesis which is at the core of human freedom. Practically, this means that early ES scholars overemphasised the soul's infinite, eternal and possible aspects *and* adopted a conservative approach to normative change. Human freedom is thereby subjugated in favour of universals – especially the state, but also, to a degree, human reason – and the scope for individuals to rebel against such constraints and pursue their own unconditional commitments is minimised. Nevertheless, these early ES thinkers identified the core problem of the paradoxical relationship between transcendent value and human freedom in international order in a way which cosmopolitans and communitarians did not: the lack of a normative foundation and a resultant normative conflict. Subsequent ES scholars would develop this theme.

Moral Scepticism

Departing from the Christian influences of early ES scholars, Bull introduced a moral scepticism to the School which explicitly accepted the lack of a normative foundation in international order and tried to derive normative prescriptions from an empirical analysis of state behaviour. Subsequent pluralist ES thinkers, particularly Jackson, then provided optimistic accounts of particular values in international order as being based on the freedom of particular human beings. However, though these moral sceptical accounts metaphysically accept anti-foundationalism, they nevertheless rely epistemologically on objective analyses derived from empirical observations, reaching similar conclusions to previous thinkers about the subordination of particular humans to the state. Ontologically, therefore, they lean towards a form of universality despite their acceptance of the anti-foundationalism of international order. They cannot account for subjective truth in this manner, thereby overemphasising the infinite, eternal and possible, and failing to introduce human freedom into their conception of international order.

A. Moral Scepticism and International Thought

Bull, who worked alongside some of the early ES scholars, agreed with their belief that international order lacked a normative foundation and that this made potentially violent normative conflicts likely. His approach was closest to Butterfield's; he also abandoned attempts to incorporate natural law theories into his conceptualisation of international order and dispensed with the Christian pessimism of his colleagues in favour of a purer "moral knowledge scepticism"[49] which denied any basis for normative foundations. Consequently, Bull argued for a pluralist international order which tried to resolve the tension between universal and particular values by denying a role for the former at all (though this view was moderated in his later works) – in essence, he jettisoned the tragic viewpoint. His approach was taken up by subsequent

[49] Ibid, p.211

ES scholars, too, who explicitly adopted Bull's anti-foundationalism to assert human welfare as the basis for a state-based international order. Though this approach is not without problems, which will be discussed below, it does introduce an important aspect to understandings of human freedom in international order. Specifically, Bull based his conceptualisation of international order on human will, rather than the human reason or human nature of natural law theorists. This would influence later attempts to reconcile universal and particular values, as well as pluralism and solidarism.

Like Wight, Bull was primarily concerned with the conflict between *raison d'état* and individual demands for change – the former a transcendent value and the latter a manifestation of human freedom. He believed that the apparent irreconcilability between the two was due to the existence of multiple different understandings of justice, all with an equally valid claim to universality. For example, pluralism and solidarism could both be considered to represent equally valid truths, as could cosmopolitanism or communitarianism. Consequently, no single normative viewpoint can act as a stable foundation of international order because it will always be contested by valid alternatives.[50] The contemporary international order is especially valuable, according to Bull, not because it is more valid than alternatives but because it is reflective of statespeople's conduct over time. Attempts to change the international order according to individual demands for justice rather than state behaviour would therefore destabilise a fragile inter-state co-existence. For that reason, Bull argued that positive international law – that is, law derived from statespeople's agreements and conduct – should take precedence over natural law or assertions of universal values. Individual agency would therefore be mediated through the procedural norms of state conduct, limiting the potentially destabilising effects of change.[51] For Bull, while claims for change were not theoretically incommensurable with pluralist values of mutual accommodation, failing to account for the reality of international order's constitution could result in solidarist demands having counter-productive outcomes, such as a chaotic general war.[52]

Bull's approach therefore resembles Butterfield's rejection of natural law theories, though the scepticism toward individual demands for change based on universal values echoes a concern held by all of the early ES thinkers. Where Bull departs from those early thinkers is his dismissal of human reason or Christian values. Whereas these had been treated as valid universal values by Wight, MacKinnon and Williams, Bull considered them to be one among many potential truths. What mattered to Bull was the empirically verifiable conduct of states (and, indeed, of other political communities before a specifically state-based international order existed) to determine areas of common agreement. Bull was not, therefore, a Christian pessimist with a tragic vision of international order; he was a "moral knowledge sceptic" who denied that any values, regardless of their claims to universality, could act as a normative foundation. The limits of

[50] Stanley Hoffman, 'Hedley Bull and His Contribution to International Relations', *International Affairs* 62:2 (1986), p.184
[51] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp.85-7
[52] Ibid, pp.89-91

normative theorising meant that no foundation could ever be discovered beyond dispute.[53] The immediate effect of this approach is to concentrate agency into the specific human beings considered to represent state conduct. Bull, for example, asked "do the theories of philosophers, international lawyers and historians in the Grotian tradition reflect the thought of statesmen?"[54] It is these figures which receive more attention as causal actors than humans exhibiting human freedom. A further effect of Bull's approach is that the desire to empower humans with agency is dampened by the fear that multiple interacting truth claims will destabilise a precious international order. Finally, by placing all values on the same level of groundlessness, Bull brought to the forefront an assumption made by Wight and other early ES scholars: that even particular values such as those embodied by states are universalisable. That is, that *raison d'état* can be considered as universal a value as those promoted by cosmopolitan theories, thereby framing pluralist and solidarist values as incommensurable.

That said, Bull would later offer a way of mediating solidarist values with pluralist ones when, in the *Hagey Lectures*, he argued that interhuman order is morally prior to and more fundamental than interstate order.[55] This suggests that solidarist norms can at least act as a moral backstop when procedural and prudential norms of positive international law falter, echoing MacKinnon's belief that natural law is best employed as a moral veto if utilitarian calculations offend the common good.[56] Bull did not align himself with Wight's *via media*, though; solidarist norms were not, to him, a secularised form of natural law as they were to Wight. Bull still believed that natural law could not survive the secularisation of international order and that claims of universal reason were insufficiently authoritative to replace God as a lawmaker. Instead, Bull's solidarist norms emerged from human will alone.[57] His moral scepticism led him to view universal values as, like MacKinnon's natural law, a procedural check on the power of "the governors" by "the governed."[58] What elements of solidarism Bull did incorporate into his pluralist outlook therefore offered a limited scope for human freedom within a state-based international order. This more moderate perspective captures the tortured relationship between pluralism and solidarism in the ES, born of a moral scepticism toward cosmopolitan ideas but a respect for their claims of individual primacy. It is a perspective which, on the one hand, reduces the degree of normative theorising that characterised earlier ES thinkers by, for example, replacing tragedy, natural law and pessimism with empirical observation.[59] But on the other hand, it prefigures a more self-confident defence of pluralist international order by later ES scholars who develop Bull's notion that human will is the only justification for common values in that order, a position which paradoxically suggests there is scope for human freedom within a pluralist international order insofar as subjectivity need not represent the 'will to power' feared by Wight. Bull's emphasis on human will, then,

[53] Cochran, 'Middle-Ground Ethics', p.211
[54] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p.38
[55] Bain, 'Pluralist-Solidarist Debate', pp.160-1
[56] MacKinnon, 'Natural Law', pp.86-7
[57] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp.27-34
[58] Wight, 'Western Values', p.123
[59] Cochran, 'Middle-Ground Ethics', p.214

demonstrated that international order need not *necessarily* subjugate individual subjectivity to objective universal values, though he did not offer a conceptualisation which fulfilled that possibility.

Drawing heavily from Bull – especially his anti-foundationalism and legal positivism – Jackson provides one of the strongest defences of a pluralist international order which is both empirically evident and normatively desirable, basing it on the centrality of human freedom and welfare. For him, humans congregate in groups based on a unity of language, blood, common experience or some other such feature (essentially, their situatedness). These groups then develop unique cultures from the interplay of historical experience, environment and 'essence', becoming distinct and incommensurable. Despite the common identity binding them, groups perform the vital function of maintaining individual agency and welfare by defending their particular values against claims to universality from outside the group.[60] States are one such group, acting to prevent universal values from constraining individual behaviour. They do so through statespeople, who agree on certain principles of action and normative obligations in support of those principles. These are procedural norms, which are "the standards of conduct statespeople have agreed between themselves or have come to accept for judging each other's […] international activities."[61] Normativity in international order is therefore the product of what statespeople do. Statespeople act differently from one another because they hail from different groups with unique societies and histories. They do not exhibit a universal order in their behaviour, therefore there can be no universal values beyond those which they agree to. Normative obligations are imposed by individuals through their conduct and consent and so ethics is rooted in mutual accommodation rather than any Kantian categorical imperative.[62] The fundamental norm – or *grundnorm*, for Jackson – which underpins this international order is state sovereignty, which is only universal because it preserves the particular values of juridically separate and normatively diverse groups. In so doing, it also preserves individual agency within those groups (hence Jackson prefers to think of IR as "international human relations").[63] Nonetheless, this approach maintains the universal-particular tension insofar as sovereignty is a universal value, the practical implication being that agency is concentrated within an exclusive epistemic community – statespeople – to whose decisions all other humans must defer. Freedom is therefore secured only by limiting most humans' agency, the same critique which dogged earlier ES thought.

Jackson's pluralist international order is oddly similar to Kant's desire for limited individual-oriented cosmopolitan rights pursued within juridically separate republics (Jackson notes his philosophical inspiration as coming from Kant, as well as Michael Oakeshott and Isaiah Berlin.)[64] Indeed, MacKinnon, whose theory of natural law is more suited to Bull's and Jackson's pluralism than was Wight's *via media*,

[60] Jackson, *Global Covenant*, pp.179-80
[61] Ibid, p.30
[62] Ibid
[63] Ibid, pp.2931; 409-11
[64] Ibid; Linklater & Suganami, *Reassessment*, p.162

asserted that Kant was more properly a rationalist than a revolutionist, being acutely aware of the need to balance the reality of a state-based international order with individual demands for normative change.[65] Furthermore, Jackson argues that pluralism averts the doctrinal imperialism which Kant feared would stem from misapplied universal values.[66] But where Jackson and other ES writers differ from Kant is the extent of change which they deem possible in international order and the threat they perceive from universal values. Kant believed that universal reason and the progress of human history were sufficient to predict the possibility for perpetual peace. Jackson worries that even the pretence of universal values threatens the mutual accommodation of an international order which relies solely on norms of human behaviour rather than on the application of a higher reason.[67] Moral scepticism and its anti-foundationalist manifestations in ES thought therefore weaken calls for individual-led change by denying that any future reconfiguration of international order can rest on a normative foundation as strong as the empirical foundation of contemporary common values. Even with a concern for human welfare at its core, then, a pluralist account of international order which retains a moral scepticism tends towards conservatism and, in emphasising *raison d'état*, raises it to the level of a universal value in incommensurable competition with alternative universal values.

B. Moral Scepticism and Individual Freedom

The conservative bent in all of these ES approaches – from the early thinkers through Bull to Jackson – is underpinned by a common philosophical influence. Most important within that influence is Oakeshott's philosophy of civility, which provides a secular defence of pluralist values like tolerance and mutual accommodation. Oakeshott is concerned with addressing the tension between universal and particular rights by asking how human freedom can be reconciled with the need for mutual respect. The paradox at the heart of this concern is the notion that human freedom must be defended but this can only be achieved by imposing constraints on individuals' conduct, a paradox which is almost identical to that in this thesis' research question. Oakeshott tackles this problem by defining humans as independent agents who pursue prudential norms which satisfy their own desires. But they simultaneously abide by non-prudential obligations to one another, which take the form of procedural norms through which obligations are interpreted and compliance with them imposed.[68] There are familiarities here with Habermas's distinction between strategic and non-strategic dialogue. But Oakeshott's philosophy is not constrained to communicative action. He derives two forms of community from his assessment of humans, both of which are based on action as much as dialogue. The first is a *universitas*, which is based around a belief in a common good, obligations to which are imposed by some form of political hierarchy. The second is a *societas*, a

[65] Cochran, 'Middle-Ground Ethics'
[66] Jackson, *Global Covenant*, pp.15-6
[67] Ibid, p.180
[68] Terry Nardin, *The Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp.184-5

collection of different independent agents sharing norms of recognition but lacking a common authority and yet, nonetheless, accepting mutual accommodation.[69] A *societas* aligns closely with the ES conception of a pluralist international order, specifically Bull's and Jackson's conception of one in which laws and norms are the product of human will alone, rather than of natural law obligations. Oakeshott viewed a *societas* as the normatively superior form of community because it respects individuality more than a *universitas*, which instead treats laws as the product of a religious or ideological revelation.

Both a *societas* and a *universitas* are ideal types. Real societies exhibit features of each to varying degrees. Furthermore, Oakeshott was not consciously engaging with the debate between pluralism and solidarism, nor did he believe his philosophy was applicable to international politics. On the contrary, he argued that international law could never be non-prudential because there is no sovereign to enforce compliance with it. Consequently, obligations are only arrived at by statespeople pursuing *raison d'état*, relating international law more to power politics than to normative debate.[70] Jackson overcame this gap between the domestic and international by arguing, alongside Nardin, that positive international law *is* authoritative because statespeople come to accept it over time as a normative principle without first considering it through the lens of *raison d'état*, thereby transforming it into a non-prudential value of international order. Therefore, in a pluralist international order, statespeople can still abide by international legal norms even if their foreign policy is conducted prudentially.[71] A similar defence of positive international law as non-prudential is offered by Bain, who highlights norms of *jus cogens* as a central aspect of international order. These *jus cogens* norms are examples of how statespeople voluntarily and prudently limit their behaviour in the absence of a higher authority who can define their obligations for them, acting as a point of interaction between solidarist and pluralist impulses in international order.[72]

Indeed, Bain's adoption of Oakeshott's philosophy is more faithful than Jackson's. The latter neglects the fundamental tension between the co-existing elements of a *universitas* and a *societas* – that is, he is overly confident about the ability for a pluralist international order to accommodate universal solidarist ambitions. Oakeshott rejects such optimism, but also refuses to embrace tragedy – the belief that humans are confronted by painful consequences even when they pursue ethical ends – as many realists do in their assessment of international order's unchanging anarchy and as earlier ES scholars did in spite of their fear of a purely power political international order. Both tragic and utopian understandings of international order exaggerate the scope for normative change deriving from human freedom. Tragedians believe international order to be too broken to change, whereas utopians believe it able to accommodate more change than it can handle. Oakeshott's middle ground, which he argued for in a debate with Morgenthau, counters that tragedy is an artistic device rather than an analytical tool for human relations. Life must be

[69] Jackson, *Global Covenant*, p168
[70] Ibid, p.119; Nardin, *Oakeshott*, p.188
[71] Ibid, pp.119-20
[72] Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws', p.559

taken as it is, not misinterpreted toward extremes.[73] That is why Oakeshott views elements of *universitas* in a *societas*: he sees a tension which prevents unfettered freedom from trampling over certain common values, again reflecting Bull's and MacKinnon's understandings of natural law as a moral backstop to human action. Elshtain applies this more explicitly to the development of a pluralist international order. She sees the transfer of God's sovereignty to the state (i.e. the replacement of God as a transcendent value with statespeople) as imperfect because states are not in fact fully sovereign. They are, to some extent, dependent on their neighbours. Statespeople are not absolutely free, as God is, but must exercise their sovereignty relationally. In this way, statespeople establish a pluralist order of mutual accommodation by voluntarily limiting their ability to impose their own order wantonly – in other words, they take the world as it is, not as either a tragic stage or an idealised utopia.[74] Bain supports this conclusion. A pluralist international order does not result in the untrammelled use of power because solidarist norms exist in tension with it as a form of rhetoric, albeit weak, within international order. So while the freedom espoused by theorists of pluralist order may cause uncertainty, it is also "the source of hope that opens the horizon to a better order than the present one."[75] Again, this mirrors the basis for Kierkegaard's thought in that ungrounded freedom both threatens and provides opportunities for individuals.

Bull and those ES scholars who adopted his moral knowledge scepticism performed two important roles in clarifying the interaction between universal and particular values in international order and the impact this has on conceptions of freedom. Firstly, by shifting the terms of debate from universal and particular values to solidarism and pluralism, they were explicit in their theorising that the state-based international order constituted a universal value in itself, through the universalisable logic of *raison d'état*. This, in turn, made more apparent the source of incommensurability between treating the state-based international order as a transcendent value and demands for normative change stemming from human freedom, by framing them as two competing universal ends. Secondly, these thinkers dispensed with theories of natural law and introduced an alternative animating impulse of human will. In so doing, they allowed for action which was not beholden to a uniform human reason, but which stemmed from particular humans instead. The potential of the conceptualisation of human will to better account for human freedom in international order was not achieved due to the anti-foundationalism and conservatism of ES thinkers. But as this chapter has argued, neither anti-foundationalism nor conservatism are inherent to a pluralist conception of international order, and so a focus on human will offers a promising way through which to incorporate human freedom into international order as a way by which individuals pursue their own unconditional commitment regardless of supposedly universal values.

[73] Nicholas Rengger, 'Tragedy or Skepticism? Defending the Anti-Pelagian Mind in World Politics' in Erskine & Lebow (eds.) *Tragedy and International Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.59-60
[74] Nicholas Rengger, 'On Theology and International Relations: World Politics Beyond the Empty Sky', *International Relations* 27:2 (2013), pp.147-8, 154
[75] Bain, *Political Theology*, pp.212-3

Conclusion

The ES, in neither its pluralist nor solidarist wings, accounts for human freedom in international order. It recognises the tension between universal and particular values, and through its engagement with the death of God and anti-foundationalism it is also aware of the difficulty of combining objective and subjective accounts of international order. However, it is inconsistent insofar as while it respects individual demands for change and, by extension, human freedom as a normative goal of international order, it does not conceive of subjectivity as a Kierkegaardian form of unconditional commitment. Consequently, ES accounts inadvertently collapse into universalism and objectivity, emphasising the soul over the body and precluding the synthesis required to attain human freedom. That said, the ES does mark an advance on cosmopolitanism and communitarianism in that it recognises and explicitly responds to the tensions between universal and particular values, and notes the detrimental effects these can have on human freedom. Its various attempts at locating a middle ground *within* this tension is consciously imperfect, reflecting the attempt to balance two seemingly incommensurable perspectives rather than achieve the dominance of one over the other. The ES therefore offers the potential to incorporate human freedom into theories of international order, even if its anti-foundationalism and conservatism have, thus far, prevented it from actually doing so.

Chapter 5

Poststructuralism

A common critique of mainstream normative IR theories which has run through the previous chapters has been their conscious or unconscious prioritisation of objective knowledge over subjective belief. The result has been that human freedom has either been defined in objective terms that treat it as less important than transcendent values or has been understood as incommensurable with transcendent freedom. The strength of Dreyfus's interpretation of Kierkegaard here is that his framework redefines subjectivity that allows for a synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value. The idea of redefining subjectivity is not new to IR, however. Poststructuralist thinkers – both those consciously engaging with IR and those not – have, contrary to assumptions, discussed in detail ethical theories, the interaction of ethics and politics, and what this means for subjectivity. In line with broader critical thinking in normative IR which has already been referenced in Chapter 2, poststructuralists also appreciate the tension between human freedom and transcendent value. Indeed, because of the influence of Nietzsche upon them, poststructuralists understand the problem of freedom itself as being both an emancipatory opportunity and a threat to the freedom of others, in line with the 'death of God' which animates this thesis's research question.

Poststructuralism therefore offers an important contribution to this thesis. Its conscious anti-foundationalism means that it takes seriously the metaphysical aspect of the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value and its epistemology is consistent with anti-foundationalism insofar as it denies grounds for objective knowledge. Consequently, ontologically, there is an acceptance that any values asserted must be qualified and weak. Furthermore, because the concerns of poststructuralists are similar to those which drove Kierkegaard, there is more direct overlap between their work than mainstream normative IR theories. However, this chapter will argue that the Kierkegaardian framework offers advantages over poststructuralism. Namely, in line with Cochran's critique of poststructuralist normative theorising, poststructuralists struggle to offer an affirmative ethics which is coherent with their metaphysical and epistemological anti-foundationalism. As will be discussed in the following chapter, she proposes a 'weak foundationalism' which allows the qualified assertion of some values and is therefore better suited to synthesising human freedom with transcendent value. Kierkegaard similarly appreciates the anti-foundationalist critique before redefining subjectivity in a way that allows for a limited foundation for values. He is not, therefore, strictly an anti-foundationalist, and this allows him to treat transcendent values as commensurable with human freedom in a way that poststructuralists may not be able to do.

This chapter will therefore proceed in two sections. Recognising that poststructuralism is a broad term which covers an array of approaches, the first section will discuss a limited number of thinkers who engage in normative theorising from a poststructuralist perspective. These thinkers include those who engage with Derrida, due to his concept of the 'decision', and Levinas, due to the redefinition of subjectivity which

stems from the decision. They also include some poststructuralists who engage with Heidegger because of the limited but significant 'existentialist' connection between Kierkegaard and Heidegger. The second section will then use Cochran's critique as well as Kierkegaard's own writings to show that poststructuralism is able to partially reflect Kierkegaard's understanding of freedom but that, despite their efforts, poststructuralist thinkers either fall back into a latent universalism which prevents the actualisation of human freedom or do not go beyond critique. As with previous chapters, this is not to deny the impact of poststructuralism on normative IR theorising or its relevance to the research question – indeed, it highlights the interrelated metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value better than mainstream normative IR theories. But its anti-foundationalism and definition of subjectivity are not appropriate to answering the research question.

Poststructuralism and Normative Theorising

Poststructuralism, as noted above, is a broad approach not only to IR but to social theory in general. It is a postmodern approach in that it demonstrates an "incredulity to meta-narratives" and an attendant emphasis on contingency.[1] For example, poststructuralists might reject the meta-narrative of 'progress' in modern thought because that concept is used to normatively justify values and actions which favour one elite group while marginalising and oppressing other groups based on gender, race, class or other characteristics. In IR specifically, the concept of 'sovereignty' as an "ahistorical, universal, transcendent concept, be it applied to the sovereign state, the sovereign individual or a sovereign truth" is therefore rejected by poststructuralists as being fundamentally arbitrary.[2] Poststructuralism therefore shares with normative IR theory a desire to expand the boundaries of IR scholarship to include other political and social fields, and in doing so to problematise the distinction between the domestic and international spheres. Hence, despite claims that poststructuralism is not a normative theory, it has been positively engaged with by scholars of normative theory and IPT, alongside other postmodern theories such as feminism, postcolonialism and critical theory.[3]

The poststructuralist aversion to meta-narratives results in conscious contestation of positivist claims to objective knowledge discernible through logical thought. For Maja Zehfuss, this is seen in Jacques Derrida's thought. Derrida argues that Western thought establishes oppositional dichotomies such as good-evil or presence-absence in order to structure itself around hierarchies. These dichotomies assume that the first term is superior to the second, such that what is real is considered to be 'present' and in 'unity'.[4] That is, positivist approaches incorporate alternative perspectives into their worldview only to silence them,

[1] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.xxiv
[2] Molly Cochran, 'Postmodernism, Ethics and International Political Theory' in *Review of International Studies* 21 (1995), p.237
[3] Cochran, 'Postmodernism'; Brown and Eckersley, 'IPT and the Real World', pp.3-4
[4] Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.197

producing a "post-Enlightenment will to knowledge that has quite literally become a will to power."[5] This is what Derrida calls *logocentrism*, the primacy of speech, logic and reason in revealing what is 'real'.[6] It is similar to Dreyfus's understanding of the Greek approach to viewing the world, as the self-revealing of objective entities with their essential presence. But Derrida argues that logocentrism does not work because the oppositional dichotomies within Western thought are not, in fact, oppositional; they are co-constitutive. Zehfuss gives the example of presence-absence. *Presence* must be absolute in order to be foundational for our understanding of the world, but it requires its opposite, *absence*, to have any meaning. Derrida uses the example of motion, specifically an arrow in flight, to argue that conceiving of the arrow in motion requires us to understand it in relation to where it was and where it will be – its past and future. The presence of the arrow in flight is understood in relation to its past and future absence. The alternative is to conceive of it as being present and *not in motion* at a particular spot in any instant of time.[7] Derrida also uses the example of a sign. A sign is both recognisably different from the thing it represents, and also implies a temporal deferral of the presence of that thing.[8] These two meanings – difference and deferral – are combined in the term *différance*: "nothing…is anywhere ever simply present or absent."[9]

Derrida's problematisation of pure presence as the authoritative 'revealer' of reality is one example of anti-foundationalism in poststructuralist thought. It leads to an epistemological critique of positivism and objective knowledge insofar as identity and difference are collapsed into each other. That is, if presence and absence are co-constitutive, then the identity of something with a past or future iteration of it is tempered by its difference from those iterations. As Zehfuss writes, "it must be possible to recognise a sign whilst giving it a different signification according to the situation."[10] Context is key to being, as entities are part of a "signifying chain," but it is not wholly determinate of an entity and knowledge of reality is therefore ambiguous.[11] Consequently, knowledge of reality comes through interpretation because the basis on which Western thought is built – the assumption of pure presence – is not authoritative. These metaphysical and epistemological arguments result in an ambiguous ontological understanding of normativity. For Derrida, this is apparent in the difference between law and justice: law is the calculable application of rules whereas justice is the judgement and decision of what is a just course of action when the rules are ambiguous about a particular situation.[12] Both law and justice are tied to the use of force. For law to become so, it must be transformed from an unlegitimised belief into a legitimate rule through a "moment of performative and interpretive force."[13] Similarly, justice implies power insofar as asserting one belief in an ambiguous

[5] Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p.32
[6] Zehfuss, *Constructivism in IR*, p.198
[7] Ibid, pp.198-9
[8] Maja Zehfuss, 'Jacques Derrida' in Edkins & Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.142
[9] Jacques Derrida, quoted in Zehfuss, 'Jacques Derrida', p.142
[10] Zehfuss, *Constructivism in IR*, p.200
[11] Ibid, p.201
[12] Zehfuss, 'Derrida', pp.144-5
[13] Ibid, p.144

situation requires neglecting or doing harm to those who assert other beliefs.[14] So though the ontological implication of Derrida's metaphysics and epistemology is a moment of decision which must be made freely, and although this free decision contributes to values (however arbitrary they may be), the effect on human freedom is problematic.

So far, the Derridian perspective reflects many concerns in Kierkegaard's thought. As noted, logocentrism is similar to the diagnosis Kierkegaard made of the primacy of Greek thought in his own society, that is the preference for absolute, universal and essential entities as the basis of reality. Derrida's identification and deconstruction of oppositional dichotomies therefore touches on Kierkegaard's establishment of a concept of the person based around the seemingly irreconcilable body and soul, and his reconceptualisation of dichotomies of infinite-finite, eternal-temporal, and possible-necessary such that they can be seen as mutually supportive. Similarly, the connection between law, justice and power implies that social values, even if freely-chosen, necessitate a sort of universalisation which undermines human freedom. Metaphysically, epistemologically and ontologically, Derrida's works identify many of the same problems that Kierkegaard was concerned with. Nevertheless, the subsequent approach taken by Kierkegaard and poststructuralists differs, largely because they reconceptualise subjectivity in different ways. This difference cements the anti-foundationalism of poststructuralists, whereas Kierkegaard's understanding of subjectivity opens the possibility for a qualified foundationalism which is better able to resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent values.

Central to Kierkegaard's redefinition of subjectivity is that it ceases to be incommensurable with objectivity but is rather treated as supporting the spiritual as opposed to scientific aspects of reality. Poststructuralists inspired by Derrida and Lacan, amongst others, also redefine subjectivity differently from mainstream normative IR theories. Their understanding of subjectivity is related to their approach to ethics which, despite differences between poststructuralists, is generally characterised as being inherently political. In other words, considering an ethical question requires one to believe that one potential solution to that question may be more valid than others and, because humans live in a world with others, to assert one's belief will simultaneously disallow challenges to that perspective.[15] Additionally, no solution to an ethical question can be pursued without also harming others to some degree, that is, no ethical answer to an ambiguous situation is pure.[16] Consequently, ethics is necessarily political. Jenny Edkins specifies two aspects of politics which clarify this point and link it to Derrida's thought about the moment of decision when law ceases to provide a given response to an ambiguous situation. The first aspect is *politics*, which Edkins defines as the technical aspects of a political system, such as elections, political parties, statespeople's actions and, internationally, treaties, wars and other international institutions. Politics is contingent, that is,

[14] Ibid, p.146
[15] Maja Zehfuss, 'Poststructuralism' in Hayden (ed.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Ethics and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.98
[16] Ibid, pp.105-7

there is no foundation to justify what counts as politics for a particular society; its limits are defined by a social order which is itself contested. Hence the *political* (the second aspect) is, for Edkins, "the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics."[17] Linking this understanding to Derrida, Edkins notes that whereas politics removes the need for choice and responsibility by subsuming people within the technical management of a bureaucracy, the political arises when politics can no longer prescribe a specific course of action or, in other words, when "law, technology, or custom" are undecided and therefore create a moment of decision which cannot be resolved by appeal to some general law.[18]

It is at this point – the moment of decision – that subjectivity emerges. The decision about how to act in an ambiguous situation is inherently ethical because it involves *taking responsibility* for choosing a just course of action. It also opens up the possibility for the continuation of ethics because no choice will be entirely just – "anything one might do involves committing some wrong" – and therefore more ambiguous situations will stem from the moment of decision.[19] Therefore, if the ethical entails claiming moral responsibility to make a decision when politics does not offer a solution, then that moment becomes one where the subject is able to exercise greater agency than within the settled 'politics' of the social order – it becomes a "moment of subjectivity."[20] In other words, it is an instant of contingency where a subject faces an open future and has the opportunity to impose their own belief on that future. When no legitimate solution to ambiguity exists, the subject is presented with the chance to forge a new legitimacy.[21] This understanding of subjectivity is based on power insofar as the subject must exercise power in order to assert their belief and deny the beliefs of others during the moment of decision where contingency is at its maximum. To return to Derrida, this is how a performative act of force legitimises a new law which was previously simply an unlegitimised subjective belief. It reflects the anti-foundationalism of poststructuralist thought, as well as the influence of Nietzsche's idea of the 'will to power'. It is the lack of a normative foundation which prevents any transcendent value from guiding human action during a point of decision, and therefore opens up both the potential for the exercise of freedom as well as the attendant risk that the exercise of that freedom will undermine the freedom of others.

In this sense, subjectivity in the poststructuralist account is as much about intersubjectivity as it is individual subjectivity; indeed, Louiza Odysseos takes a Heideggerian approach to argue that whereas mainstream normative IR theories consider 'otherness' to involve the detached coexistence of disassociated and independent rational actors, 'others' should instead be considered as co-constitutive of the subject.[22] This

[17] Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), p.2 – italics in original
[18] Edkins, *Poststructuralism*, p.5
[19] Zehfuss, 'Jacques Derrida', pp.145-6
[20] Zizek, quoted in Edkins, *Poststructuralism*, p.8
[21] Edkins, *Poststructuralism*, p.8;
[22] Louiza Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence: Otherness in International Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p.xiii

Heideggerian co-constitution takes on four elements: first, humans are 'thrown' into and defined by a world already made by others such that they cannot treat others as "objects of comprehension" but merely "disclose" them.[23] Additionally, because the world is not an objective "container of things," humans act against a "background of meanings" and, in so doing, come to understand what it means to exist. Humans can act towards an open future, but their subjectivity in that moment is qualified by the fact that they are *being-in-the-world* alongside others who have already constituted the world the subjects within it.[24] Ethically, Odysseos argues that this means mainstream accounts of ethics as habitual and generalisable rules lead humans to neglect their co-constitution of others by treating others as objects to whom they must apply these rules. Instead, she suggests an ethics of "silence and hearing" in which one "[desires] to hear the voice of the other and witness its suffering and pursue no ethical project that unwittingly obscures its very object of concern."[25] Thus:

> "The 'ethical' self implies the withdrawal of identity based solely on the nurturing éthos in which Dasein [being] is primarily and initially constituted and socialized, and thus can sustain 'a form of coexistence in which one remains attentive to others as centres of transcendence and possibility who are never subsumed by the public projects in which they happen to be absorbed.' The 'ethical' self liberates the other by not awarding him the badge of a universal humanity, rights and entitlements, and thus reducing him to sameness, but by calling him to face his own heteronomy [co-constitutedness] and groundlessness."[26]

This, in particular, mirrors much of Dreyfus's interpretation of Kierkegaard. That is to be expected, given the shared existentialist links between Heidegger and Kierkegaard.[27] Indeed, the relationship between later existentialists and Kierkegaard's thought will be examined in Part II of the thesis. In general, though, the poststructuralist approach recognises the arbitrary yet universalising character of 'politics' in removing the responsibility for normative decision-making from humans, similar to Kierkegaard's critique of his own age, during which he recognised the fallibility of philosophical systems, most notably Hegel's, and the need for the state to justify its authority by appeal to the 'myth and legend' of the church.[28] Poststructuralism also reflects the importance Kierkegaard placed on moral responsibility as a response to the nihilism or distraction of the age, and how this opens up space for the exercise of subjectivity.

---

[23] Louiza Odysseos, 'Martin Heidegger' in Edkins & Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.212
[24] Ibid, pp.212-13
[25] Odysseos, *Subject of Coexistence*, pp.150-1
[26] Ibid, p.149
[27] See, for example: Jean Wahl, 'Heidegger and Kierkegaard: An Investigation Into the Original Elements of Heidegger's Philosophy' in Schrift & Moore (eds.) *Transcendence and the Concrete* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), pp.107-31
[28] See Chapter 7.

However, while the poststructuralist redefinition of subjectivity integrates it with objectivity, it does not treat the two as commensurable. The result is that while there is room for subjectivity within poststructuralist thought, this room is short-lived and is quickly subsumed back into objectivity. In other words, rather than synthesising the two into a mutually supporting whole, subjectivity and objectivity in poststructuralism form what in Kierkegaardian terms would be a negative unity: the annihilation of one aspect of the self by the other (see Chapter 1). To be fair, this is freely admitted by poststructuralists – as will be noted in the next section – and does not detract from the importance of their approach in supporting the critical element of this thesis. Indeed, the poststructuralist redefinition of subjectivity highlights the arbitrary 'givenness' of social and normative structures by elevating the role of subjectivity within what they term the 'ethico-political'. However, this means that poststructuralism's value to this thesis is mainly in reinforcing Kierkegaard's critique of transcendent values within society, not in explaining how human freedom can be synthesised with transcendent values in order to establish a theory of obligation which prevents harm to others while retaining human freedom.

The Limits of Poststructuralism

Despite the value poststructuralism brings in elucidating the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value, it does not entirely escape from the universalising tendencies which have undermined more mainstream efforts to synthesise the two. As with mainstream normative IR theories, this is because of its understanding of subjectivity which, lacking a foundation, risks being subsumed under stronger totalising forces which claim to be objective. This problem is recognised by poststructuralists insofar as the contingency during a moment of decision can lead to a particular belief being asserted through power relations and thereby become a new universal (albeit arbitrary) value. Notably, Edkins argues – citing Slavoj Žižek – that although the moment of decision creates space for subjectivity to emerge, it simultaneously produces a new social order which is asserted by that subject. The subject therefore proclaims their subjectivity while also willingly eradicating it by subsuming themselves into this new social order. And because this new order is legitimised to others as retroactively 'objectively evident' or 'historically progressive', the subject must identify themselves with the eternal and universal.[29] This collapse of subjectivity back into the objective universal is made clear in an example she provides of the Russian October Revolution. Prior to the Revolution itself, there was a moment of contingency when the particular and not-yet-legitimate beliefs of Lenin, Trotsky and the Mensheviks were debated. The victory of Lenin in asserting his particular belief during this moment of decision was also a victory for his subjectivity, and because he asserted his belief through a technically illegitimate exercise of power, it was not necessarily an objective and universal value. But Leninism became objectivised and universalised in an effort to justify that exercise of power and legitimise the new order to a mass of 'others', such that Lenin became fully subsumed into Lenin*ism*, the universal and *totalitarian* principle.[30]

[29] Edkins, *Poststructuralism*, pp.136-7
[30] Ibid, pp.7-8

While poststructuralists attempt to diagnose and therefore critique this tendency in the foundationless but logocentric thought of modernity, Cochran extends this critique to attempts to establish a poststructuralist ethics. She also notes that poststructuralists "agree that subjectivity is integrally tied to objectivity, meaning that any understanding of the individual as subject is linked to the historical practices of the social matrix, and similarly, the understanding of those practices is reinforced by subjective consciousness."[31] This deconstruction of the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity also problematises that between universal and particular values by revealing both to be equally foundationless. In so doing, Cochran argues that poststructuralists undermine the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate along similar lines to those argued for in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.[32] Those poststructuralists with which Cochran engages argue instead for a "second-order ethicality" which recognises its foundationlessness and therefore qualifies its ethical claims; their ethics is more about critiquing the universal and identity-based elements of 'modern' ethics and opening the space for different marginal perspectives which do not attempt to "fix identity, space and time."[33] Yet, she argues, such an approach assumes a 'counter-ontology' to the contemporary international order which is defined by "freedom and democratic plurality," with freedom defined as "the privileging of multiple practices."[34] No matter how qualified this counter-ontology may be, it still involves universal assertions under a 'politics of resistance' which speak on behalf of others. And this raises two problems with regards to this thesis:

1. As Part II will demonstrate, this thesis is broadly supportive of a politics of resistance and therefore sympathetic to poststructuralist ethical arguments. However, as with Cochran, it is concerned by the lack of consistency between a wholly anti-foundationalist approach which nonetheless makes universal claims. A politics of resistance does make positive claims towards ethical action and therefore, to avoid being criticised as reflecting a mere 'will to power', it must have at least weak normative foundations on which to stand.
2. While the poststructuralist understanding of freedom shares many elements with that proposed in Dreyfus's reading of Kierkegaard – such as the freedom of choice between potentially conflicting values and a recognition of the arbitrariness of the 'universal'[35] – the conflation of subjectivity and objectivity limits freedom by incorporating the legitimising aspect of the universal. For Kierkegaard, this misses the mark insofar as it re-emphasises transcendence *over* human freedom and so denies a synthesis between the two. To be fair, poststructuralists argue that this universalising tendency is a real but not necessarily positive aspect of human experience, but their ethical arguments do not appear to overcome it in the way that Kierkegaard's can. That is because

[31] Cochran, *Postmodernism*, p.244
[32] Ibid, pp.244-5
[33] Ibid, p.247
[34] Ibid
[35] See, for example: William Connolly, *Identity/Difference* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp.17-18; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.283

> while their ethical arguments open the space for greater scope of positive action, they still lack a determinant for that action which Kierkegaard finds in the unconditional commitment. The only guide to ethical action is therefore back in the universalising social order which is intrinsically tied to a human's subjectivity.

These problems are made more apparent when directly contrasted with Kierkegaard's redefinition of subjectivity. Writing in the early-19th century, Kierkegaard anticipated Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God. He was influenced by Schelling's anti-Hegelianism which rejected foundational grounds for knowledge but, unlike later poststructuralists, he rejected the proposition that powerful linguistic and cultural forces can determine the self.[36] Consequently, Kierkegaard's thought simultaneously accepts the anti-foundationalist critique of objective knowledge while reaching towards a qualified normative foundation in subjective belief.

On the first move that Kierkegaard made – the rejection of classical foundationalist arguments – he argued that the purpose of foundationalist philosophies is to seek absolute certainty of universal knowledge and normative claims. This is impossible for humans because they are historically situated and finite beings. So while the Hegelian 'System', which aspires to universal knowledge, is possible as a "logical system," it is not possible to translate such knowledge into a "system of life itself" which can account for the totality of human existence.[37] Moreover, in anticipation of the critical connection of epistemological discourse with the degree of freedom possible, Kierkegaard referred to "our objective and yet liberal age, which busies itself far too much with the system and with forms to trouble itself with human life."[38] He put this into religious terms when he claimed that "life itself is a system – for God, but cannot be that for any existing spirit [i.e. human being]."[39] This latter point is important, because while it holds that objectively valid knowledge and normative claims are inaccessible to humans, it does not align with the Nietzschean idea that God is dead. This means that while uncertainty is a natural part of human existence which must be accounted for in normative accounts of the world (just as Derrida locates ethics in the decision about uncertainty), the possibility for a sufficiently strong foundation for normative action does exist in the form of God. Indeed, because humans find uncertainty painful – a notion which Kierkegaard captures in the emotion of 'angst' – we are naturally predisposed to discover normative justifications for our actions, a very different idea than Nietzsche's will to power.[40] Of course, this requires knowing how Kierkegaard understands God, and this is done by exploring the second movement in Kierkegaard's approach: reaching towards a foundation in subjective belief.

---

[36] Steven Shakespeare, 'Kierkegaard and Postmodernism' in Lippitt & Pattison (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.480
[37] Kierkegaard, *CUS*, p.92
[38] Ibid, p.132
[39] Ibid, p.100; for Kierkegaard's understanding of human beings as an 'existing spirit', see Kierkegaard, *SUD* and Ch. 7 of this thesis.
[40] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Hannay (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2014)

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard, having argued for the inadequacy of 'objective' accounts of the truth (which he relates with what are today called correspondence theories of truth and a coherence theory of truth), makes clear that truth is comprised of both objective and subjective elements. That is, while critical of the overreliance on objective approaches to theorising, he does not doubt that they reflect some important part of the world. Instead, he asks whether such approaches are sufficient to instruct humans how to live in a meaningful, worthwhile way. His answer is that they do not, because they lack an appreciation of the 'inwardness' – that is, subjectivity – of human life, encapsulated in emotions and change.[41] Objective knowledge is insufficient to living truthfully because affirming rational ideas is not enough; an individual must actually believe (regardless of the lack of a foundation) such that they change their actions to accord with their beliefs. In this sense, faith is more important than objective knowledge because it directs humans towards normative action in spite of the lack of an objective foundation for such actions to rest upon.[42] But if they lack a foundation, how can they justify their actions to themselves? This is where subjectivity comes in for Kierkegaard, for an individual's subjective experience is what makes a particular action normatively justifiable to them regardless of objective knowledge. In other words: "subjectivity is truth."[43] This is where the unconditional commitment – discussed in Chapter 1 – fulfils part of its role in synthesising the various aspects of the self.

As a brief reminder, the unconditional commitment is a concrete entity (in other words, a thing, not an abstract idea) which exists in the world and which an individual loves *unconditionally*. That commitment is the end towards which an individual's every action is defined and it consequently gives that individual their identity as distinct from all other humans: "the content of [their] whole life lies in the love" they feel towards their defining commitment.[44] Importantly, because the unconditional commitment is chosen by the individual, and because their relation to the unconditional commitment is love, it cannot be understood according to objective knowledge and normative claims made by the individual are not reliant on objective assumptions. Instead, they rely on subjective beliefs, and this is where we return to Kierkegaard's understanding of God in the anti-foundationalist age. God, to Kierkegaard, is not a supreme being legislating universal and timeless truths for all humans across time and space. God is, rather, the calling to one's unconditional commitment, the unintelligible feeling of love which directs us towards that finite being which gives our life meaning.[45] In other words, God is *not* each person's subjective truth, but the *possibility* that subjective truth can exist. (This is what Kierkegaard means when he opens *Works of Love* with the prayer: "How could love be rightly discussed if You [i.e. God] were forgotten, O God of Love, source of all love in heaven and on earth, You who spared nothing but gave all in love, *You who are love*, so that one

[41] Ibid, pp.167-73
[42] Kierkegaard, *FT*
[43] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, p.175
[44] Kierkegaard, *FT*, p.70
[45] Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, trans. Hong & Hong (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009); Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.99-100

who loves *is what he is* only by being in You.")[46] Despite the religious language, then, Kierkegaard's God is an ontological manifestation of the claim that each individual can possess a subjective truth in a world of uncertain knowledge and normative claims, and that they can act according to that truth.[47]

The other implication of Kierkegaard's approach to the anti-foundationalist problem is that he takes a middle-ground approach which accepts the possibility of objective truth while de-emphasising it in relation to classical Western philosophy (and, by extension, those normative IR theories built on what poststructuralists might term 'Enlightenment knowledge'). Because objective knowledge is possible – albeit only for God – there is still cause to pursue a method to discover such objective truths. Normative action which is justified by such universal 'logical' approaches may therefore be superior, to Kierkegaard, to impulsive actions guided by 'animal instincts' or 'bodily pleasures'. In other words, he does not see the anti-foundationalist critique as necessitating the removal of Western morality. But to reach the most worthwhile truth, Kierkegaard believes that subjectivity is absolutely necessary and, in that regard, is superior to the universal objective laws derived from philosophy or, indeed, from the legitimisation of forcefully asserted particular values. Kierkegaard is therefore neither as assured of certainty as classical philosophers, nor as sceptical as poststructuralists and critical theorists.[48] But this allows him to potentially expand the scope of freedom – as anti-foundationalists try to do – without compromising it by falling back to moral relativism and power relations or latent universalism – as poststructuralists and critical theorists inadvertently do.

The relationship between anti-foundationalism, objective truth and subjective truth in Kierkegaard's thought can therefore represented in a hierarchy as proposed by Dreyfus.[49] (To avoid complicating the thesis further, I will slightly alter the terms of the hierarchy to relate them to the argument so far). This hierarchy affirms the role of objective truth in human experience while also refusing to relegate all human experience to objectivity.

1. *Lower subjectivity* is a base form of subjectivity in which humans define themselves according to their desires, whims and superstitions. In this sense, humans are not so much individuals as creatures. Kierkegaard also calls lower immediacy the 'aesthetic sphere'. It it rejects the importance of objective truth and results in unstable spontaneity and impulsiveness.[50]
2. *Mediation* is the act of reflection on what is essential to human self-definition. It therefore aspires to identify what our one true desire is, as opposed to the changing impulsive desires of lower subjectivity. Mediation arrives, through modern thought, *at objective truths which are universal across time*

[46] Ibid, p.xxix – my emphasis.
[47] Don Cupitt, *The Sea of Faith* (London: SCM, 2003), p.158
[48] Charles Evans, *Kierkegaard: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.66
[49] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*
[50] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, p.480; Kierkegaard, *SUD*, pp.51-3; Kierkegaard, *FT*, p.109 – some translations refer to 'lower immediacy' as 'first immediacy'.

and space. Kierkegaard also refers to this as the 'ethical sphere' because it produces foundationalist moral rules in line with classical Western philosophy.[51]

3. *Higher subjectivity* occurs when an individual returns to subjectivity – that is, they exist in time rather than try to escape it by appealing to universal objective truths – but relates to the world not in terms of unstable impulses and changing desires, but in terms of their unconditional commitment – in other words, their subjective truth. Kierkegaard also refers to this as the 'religious sphere'. It is a distinct form of subjectivity which rests on prior (but lower ranked) objective truths and which is foundational.[52]

Consequently, Kierkegaard also reflects the poststructuralist claim that ethics and politics are one and the same. But unlike poststructuralists whose conflation of the two "leads to […] unlimited ethical and political decisions and interventions […] for which, in the absence of grounds, we, as singular-plural, are always responsible,"[53] Kierkegaard relocates the locus of the decision away from the ethical and political. Instead, for him, because higher subjectivity is necessarily non-political and non-ethical – that is, it has transcended the ethical and political – it is here that normative responsibility can be taken.[54] This subjectivity begins from the same anti-foundationalist critique as poststructuralism, but relocates a new locus of foundations in higher subjectivity and therefore transcends the ethical towards human freedom.

A partial exception to this critique is Odysseos's Heideggerian approach. Hers is not an ethics which offers a 'counter-ontology'. Indeed, she consciously tries to avoid this in order not to fall foul of Cochran's critique.[55] The problem with the Heideggerian approach is that it does not provide affirmative grounds for ethical action. Whereas the Kierkegaardian framework is animated by the unconditional commitment which allows the individual themselves to transcend the world into which they are thrown, Odysseos's reading appears to rely on the transcendental potential of others. Certainly, this involves a fruitful understanding of *being-in-the-world* and how it can positively bring human freedom and transcendent value closer together, and elements of this understanding will appear in the discussion of Sartre and Beauvoir in Part II. But Heidegger is simply not trying to answer the research question put forward in this thesis or provide an ethics of action at all. He says as much when writing about his relation to Kierkegaard. As Gerhard Thonhauser notes, Heidegger sees his project as the question of being, whereas he views Kierkegaard's project as 'Christian salvation'.[56] That Christian perspective allowed Kierkegaard to break free from a metaphysical perspective which prioritised universalism, and instead focus on the salvation of the single individual – that is, higher subjectivity.[57] As discussed in Chapter 1, Kierkegaard's route to salvation is an escape from despair which

[51] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, pp.161-7, 480; Kierkegaard, *FT*, p.83 (see also Problemata I and II)
[52] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, pp.221, 344-5, 480; Kierkegaard, *FT*, pp.136-44
[53] Madeleine Fagan, *Ethics and Politics After Poststructuralism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p.13
[54] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*
[55] Odysseos, *Subject of Coexistence*, p.123
[56] Gerhard Thonhauser, "'Thinker Without Category": Kierkegaard in Heidegger's Thinking of the 1930s' in Grøn, Rosfort & Söderquist (eds.) *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), p.42
[57] Ibid, pp.42-3

involves freely embracing one's unconditional commitment – in other words, a positive criterion for action. This is not what Heidegger is interested in, and so the ethics derived from his work, while valuable in showing an alternative to mainstream normative IR theories, is incomplete in synthesising human freedom with transcendent value. In large part, this is due to the poststructuralist interpretation of subjectivity which falls back into a universalising concept – in the Heideggerian case, the co-constitutiveness of being.

Conclusion

Poststructuralists effectively diagnose and draw out the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of the puzzle which animates this thesis. Recognising that the secularisation of modern Europe has removed foundations for objective knowledge and universal values, they identify the implications this has for human freedom: simultaneously a chance to forge new values but also a potential to impose those values on others. Additionally, they recognise that strong social, historical and linguistic forces constrain the exercise of that human freedom. Consequently, values which assume a degree of universality and transcend a particular time or space are perceived as oppressive, arbitrary, or both. William Connolly argues that these values – and theories which espouse them – turn "fear into a desire, a desire to fill the void, to compensate for the lack, to impose a centre of universal judgement capable of effecting limitations and fixing a space, a time, and identity beyond question."[58] The poststructuralist response is to deconstruct such attempts and, insofar as they espouse an ethics, to propose a 'politics of resistance' which attempts to open up the space for diverse perspectives and avoid any totalising universal value which can compromise human freedom to choose and assert a subjective value.

More than the mainstream normative IR theories discussed so far, poststructuralism engages with all facets of the research question and therefore highlights the scale of the problem in attempting to resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value. However, because of its anti-foundationalism, because its method of deconstruction is a form of internal critique, and because it treats subjectivity and objectivity as intrinsically co-defined, poststructuralism is not equipped to actually resolve the research question. This is made most evident by Heidegger, who has inspired one strand of poststructuralism, when he admits the difference between his project of studying the ontology of Being and Kierkegaard's project of attaining Christian salvation – the latter implying an ethics which contains a positive criterion for action. Supporting this view, Cochran notes that Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker term attempts to "fill the void" left by the death of God as "religious."[59] In this thesis, the term 'religious' does not carry negative connotations, especially when read in relation to the Kierkegaardian framework put forward by Dreyfus. Indeed, it is through a religious interpretation of the research question and the puzzle behind it that a resolution to the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value can potentially be found, given the concern of Christianity with both of those aspects.

[58] William Connolly, quoted in Cochran, 'Postmodernism', p.240
[59] Cochran, 'Postmodernism', p.240

This thesis is therefore sympathetic to poststructuralism. Indeed, Part II will engage with many existentialist thinkers who were engaged with poststructuralists, and in so doing will draw out more of the impacts of poststructuralism on the research question. This is effectively a recognition of Heidegger's division of labour between his own work and Kierkegaard's. But it cannot rely on poststructuralism as a tool for resolving the paradox in the research question because doing so requires a foundation which poststructuralists avoid. A resolution also requires a stricter understanding of human freedom than poststructuralists – with their integration of subjectivity with objectivity – can provide. However, just as poststructuralism demonstrates the value of marginal theories to this thesis, and as the English School showed how a middle-ground approach can draw out many of the tensions in the research question, the following chapter will attempt to find a middle-ground approach within marginal approaches to normative IR theory in order to capture the strengths identified in these past two chapters.

Chapter 6

Phronetics, Pragmatism and Political Theology

The previous chapters have discussed three of the most widely used normative IR theories for addressing the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value in international order, as well as poststructuralism's impact from a self-consciously marginal perspective. Cosmopolitanism and communitarianism argue that freedom in the international realm is attained by, respectively, actualising oneself as a part of a common humanity or as a member of a bounded political community. Where they differ is the emphasis they place on universal or particular values, though they share a rationalist reliance on objective knowledge without a sufficient normative foundation, which ultimately means that they treat particular values as another form of the universal. Consequently, they are rooted too firmly in the 'soul' to synthesise it with the 'body' and resolve the paradox of the self. The ES treats freedom as much more problematic precisely because it is so difficult to realise in the context of competing universal and particular values. Despite a focus on human will and, consequently, a greater appreciation of anti-foundationalism and subjectivity as opposed to objective knowledge, the ES also overemphasises objectivity and so better explains universal values than particular ones. Poststructuralism, while fully cognizant of the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of the paradox, treats subjectivity and objectivity as so interlinked that the universal is inescapable and, in a sense, the purpose of their theorising is not to resolve the paradox. Derived from these theories, however, are three approaches which lie on the margins of normative IR thought. That is not to say that they are not considered valuable scholarship, but that they have consciously departed from the mainstream of the normative IR theories discussed so far without accepting poststructuralism's anti-foundationalism. Given the subject matter of this thesis, these marginal approaches may offer a greater appreciation of the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological issues surrounding human freedom and transcendent value, and consequently a way to translate the Kierkegaardian concept of the person into familiar IR terminology.

This chapter will explore each of these three marginal approaches for their ability to do so. The first is Brown's phronetic theory, a neo-Aristotelian approach which breaks down knowledge in such a way that objectivity may be deprioritised. The second is Cochran's pragmatism, which introduces the important element of normative contingency based on weak but existing normative foundations, building on her critique of poststructuralism. The final approach is Bain's political theological discussion of the medieval debate between immanent and imposed order, which this chapter will conclude provides the closest combination of metaphysical, epistemological and ontological elements to reflect the conception of human freedom, transcendent value and international order required to answer the research question. It is not, however, the answer. That is because while Bain's approach contains the tools to translate Kierkegaardian concepts into normative IR theory, his goal is not to do so. Part II of the thesis will therefore use this political theological discussion as a way to answer the research question.

Phronetics

Though Brown is known for introducing the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate into IR during the emergence of normative IR theory (or International Political Theory, as he prefers) into the field,[1] his more recent work has focused on phronetics. Phronetics is a neo-Aristotelian critique of the epistemological basis of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate which recognises the latter's ungrounded reliance on objective knowledge to form its ontological conclusions. Brown argues that modern thought emerged in the early-17th century from a change in how thinkers in the West understood knowledge. Specifically, "formal logic came to displace rhetoric, general principles and abstract axioms were privileged over particular cases and concrete diversity, and the establishment of rules (or laws) that were deemed to have permanent as opposed to transitory applicability came to be seen as the task of the theorist."[2] Brown further claims that this was a "category error" in that it applied natural scientific reason to a social world which was unable to conform to cause-effect principles.[3] To rectify this category error, Brown proposes a threefold conceptualisation of knowledge based around Aristotelian principles: first, *episteme* represents the focus on scientific knowledge of universal, unchanging things. Second, *techne* represents the knowledge possessed by an artisan for their discipline, or what we might call experienced craftmanship. And third, *phronesis* represents the application of practical reason to determine the rightness or wrongness of human actions in specific, concrete and changing situations.[4] *Phronesis*, from this description, is the more appropriate form of knowledge for explaining the social world of interhuman exchanges. Brown's critique of modern thought is, then, in Aristotelian terms, that it overemphasises *episteme* to the neglect of *phronesis*.

The solution is therefore to alter the epistemological basis of theorising to incorporate *phronesis* when engaging with the social world. As noted above, *phronesis* employs practical reason in concrete situations. That is, it "attempt[s] to produce 'action-guiding', as opposed to 'world-revealing' theory," implying that "all theory ought to be problem-solving."[5] This provides a link between Brown's epistemological discussion and his metaphysical assumptions. He is not an anti-foundationalist insofar as he argues that theories derived from anti-foundationalism – especially poststructuralism, which he describes as "narcissistic, hermetic [and difficult] for its own sake"[6] – are merely world-revealing and do not offer guidance for action; in other words, they fail to achieve the task of theorising.[7] And yet, by emphasising action, Brown, like Frost's constitutive theory, treats humans as acting creatures rather than embodiments of some essential nature – that is, his theory does not include an objective and universal foundation against which to judge knowledge claims or normative decisions. Instead, Brown suggests that, following the practical reason laid

[1] Brown, *Normative Approaches*
[2] Brown, *Practical Judgement*, p.9
[3] Brown, 'Phronetic International Political Theory?', p.441
[4] Ibid, p.445
[5] Brown, *Practical Judgement*, p.9
[6] Chris Brown, *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p.17
[7] Nicholas Rengger, 'Practical Judgement: Inconsistent – Or Incoherent?' in Albert & Lang (eds.) *The Politics of International Political Theory: Reflections on the Works of Chris Brown* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.64-5

out in phronetics, such a foundation lies instead in the common experiences shared by humans across a broad range of situational categories.[8] In other words, humans categorise their experiences and recognise that though the specifics of these experiences differ in everyone's particular perspective, the categories themselves are shared and therefore provide a common basis from which to determine right and wrong actions. Brown uses the example of death, a common category of experience faced by all humans (and also referenced originally by Aristotle). He then argues that all humans regardless of their context agree that courage is a virtuous reaction to the experience of death, even if the precise form which that courage takes differs.[9] It is this recognition of the need to integrate the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological elements of human action which allow Brown to move beyond the impasse of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate and offer a normative foundation (albeit fluid and changing) which does not prescribe universal actions based on objective knowledge.

That said, phronetic theory does not wholly escape an overreliance on objective knowledge, and the result is that it does not translate well into a discussion of freedom from the Kierkegaardian perspective. Phronetics, as Brown employs it, relies on common experiences over broad categories of situation; only those who are engaged with such experiences can exercise practical reason with regard to such matters. In the context of international politics, though, the degree to which experiences are common across all humans is limited. That is, as with pluralist accounts of the ES, those humans who have experienced the category of strategic situations requiring decision-making typical of international politics are confined to practitioners – especially statespeople, but also other forms of policymaker.[10] As Brown puts it, "a phronetic social science requires an experienced social scientist; partly this is a matter of experience of the world in general, but it also involves experience in the relevant practice."[11] Within IR more broadly, a similar perspective is taken by those who pursue the 'practice turn', which explores the way that reason is informed by experience and vice versa.[12] In ontological-normative terms, this approach means that the status of particular humans as normative agents is not a given, but is predicated on their membership of a particular group – in this case, those who interact with the existing state-based international order. Phronetics cannot, therefore, transcend existing categories of common experience to identify inherent threats to freedom within them.[13] As with Frost's constitutive theory, it is limited to internal critique.

Essentially, then, phronetics is tackling a different problem to that of freedom and transcendence; it is dealing with justice and injustice in international order. Determining whether an action is just or unjust is a question of human welfare, whereas attempting to reconcile freedom and transcendence may require an

[8] Brown, *Practical Judgement*, pp.82-3
[9] Ibid
[10] Kimberly Hutchings, 'The Politics of Judgement in International Political Theory' in Albert & Lang (eds.) *The Politics of International Political Theory: Reflections on the Works of Chris Brown* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.46-7, 49
[11] Brown, 'Practice Turn', p.447
[12] Ibid; Hutchings, 'Politics of Judgement', pp.40-1
[13] Hutchings, 'Politics of Judgement', pp.47-8

individual to sacrifice some degree of their welfare for their unconditional commitment. The difficulty of translating the two into similar terms is evident in three ways. Metaphysically, Brown's fluid normative foundation is not located in individuals but in the relations between humans. This means that rather than individuals defining their common experiences with others in relation to their unconditional commitment, those common experiences become the foundation against which humans define themselves. In other words, human meaning relies fundamentally on what others do – their freedom is taken out of their hands. Epistemologically, questions of welfare and justice rely on objective knowledge. What is just is what is right in relation to the common experiences of a group (given that is the normative foundation). By implication, doing what is right only for oneself is unjust because it does not relate to the common experience of the group. To determine what is right for the group, though, a shared understanding must exist and an understanding can only be shared if it is not subject to the changing whims of a single person. Objectivity is the basis of such an understanding – and, therefore, of justice – because it provides for a form of knowledge which is independent of any single observer. Subjectivity, on the other hand, is perceived in phronetics only in terms of base impulse of particular whims; there is no room for acting in anguish towards an unconditional commitment because, metaphysically, the normative foundation lies in common experiences. And so, in ontological terms, phronetics prioritises groups over individuals and overemphasises the stasis of the current order over demands for change from individuals. Overall, the result is a theory which cannot balance between the two factors of the self because it prioritises objective, universal and infinite in a way which is softer than but ultimately in the same vein as communitarianism.

In retrospect, the fact that *phronesis* is defined as the use of practical reason suggests that it is unsuitable for discussing human freedom and transcendence. Any theory which constructs its approach explicitly around a form of reason must necessarily deprioritise human will in order to account for the inherent relationality of reason. In the case of phronetics, this takes the form of a focus on questions of welfare rather than questions of freedom. It may be able to account for a limited freedom of choice but, if so, this is restricted only to certain groups, notably statespeople and policymakers. It does not reflect the more radical form of freedom which Dreyfus derives from Kierkegaard's thought. In all, while Brown does account for many of the problems identified in more mainstream approaches, his phronetic theory seeks to answer a fundamentally different question than this thesis does, and cannot therefore translate the Kierkegaardian concept of the person into terms of international order.

Pragmatism

Based on Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, Cochran also explores the metaphysical and epistemological bases of normativity in international order. The central claim of her approach is that normative judgements can be made so long as they are recognised as being contingent because of the weakness of any normative foundation that can be realistically identified by humans. That claim is itself based on Dewey's critique of positivist methods which seek absolute and universal truths. Pragmatism therefore engages with the

metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of international order and, at the outset, appears to treat central elements such as subjectivity much more seriously than does phronetics.

Dewey argued that the purpose of philosophical inquiry is to engage with the world from a social and emotional perspective, rather than an intellectual one; the origins of philosophy, for him, therefore lie in poetry, drama and symbols. The intellectualisation of philosophy occurred because, over time, social and emotional engagements ossified into traditions of thought which had to legitimise themselves against competing traditions. They did so by appealing to reason.[14] Practically, this means that the emphasis on change and fluidity central to a social engagement with the world has been replaced with a search for universal, rational foundations to justify absolutely these traditions of thought. Pragmatism is Dewey's attempt to recapture the original social purpose of philosophy, using the maxim that the value of a theory should be judged by its consequences for human action or, in other words, its ability to "[project] an idea or an ideal which, instead of expressing the notion of some other world or some far-away unrealisable goal, would be used as a method of understanding and rectifying specific social ills."[15] The most immediate implication of this pragmatic maxim is that, epistemologically, subjective experience is prioritised over objective reason when seeking to explain the world and offer solutions to social issues.[16] Metaphysically, too, Dewey goes on to propose a weak foundationalism, which distinguishes this perspective from poststructuralism's anti-foundationalism and the English School's moral scepticism. Strong normative foundations become incommensurable with any alternatives because they treat opposed perspectives as unreal. Weak normative foundations, by contrast, treat alternatives as "different realms of experience" and, because of the very existence of multiple alternatives, assume that all claims to foundationalism are fallible. In this context, fallibility means that the status of a particular "realm of experience" and any normative claims derived from it are provisional and thus "always open to further correction and critique."[17] This, incidentally, is similar to Bull's assessment that different theories represent multiple equally valid truths. While agreeing with the anti-foundationalist critique that non-contingent normative claims cannot be made in a foundationless world, the pragmatic approach tries to show that contingent normative claims can be made based on weak foundations which leave a greater role for subjectivity.

In relation to the normative IR theories discussed in the previous chapters, Cochran's use of pragmatism was intended to resolve the impasse between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. One of the fundamental flaws with all variants of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism is that they lack sufficiently strong foundations on which to make their non-contingent normative claims. Pragmatism, by contrast, attempts to engage with specific normative issues through the concrete experience of those directly

[14] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.177
[15] John Dewey, quoted in Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.178
[16] Molly Cochran, 'Deweyan Pragmatism and Post-Positivist Social Science in IR', *Millennium* 31:3 (2002), p.532
[17] Ibid; Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.175

involved, with the ultimate view of finding practical solutions.[18] The question therefore becomes an ontological one of how to define particular humans (those who experience these issues concretely) and what they ought to do in their situation. As with phronetics, pragmatism rejects any definition of humans according to an essential nature. Primarily, this is because it is difficult – if not impossible – to determine which characteristics exhibited by humans are essential and which are acquired through social interaction. To derive any conclusions from a speculative assessment would undermine the pragmatic maxim by theorising from the perspective of "some other world." Rather than identify a common characteristic, Dewey therefore identified a common experience inevitably undergone by all humans: change. In his words, humans possess "a tendency to learn and hence to modify, and be modified."[19] From this definition, Dewey determined right action to be "growth," that is, adaptation to change in a way that produces practical improvements in a human's experience of their life.[20]

There are some similarities between pragmatism and phronetics, from this initial overview. The most obvious is that, by focusing on practical improvements to human experience, the pragmatic approach shares with phronetics a focus on human welfare as its topic of discussion, rather than freedom. However, there are already signs that pragmatism is better placed to incorporate freedom into its conception of welfare than phronetics is, chiefly because it uses the common experience of change as a foundation for particular growth, rather than common categories as a foundation for shared understandings. This means that, metaphysically, whereas phronetics takes particular categories of experience as its foundation and therefore limits normative agency to practitioners within that category, the pragmatic emphasis on change applies to all humans and is therefore unrestricted in the context of international order. Consequently, in ontological terms, whereas phronetics prescribes right action according to a *shared* response to common experiences, pragmatism appears to define right action according to a *particular* response to the common experience of change. Pragmatism therefore leaves greater scope for deviation from objective knowledge than does phronetics, a fundamental requirement in accounting for human freedom. That is not to say that the pragmatic approach neglects social norms – nor should it, for the purpose of discussing human freedom in this thesis is to relate it rightly to some transcendent norm. Indeed, an important aspect of pragmatic growth is social engagement, specifically by determining which social institutions (including those in the international realm) facilitate the further development of growth. For Dewey, such institutions would be democratic because they provide equal opportunities for all humans to grow, maximising the potential for improvements in practical experiences of the world. The state, for example, is only normatively justified to the extent that it performs the wider institutional function of fostering the growth of individual citizens within it; as soon as it ceases to offer these practical outcomes, it loses normative grounding.[21] And this

[18] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.182
[19] John Dewey, quoted in Molly Cochran, 'Dewey as an International Thinker' in Cochran (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.313
[20] Ibid
[21] Ibid

suggests another important distinction between pragmatism and phronetics: the former is accommodating of normative change in a way that the latter is not, allowing it to account for the effects of human freedom.[22]

In all three aspects of inquiry – metaphysical, epistemological and ontological – pragmatism appears to offer greater scope for incorporating human freedom than any of the theories previously discussed. But taking Dewey's approach without alteration is problematic for three reasons, as Cochran notes. First, his understanding of institutions is too benign, such that he underestimates the forces which entrench institutional power against demands for change. The corollary of this critique is that Dewey overestimates the ability of social inquiry to promote change to those institutions, even when they have lost their normative grounding by abrogating their responsibilities to promote growth. Second, Cochran argues that there is a latent Hegelianism in Dewey's work which opens his pragmatism up to the same argument deployed against Frost's constitutive theory: namely, that insofar as individual growth is tied to social engagement, humans can only reach their maximum potential for growth *within* the boundaries of a society. This makes the relationship between a human and society a defining feature of their being, prioritising the universal without providing a strong normative foundation for doing so. And third, despite the emphasis on contingency in human experience, Dewey attempted to create a "neutral method" of inquiry which sought general, objective traits within that experience, casting into doubt the deprioritisation of objective knowledge in pragmatism.[23]

Cochran, nevertheless, sees the value in pragmatism and attempts to resolve these problems by incorporating some of Rorty's ideas. Rorty follows the linguistic turn in the social sciences, arguing against constructing a "neutral method" of inquiry and instead using pragmatism to redescribe traditions of thought, not in terms of reason, but using social vocabularies which lead to better forms of practice.[24] In other words, the linguistic approach seeks to reclaim the social and emotional inquiries which predated intellectualised philosophy, and which Dewey argued was the original purpose of philosophical inquiry. The most notable departure between Rorty and Deweyian pragmatism is the former's employment of a division between public and private spheres. Rorty claims that growth can occur within the private sphere, completely detached from social engagement. Any broader social improvements resulting from individual growth will be beneficial, but unintended. In other words, social as opposed to individual change occurs through "the accidental coincidence of a private obsession with a public need."[25]

Even with the incorporation of Rorty's linguistic approach alongside Dewey's, though, pragmatism may not be able to account for human freedom in international order in a way that satisfies the Kierkegaardian concept of the person. That is because, despite its appreciation of weak foundations, contingent values and

[22] Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.182
[23] Ibid, pp.183-6
[24] Ibid, p.188
[25] Richard Rorty, quoted in Cochran, *Normative Theory*, p.191

particularity, pragmatism is concerned primarily with human welfare rather than freedom. Recall that growth involves securing practical improvements to a human's experience of life. This means that within Rorty's private sphere, the freedom exercised by a particular human is directed towards choosing between what is ultimately able to provide tangible benefits, not just in material terms but also in its ability to distract from the fact that human existence is despair. This is not the same problem faced by phronetics, wherein practical reason defines humans through their relation to a higher universal. But it is not the radical freedom brought about through an unconditional commitment. Rather, it is, in Kierkegaardian terms, willing despair. To escape from despair and synthesise the paradox would be to make any *practical* improvements subordinate to one's *spiritual* development. In that sense, an individual might in fact be called to sacrifice their own welfare if called to by their unconditional commitment, but in doing so they would be realising their freedom. Kierkegaard writes, "in the world of spirit […] only one who works gets bread, and only one who knows anguish finds rest, only one who descends to the underworld saves the loved one, only one who draws the knife gets Isaac."[26] By contrast, pragmatism is, as its maxim explicitly accepts, concerned with improvements in this world – "it does not get bread [i.e. freedom], it starves to death while everything is transformed into gold."[27] It therefore does not synthesise the paradoxical factors of the self, escape from despair, or reconcile human freedom with transcendent value. In this regard, it is telling that the ideal institution, for Dewey, is a democratic one – that is, the political prescriptions he offers fall mostly under the concept of political rights.

Pragmatism, in both its Deweyan form and in Cochran's incorporation of Rorty's linguistic approach, highlights important aspects of normative IR theory which must be included in any account of freedom and transcendence. These are, primarily, a recognition of weak and fallible normative foundations rooted in experience, and the resultant contingent social values derived from them. But, as with phronetics, pragmatism tackles a different question than this thesis; it focuses on human welfare rather than freedom. Though it rejects objective knowledge as a strong foundation for normative judgements, the subjectivity it replaces it with is a basic subjectivity which does not tackle the problems of human will as described in the previous chapters. In other words, whereas the flaw in phronetics – in relation to this thesis – was its overemphasis on practical *reason*, the flaw with pragmatism is its overemphasis on *practical* unreason.

Political Theology

In a sense, political theology is not marginal to IR scholarship. Some of the field's most famous thinkers from the early- and mid-20th century – including many of the scholars discussed in the chapter on the ES – explicitly used theological concepts to understand international order. Indeed, Guilhot argues that the development of IR in this period was driven in part by a theological reaction to the shortcomings of liberal Protestantism, as evidenced in the openly Christian writings of Reinhold Niebuhr as well as the less overtly

[26] Kierkegaard, *FT*, p.57
[27] Ibid, p.58

theological ideas of Morgenthau.[28] However, in contemporary normative IR scholarship, political theology is a deviation from the mainstream and is even perceived as unsuitable for theorising by Brown, whose phronetics is considered in this thesis to be similarly marginalised. Specifically, Brown argues that theology provides multiple incompatible accounts – such as between Christianity and Islam – and does not therefore fulfil the primary role of theory as guiding human action.[29] This critique stems from a misunderstanding of political theology as used by scholars like Bain and Guilhot. Contemporary political theology in IR is not, as Brown suggests, the application of religious belief to international order. Rather, it involves "interpreting and analysing politics – institutional arrangements, sources of authority, patterns of order, purposes and justifications of rule, and so forth – in the context of theological concepts and categories."[30] That is, political theology attempts to unearth the theological ideas which are embedded in contemporary, secularised practices. In so doing, it translates those practices into these historical terms in order to shed light on their operation and interaction.[31]

In this way, political theology shares a common approach with phronetics and pragmatism: they all attempt to translate the concepts of IR, which they believe are dominated by a false emphasis on positivism and natural science, into terminology which is more suitable for explaining the human experience. They all also do so at multiple levels, namely the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological. Where political theology departs from phronetics and pragmatism, though, is in its subject of study. The previous sections in this chapter asserted that other marginalised approaches ask a fundamentally different question than this thesis: they seek to explain how to improve human welfare rather than how to realise human freedom within the basis of transcendent value. Political theology, on the other hand, explicitly grapples with the problem of freedom, and it does so in a way which reflects the Kierkegaardian framework used in this thesis. One of the most recent works on political theology in IR – Bain's *Political Theology of International Order* – suggests as much when it begins a discussion of conceptualisations of international order with reference to Tertullian's dichotomy of Athens and Jerusalem.[32] The conflict between Athens and Jerusalem was taken up by Spinoza as the 'theologico-political problem',[33] and then slightly modified by Leo Strauss into the 'theological-political problem', which he defined as the problem of how humans approach the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between universal commitments and particular identities. Furthermore, this problem was not, for Strauss, confined to the ontological aspect of universal and particular values, but also involved an epistemological debate over how knowledge is formed which, in turn, rested on a metaphysical dispute

[28] Nicolas Guilhot, 'American Katechon: When Political Theology Became International Relations Theory', *Constellations* 17:2 (2010), pp.224-53; Chris Brown, 'Political Thought, International Relations Theory and International Political Theory: An Interpretation', *International Relations* 31:3 (2017), p.230
[29] Chris Brown, "Human Nature', Science and International Political Theory', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 16 (2013), p.437
[30] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.3
[31] Ibid, p.5
[32] Ibid, p.27
[33] Benedictus de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

about the nature of God.[34] In short, political theology and its antecedents directly grapple with the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value at the core of this thesis.

This is evident in Strauss's approach. He argued that the historical development of Western thought rested on the interaction between a rational natural law perspective, and a theological perspective emphasising revelation and divine command. The former is epistemologically represented in "autonomous understanding," and the latter in "obedient love."[35] These two perspectives are incommensurable because they are based on fundamentally different metaphysical understandings of what constitutes truth – in other words, they possess different normative foundations. But Strauss nevertheless believed that these two perspectives should be open to challenges from one another in order to moderate any imbalance in thought towards one approach.[36] The problem – or 'crisis' – in modern Western thought was that such openness to critique was closed off by a specific form of reason encapsulated in Enlightenment thought, most evident in positivist philosophy. Such an approach, which emphasises objective thought and universal values, tends towards assimilating alternative perspectives such as theology by translating them into universal, objective values. This caused an equally strong reaction from theologians, who then attempted to eradicate philosophy by asserting nihilism. In other words, the crisis in modern thought is the replacement of openness and fallibility with a fanaticism which requires the eradication of the alternative mode of thought – the imposition of one person's will on others without a transcendent value to arbitrate between them.[37] For Strauss, this was practically evident in the ideological conflict of the 20th century.[38] The Straussian crisis of modern thought, then, is caused by the interaction between the different factors of the self (as described in Chapter 1), albeit on an international scale. Metaphysically, it is premised on alternative normative foundations in innate reason or divine command; epistemologically, this results in a tendency towards objective knowledge or subjective experience (though references to nihilism suggest that this is a subjectivity which remains in despair); and ontologically the result is violent ideological conflict.

Strauss's solution to his theological-political problem was imperfect, but necessarily so. Ideally, he argued, the collapse of theological thought into nihilism would be rectified by restoring true faith in God, thereby balancing the philosophical overemphasis on Enlightenment reason. However, recognising the Nietzschean pronouncement of the death of God, this would not be feasible in a secularised world. Strauss therefore offered a practical solution in which philosophy is restored to its pre-modern status as a fallible mode of thought which co-exists with theology.[39] The Straussian approach to the paradox of human freedom and transcendent value appears to reflect the critique of pragmatism offered above. That is, Strauss tries to reach a synthesis between the two, but ultimately accepts the logical impossibility of doing so and therefore

[34] Smith, 'Strauss', pp.78-9
[35] Leo Strauss, 'Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilisation', *Modern Judaism* 1:1 (1981), p.33
[36] Smith, 'Strauss', p.79
[37] Strauss, 'Progress or Return?', pp.31-3
[38] Smith, 'Strauss', p.81; Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959), p.28
[39] Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.75

reverts, in despair, to a universalist perspective which treats subjectivity as, at most, a form of base impulse rather than unconditional commitment. This can be modified somewhat to claim that because Strauss uses theological language, he recognises the ideal result would be to restore the role of faith. In other words, Strauss might ideally propose a synthesis in line with Kierkegaardian thought which could transcend the universalising tendency of the philosophical mode, but he does not take the "leap of faith" to reach it "on the strength of the absurd."

Strauss's is not the only approach to political theology. In broad terms, he argues that political practice must, to some degree, be grounded in faith. Bain distinguishes this from an alternative approach which treats political theology not as a prescriptive exercise but as a form of historical investigation.[40] Political theology as historical investigation instead traces the influence of theological concepts from the ancient and medieval worlds into the modern (and, in doing so, problematises the distinction between these periods). This is the approach taken by Bain, who contends that Strauss's focus on the assimilatory potential of the philosophy ignores the continued influence of theological debates in how we understand the nature of international order and our responses to international issues.[41] Consequently, the Straussian perspective of theology collapsing into nihilism and therefore being unable to synthesise with philosophy is flawed. Under Bain's understanding of political theology, then, there may still be space to synthesise the transcendent values represented by philosophy with the human freedom represented by theology.

Bain's political theology stems from his earlier engagement with the ES, in which he broadly resembled Bull's approach in the *Hagey Lectures*: universal values are not as destabilising as staunch pluralists contend. Rather, when the limits of toleration are reached, "some sort of higher law" can justify the prevention or punishment of intolerable actions, such as genocide or slavery.[42] The result is a state-based international order, but one which ultimately recognises that "equality and freedom […] is the proper end of all human beings."[43] In his later work, however – and to relate this back to the discussion of the ES in Chapter 4 – Bain came to doubt the commensurability of the universal and particular tendencies in solidarism and pluralism respectively. The two certainly co-exist in international order, but whereas Bull believed they were at least theoretically compatible, Bain argues that they are so metaphysically distinct that they cannot be integrated without significant disruption to the present order.

The metaphysical distinction between pluralism and solidarism is the same as that between the two factors of the self which Dreyfus described. Bain relates that distinction to a medieval theological debate between *immanent order* and *imposed order*. Immanent order is a fundamentally unchanging order based on universal reason, accessible to all through human nature. By contrast, imposed order is a dynamic and constantly

[40] Bain, 'Political Theology and Historical IR', p.203
[41] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.29
[42] Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws', p.573
[43] Ibid

changing form of order which is perpetually willed into existence by free beings unbounded by the laws of reason. The two forms of order embody metaphysical foundations (human nature and human will), epistemological assumptions (objective knowledge and subjective desires), and ontological manifestations (unchanging order and fluid order) and so reflect the two factors of the self, albeit in the context of international order. Bain argues that the contemporary international order is an imposed order because there is no universally accessible reason from which to derive obligations. Specifically, any source of immanence has been lost following the death of God as a universally accepted lawgiver. He therefore agrees with Bull that while solidarist values may exist, they cannot be justified by anything other than human will. Natural law, by contrast, is a non-starter. For example, Wight's *via media* is inapplicable to a secular age because its Grotian precepts require some form of supreme rational being to embody universal reason.[44] It therefore argues for a form of immanent order, whereas the contemporary world is a wholly imposed order. In short, by incorporating theological language from a historical debate between different forms of order, Bain is illuminating the metaphysical and epistemological assumptions behind existing IR ontologies.

In rejecting natural law because of its immanence, Bain instead advocates for a form of positive international law. He uses the specific example of *jus cogens* as one aspect of international law which prevents states from agreeing what is contrary to the purpose of international order – namely, to defend the principle of co-existence and promote individual freedom and welfare within states. *Jus cogens* "announce[s] a solidarity that stands before a world in which everything is permitted."[45] It is a voluntary limitation on the will of statespeople to impose their own specific order on the world in contravention of procedural norms of action. This argument echoes Jackson's but is far less optimistic about international law's strength; instead, Bain believes that norms derived from *jus cogens* are inherently fragile. This is because *jus cogens* is justified using the rhetoric of immanent order, which implies universal values (for example, the enforcement of human rights by one state against another may be justified by appeal to universal reason). In practice, though, *jus cogens* norms are derived from human will and imposed by statespeople. Consequently, a mechanism which is intended to strengthen pluralist norms of coexistence potentially threatens them by introducing uncertainty about whether they ought to be applied against another's will.[46] Bain's later work therefore adopts a position of moral scepticism towards solidarist norms and universal values. In concluding that the international order is imposed, the presence of any norms justified through the language of immanence is inherently destabilising because they raise questions about whether pluralist norms will be applied in future. He problematises the metaphysics of solidarism.

Bain's argument echoes Jackson's to the extent that both ground the normative force of the state-based international order in its ability to defend humans from the external imposition of other values.[47] Indeed,

[44] Bain, 'Rival Traditions'
[45] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.215
[46] Ibid, pp.215-6
[47] Bain, 'One Order, Two Laws', p.573; Jackson, *Global Covenant*, pp.372-3

he highlights how the historical development of theories of imposed order is tied to the value of freedom, emphasising this as a subject of study instead of human welfare. Theories of imposed order arose in medieval Europe, where theologians such as William of Ockham and Martin Luther believed that neo-Platonic philosophies were undermining God's omnipotence and independence by requiring His actions to conform to a universal, transcendent reason. The world was not, therefore, the product of God's will and power, but of an immanent order which God applied onto the world as an intermediary.[48] Luther's theology therefore aimed at two goals: first, it tried to grant God normative authority as an agent unbound by any transcendental value; and, second, it attempted to integrate the religious world with the secular so that any theory of God's freedom from universal reason could be transposed into a theory of human freedom as well.[49] The result was a theory of imposed order which rejected immanence. This narrative provides a theological grounding to Jackson's claim that the combination of Reformation theology and Renaissance political thought empowered statespeople to pursue *raison d'état* and independence from the doctrinal imperialism of the reigning Catholic orthodoxy.[50]

Bain also connects the theory of imposed order to Renaissance political thought. As noted above, he disputes Grotius's natural law theory as being tied to theories of immanent order. On the other hand, he describes Hobbes as the quintessential theorist of the modern imposed international order. Hobbes describes social orders as containing "singular existents" within "a system of external relations, knowledge of which is acquired by empirical observation and the investigation of efficient causes."[51] The solidarity of immanent order is thereby replaced by a world of particular humans whose relations are entirely external and driven by cause and effect. To the extent that reason does exist, it is a product of God's will, not vice versa. Freedom, conceived theologically, therefore offers a normative foundation for the imposed international order, and this is an important contribution of Bain's work to an individual-oriented international order. However, it also demonstrates the limitations of applying a theory of imposed order to existing normative IR literature. Insofar as Hobbes's freedom is one of particular humans within a larger system characterised by empirical observation and causal logics, it does not represent an escape from the universal. Rather, it reflects a different conception of the universal, one which is less rooted in cosmopolitan reason than in *raison d'état*. Because of his interaction with the ES, then, Bain appears to encounter the same problem as other moral sceptics insofar as he differentiates between different levels of universality when explaining freedom, therefore limiting the applicability of his approach to the form of freedom described in Chapter 1.

That said, Bain's use of political theology significantly improves ES accounts (in relation to the research question) insofar as it takes metaphysical and epistemological problems seriously. Whereas, for example, he

[48] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.39
[49] Ibid, pp.82-4, 93
[50] Jackson, *Global Covenant*, pp.160-1
[51] Ibid, p.129

shares many similarities with Jackson's approach, Bain does depart from him in claiming that international order is not as stable as Jackson suggests. In this, Bain reflects Wight's concern that the decline of the remnants of immanent order could lead to the unconstrained application of power without regard to common normative principles.[52] The difference is that Bain disputes the applicability of Wight's Grotian solution to the problem he posed. The framework of the imposed-immanent debate transforms Grotius from the father of a secular natural law to a perpetuator of immanent order.[53] This is impossible to reconcile with an imposed international order *and* disruptive of that order because it undermines its normative foundation in human will. And yet human will also contributes to its own fragility: a "preoccupation with freedom is the cause of […] uncertainty" because it replaces a single transcendent arbiter with the unpredictable and fallible vicissitudes of human will.[54] Therefore, though sharing with Jackson a belief in the value of freedom, Bain does not believe it is a sufficiently strong normative foundation to anchor a pluralist international order against the threats of violence and universal despotism. His moral scepticism, which echoes Bull's, maintains a conservative tendency in its fear of the radical change which is manifested from the exercise of human freedom. Instead, states, represented by statespeople who forge norms of *jus cogens*, are the most effective guarantors of that freedom.

This implies that the threat from theories of immanent order is not *only* their rhetoric. Rather, they reflect transcendent values which prioritise a universal, objective truth to the detriment of multiple, particular, subjective truths. When this appeal to transcendent values is reflected in statespeople's actions, it undermines the limited commitments, situational ethics and particular values which are necessary for maintaining pluralist norms of tolerance and mutual accommodation which underpin human freedom.[55] Contrary to Bull's more optimistic approach, in which immanent rhetoric could act as a moral veto to abuses of statespeople's actions, there is a requirement in Bain's understanding for a more fundamental normative foundation for action which does not simultaneously undermine the pluralist international order it is meant to uphold. By incorporating political theology into an analysis of ES theory, Bain has identified this need. But his work does not provide an immediate solution. That is because, despite reflecting many of the elements of the Kierkegaardian framework of paradoxical factors of the self, he does not match that with the Kierkegaardian understanding of freedom. Consequently, if this Kierkegaardian form of freedom is not considered, there is no path towards synthesising the factors of the self. This is evident in Bain's association of imposed order and its related freedom of human will with Hobbesian international thought. As noted above, this mistakes an instrumental form of reason for freedom, and therefore remains rooted in the universal; in other words, it does not remove the tension from the relationship between transcendental value and human freedom. As Dreyfus noted of Kierkegaard, this tension can lead to a "despairing analysis of the present age as nihilistic" with a "[levelling of] all meaningful differences between

[52] Hall, *International Thought*, p.70; Bain, 'Rival Traditions', p.948
[53] Bain, 'Rival Traditions'
[54] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.213
[55] Ibid, p.147

the trivial and the important."[56] But it can also open the possibility of "an account of the structure of the self that explains […] what is required for a meaningful life."[57] Bain's political theology can translate the first point into terms of international order, but does not engage with the second.

Conclusion

All three of the marginalised approaches discussed above draw out the essential metaphysical and epistemological aspects of human freedom which are lacking in mainstream normative IR theories. They therefore expand the scope of discussion in a way that is conducive to incorporating the Kierkegaardian framework into conceptions of international order. However, because of the phronetic emphasis on reason, the pragmatic focus on human welfare, and Bain's pessimistic assessment of international order, none of these approaches fulfil the potential of crafting an individual-level account of international order based on the Kierkegaardian concept of the person. In other words, though they do not fulfil the requirements of a Kierkegaardian conception of freedom, they demonstrate the applicability of such a conception to international order and to normative IR accounts. Moreover, Bain's discussion of immanent and imposed order offers useful terminology for doing so. If his understanding of imposed order can be divorced from the rationalistic and pessimistic Hobbesian account and incorporated into an alternative theoretical approach, then it offers the best way of accounting for human freedom in international order while synthesising it with transcendent value. The fact that Kierkegaard's thought was later developed – in part – into the broader approach of existentialism suggests that a viable alternative may be found there. Indeed, as suggested so far in the thesis, Kierkegaard's thought as well as that of the existentialists who were inspired by him overlaps with both political theology and poststructuralist concerns. It recognises the strength of the anti-foundationalist critique while seeing room for a qualified foundationalism through Christian concepts. What distinguishes the Kierkegaardian approach from these normative IR theories is his radical definition of freedom based on a redefinition of subjectivity which allows him to reconceptualise human freedom and transcendent value as commensurable. Part II will now attempt to demonstrate this resolution to the paradox and its impact on international order.

[56] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.88-9
[57] Ibid, p.89

Part II

Condemned to Freedom

> "Man is free, man is freedom. If, however, God does not exist, we will encounter no values or orders that can legitimise our conduct. Thus, we have neither behind us, nor before us, in the luminous realm of values any means of justification or excuse. […] That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free: condemned, because he did not create himself, yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does."[1]

Chapter 7

Eschatology

This thesis is attempting to answer the question of how the paradoxical normative relationship between human freedom and transcendent value can be reconciled in the context of international order. Part I tied the concepts of human freedom and transcendent value to Dreyfus's Kierkegaardian concept of the person in a state of despair over the irreconcilability of those two paradoxical aspects within themselves. It also assessed both mainstream and marginal normative IR theories for their ability to resolve the paradox as effectively as the Kierkegaardian framework does. Part I concluded that, to varying degrees, no current normative IR theory reflects the radical redefinition of freedom provided by Kierkegaard which is necessary to resolving the paradox. However, the marginal approaches discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 offered the closest insights into the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects of the paradox. In particular, the approaches to poststructuralism and political theology used in this thesis engage directly with the research question's concerns for human freedom and transcendent value and, combined with their metaphysical and epistemological awareness, come close to reflecting the divided Kierkegaardian concept of the person between body and soul which permits the redefinition of human freedom and transcendent value into commensurate terms. Nevertheless, neither approach provides a direct answer to the research question. Poststructuralists are limited by their anti-foundationalism which, while necessary for better understanding the context of the paradox, is held so rigorously as to hinder its resolution. Bain's political theology, while recognising the interplay of logics of immanent and imposed order, similarly does not identify a secure foundation for reconciling the two. However, it is not necessarily anti-foundationalist and therefore appears better aligned to capture the important elements of the Kierkegaardian approach than poststructuralism.

Part I concluded that, in order to answer the research question, normative IR theories require a qualified foundationalism at the metaphysical level and a redefinition of subjectivity such that it can be synthesised

[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p.29

with objectivity at the epistemological level. Where the conclusions are less clear are ontologically and normatively. Consequently, this half of the thesis will focus on the ontological and normative implications stemming from Part I. Specifically, Part II will build upon the significant overlaps between Dreyfus's Kierkegaardian framework, poststructuralism and political theology to conceptualise international order in a way that can resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value. The result will be a definition of international order from the individual level of analysis. The following chapter – Chapter 8 – will therefore discuss the phenomenological ontology of French existentialist thinkers, most notably Jean-Paul Sartre, whose influence by Kierkegaard allows the former to clarify some of the limitations of the latter. Chapter 9 will then address the normative implications of this ontology using Simone de Beauvoir's 'ethics of ambiguity' which, while sharing similarities with poststructuralist normative thinking, is more cohesive than it. Her work is also closely related to Sartre's and so captures the ontological aspects of the attempt to resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value. Chapter 10 will then concretise the key findings of this thesis by examining the historical struggle for racial justice and arguing that those thinkers and activists involved in such struggles capture many of the existentialist themes discussed in Part II. Chapter 10 is essentially an illustrative example of a highly abstract thesis, bringing together other examples which will be used throughout Part II to explain the concrete implications of the themes discussed.

This chapter, however, will bridge the two parts of the thesis. Having argued that Bain's political theology provides a viable way of translating Dreyfus's Kierkegaardian framework into terminology of international order, this chapter will attempt that translation. It will proceed in two sections. The first will break down Bain's approach in greater detail to show how the medieval debate between theories of immanent order and imposed order relate to human freedom, transcendent value and the Kierkegaardian aspects of the self. While the comparison between these sets of terms allows us to understand Kierkegaard's thought in the context of international order, it is imperfect, and this section will also explain the limitations of Bain's political theology in accounting for Kierkegaard's demanding redefinition of the terms of the paradox. The second section will then describe Kierkegaard's own political theology in the terms employed by Bain. This section offers an alternative *eschatological* approach to political theology which can resolve the tension between immanence and imposition in the contemporary international order. But, while it offers a way forward, Kierkegaard's political theology is also limited insofar as its Christian ethics cannot reliably be applied in a secularised or multi-faith international order. This chapter will therefore conclude that a secularised version of Kierkegaard's political theology is needed to synthesise human freedom and transcendent value in international order.

Bain and Political Theology

Bain's political theology captures the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological issues at stake in this thesis through its discussion of the medieval theological debate between theories of immanent and imposed

order. These two theories appear to share similarities with the terms of the paradox in the research question – respectively, transcendent value and human freedom – as well as the Kierkegaardian aspects of the self – the soul and the body. They therefore provide a way of reframing Kierkegaard's concept of the person in terms of international order. But the theories of order do not perfectly map onto the other terms. As this section will demonstrate, theories of immanent order represent just one possible manifestation of the transcendent value which reflects an obvious universalist tone, while theories of imposed order contain a latent universalising logic which prevents them from capturing the subjective belief central to Kierkegaard's concept of human freedom. While both try to synthesise competing perspectives on the world, they are limited by their explicit or latent prioritisation of objective, universal absolutes. Nevertheless, both immanent and imposed forms of order allow the previously abstract discussion of Kierkegaardian thought to be translated into examples of different types of international order.

A. Political Theology and Individual Freedom

The motivation for the development of theories of immanent and imposed order echoes many of the motivations behind Kierkegaard's thought. Bain notes that both theories of order emerged from two competing observations: from Ancient Greek philosophy came the notion of a rational and predictable natural order, which was translated into ideas of equally rational social and political orders. From the Judeo-Christian scripture came the idea of an omnipotent God who created the world through His will alone and was therefore unbound by the dictates of reason. In the medieval Christian context, then, the question was why the omnipotent Judeo-Christian God confined Himself to the creation and maintenance of a rational natural (and by extension political) order? Theories of immanent and imposed order represent different approaches which emphasise each aspect of this puzzle. Immanent order prioritises reason and intelligibility, while imposed order values God's absolute freedom and arbitrary will. In that sense, they superficially reflect transcendent value and human freedom, as well as soul and body. But, as this section will argue, the different theories of order are both, in fact, what Kierkegaard would term *negative unities* – that is, the failed attempt to combine two incommensurable factors so that one factor is subsumed into the other and, in the process, annihilated. In other words, neither theory fully synthesises human freedom and transcendent value because they remain rooted in objective epistemologies and universal ontologies. Consequently, though they translate key concepts into IR's terminology, they do not resolve the normative paradox within international order.

Theories of immanent order are the simpler to discuss in this context, because they more obviously deprioritise human freedom in favour of transcendent value. Immanent order, as Bain describes it, is "a function of laws that have an independent, though discoverable, existence that is inherent in the structure of reality, and God is an inner-worldly principle that defines a necessary and harmonious pattern of right

order."[2] That is, metaphysically God is a rational principle of nature which acts as a foundation for all knowledge and normativity. Epistemologically, then, objective truths exist which humans reach through detached meditation, transcending their subjective existence towards universal knowledge. Ontologically, the world is constituted of a series of beings who possess a pre-defined nature and purpose and who are inherently interconnected within a hierarchy of creatures ranging from the more rational to the less rational. Though the basic principles derive from Plato and Aristotle, as well as Philo, Bain discusses Augustine's efforts to combine this highly rational account with the Judeo-Christian omnipotent God in his *Confessions*:

> "God creates according to a rational plan that explains regular movement and change in things. That is to say, divinely ordained natures of things serve as the law that governs their journey through time in the process of becoming. […] Everything has a mode of existence such that it is what it is and it exists in the manner it does, which is by participation in these ideas or reasons. Therefore, the reason of God is present in all things in proportion to their perfection. […] This notion of degree informs the relation between creator and what is created. God is being as such, the definition of being; all else is partial being."[3]

Recall that freedom, for Kierkegaard, involves a human having an unconditional commitment which gives their entire life meaning and sets them apart from all other humans, not just in terms of degree but in terms of their fundamental self-definition. The Augustinian theory of immanent order simply cannot account for this conceptualisation of freedom for three primary reasons. First, it defines the world as a hierarchy. This hierarchy applies between different creatures, such that humans are 'more perfect' than animals, and between humans, such that humans who commit fully to detached and rational reflection are 'more perfect' than those who submit to bodily distractions. This is because human nature is inherently rational. The implication is that humans are already defined by God – the supreme rational being – before they are born. Their rational nature is infinite and eternal, and they therefore have no opportunity to define themselves separately from this nature. They therefore have no opportunity to act differently from the dictates of the rational order, which is both ontologically real and normatively the *right* order. Second, the rational order is necessary, meaning that it is the only possible order because it is the only one which is in accord with reason. Consequently, even if a human were able to define themselves differently from their nature, there would be no feasible way of acting differently from the prescriptions of the current order. And third, because humans as rational creatures can reach universal truths through detached meditation, the subjective beliefs which would motivate a human to define themselves differently from the rational order are both epistemologically deprioritised and normatively treated as wrong.[4] The Augustinian "decisive synthesis" of rational order and freedom neglects the defining aspect of Kierkegaardian freedom which allows a synthesis with transcendent value.

---

[2] Bain, *Political Theology*, pp.30-1
[3] Ibid, p.34
[4] Ibid, p.35

This is especially evident in a later development in theories of immanent order, introduced by Thomas Aquinas. Whereas Augustine's approach is concerned primarily with efficient causes – in other words, the idea that the nature of God as a rational being causes rational effects – Aquinas's approach adds the idea of final causes. Final causes are, essentially, ends towards which beings are directed (a *telos*), and Aquinas contends that they are linked to efficient causes. He claims that humans, through detached meditation, engage in rationally right action which is freely determined but which, nonetheless, has only one end precisely because it is rational. That end is, for Aquinas, knowing and loving God, who is the ultimate rational principle.[5] Whereas Augustine's theory defines humans through their causal relationship to a supreme rational God, Aquinas additionally argues that the natural purpose and inclination of humans is to subsume themselves into that supreme reason, mirroring Aristotle more than Plato.[6] The Thomist approach maps onto notions of order insofar as the universal reason into which humans subsume themselves reveals to them their interconnectedness in a hierarchy alongside others, and this is the means by which society is both ontologically formed and normatively justified. Social and political order within theories of immanence, then, are a necessary manifestation of the loss of individuality to a pre-determined hierarchical and rational structure which is both empirically evident and normatively right. In that regard, theories of immanent order share assumptions of innate human nature, objective knowledge and universal reason with the cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

More obviously, theories of immanent order also reflect the soul within Kierkegaard's concept of the person – that is, the aspects of the person which are infinite, eternal and necessary. That is not to say that immanent order is a perfect representation of the soul in the context of international order. Importantly, these theories of immanent order, because they occur within the context of a medieval Christian debate about the nature of God, necessarily grapple with divine freedom and the potential arbitrariness of divine will, which are aspects more associated with the body. Theirs is an attempt to synthesise those aspects with reason. But the outcome is to thoroughly subsume the finite, temporal and necessary aspects of the body into the soul and, as noted, they therefore overemphasise transcendent value at the expense of human freedom within international order. This is the same critique that Dreyfus, through Kierkegaard, applies to 'Greek philosophy' and those scholars who rely upon it.[7]

By contrast, theories of imposed order give a much greater role to divine freedom and will. They emerged from a rejection of the constraints of reason on the supposedly omnipotent Judeo-Christian God, rebelling against Platonic and Aristotelian natural philosophy. One of the most prominent theorists of imposed order was William of Ockham. He rejected the idea, central to theories of immanent order, that all entities possess an innate nature reflective of a universal rational principle. Ockham extended this to God, whom he claimed

[5] Ibid, p.36
[6] Ibid, p.37
[7] Dreyfus, 'What Monster Then Is Man'; Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*

did not create the world according to a necessary rational plan but did so through a free act of will, producing a contingent universe. By implication, God could have instead created an infinite possible number of alternative worlds or, indeed, could alter this world according to His whim.[8] Metaphysically, then, innate natures are replaced by highly contingent wills. This also removes the idea of a *rational* foundation for the natural or political orders (though not a foundation in itself). Epistemologically, the status of objective knowledge is less assured, given that it does not exist independently of the creator of a world, and space is opened for subjectivity. Ontologically, there is no natural hierarchy of interconnected entities so much as a series of singular existents disconnected from everything to the extent that order is not even reliant on logical cause and effect.[9] These assumptions so far mirror Kierkegaard's qualified foundationalism and its metaphysical and epistemological implications.

And yet, there is a rational logic in the world, even if it is not as all-encompassing as theorists of immanent order contend. Theorists of imposed order therefore do not entirely reject the idea of reason, they simply make it contingent on a free and omnipotent God. Indeed, this presence of God as a foundation for knowledge – even if not a rational foundation – is one reason why theories of imposed order do not fully reflect Kierkegaard's redefinition of subjectivity into lower and higher forms.[10] For Ockham, God exercised 'ordinary power' in order to maintain the natural order according to rational laws, but retained the ability to freely use 'absolute power' to abrogate those laws at will – this, then, is the explanation for miracles in the scripture.[11] Interestingly, God's 'absolute power' applies to moral laws as well, insofar as God can willingly abrogate seemingly universal normative principles. In an echo of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Ockham cited the example of Abraham and Isaac to argue that "because Abraham received the command about sacrificing his son, he was obliged to prepare himself to kill his innocent son; and yet he was obliged to take care not to kill other innocents, because it was commanded to him simply to sacrifice his son, and not others."[12] Ockham's theory of imposed order, then, captures that aspect of freedom which in Kierkegaard's writing is represented by the ability to act according to an unconditional commitment, out of love, and in a way which is utterly unintelligible in relation to rational natural or normative laws. In other words, it incorporates subjective belief as hierarchically superior to objective knowledge and universal values. It therefore comes far closer to synthesising the body and soul as well as human freedom and transcendent value than theories of immanent order.

The question then becomes whether theories of imposed order *fully* replicate the Kierkegaardian synthesis. If they do, then they can resolve the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value *and* translate such concepts into terms of international order. It is promising when Bain notes, referencing Etienne

[8] Bain, *Political Theology*, pp.47-8
[9] Ibid, p.48
[10] See Chapter 6.
[11] Bain, *Political Theology*, pp.49-50
[12] William of Ockham, quoted in Bain, *Political Theology*, p.49

Gilson, that the purpose of theories of imposed order is to "discipline the relation between the revelation of Jerusalem and the reason of Athens."[13] This, in other words, is the same goal as the Kierkegaardian synthesis, to rectify the imbalance between the body and soul. And, as noted above, Ockham's approach is similar to Kierkegaard's in his recognition of the importance of soul with its objective knowledge and universal, abstract principles, but his subordination of that mode to the bodily emphasis on subjective belief and deeply involved unconditional commitments. There is, however, a crucial difference between the two: whereas Kierkegaard is discussing *human* freedom, Ockham is discussing *divine* freedom. For Ockham, then, God remains as an ultimate arbiter of knowledge and moral claims – that is, a strong normative foundation exists to justify the imposition of divine will. For Kierkegaard, there is no strong foundation to anchor notions of absolute human freedom. Kierkegaard's perspective is therefore more in tune with Bain's assessment of the contemporary international order (and, indeed, of ES theorists such as Wight). In this perspective, the remnants of a discourse of immanent order are evident in appeals to supposedly rational solidarist norms, but precisely because the death of God has removed their foundational claim, these norms are threatened by the free imposition of human will within a discourse of imposed order. And human will cannot be assumed to necessarily be right, unlike divine will. In Bain's words:

> "The theory of immanent order provides a sense of a transcendent truth that qualifies the freedom to pursue self-chosen wants and desires. But in a constructed world, consistent with the theory of imposed order, this transcendent truth is an artefact of the same freedom that it is meant to regulate. This is a consequence of substituting human decision in place of God when trying to reconcile the demands of freedom with the requirements of order."[14]

This has negative implications for the ability of theories of imposed order to synthesise human freedom and transcendent value. In Ockham's approach, God was simultaneously all-powerful *and* all-good, ensuring that the exercise of His freedom did not compromise the freedom of others. When replicated in the human world, this guarantee is removed, meaning that subjective belief does not represent the transcendence of objective knowledge so much as a return to base instincts. In Kierkegaardian terms, whereas God's subjectivity is necessarily a form of *higher* subjectivity, human subjectivity is instead a form of *lower* subjectivity. Consequently, the free exercise of human will is reconceived as a negative which may harm others and, crucially, curtail their own potential for freedom. In other words, following the death of God, theories of imposed order deprioritise subjective belief and human freedom in favour of objective knowledge and universal principles. This is particularly evident in Bain's translation of theories of imposed order onto international order through Hobbesian thought.

[13] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.38
[14] Ibid, p.212

B. Political Theology and International Thought

According to Bain, the Hobbesian account of international order is linked to Hobbes's theological views. Like Ockham's theory of imposed order, Hobbes begins from the metaphysical assumption of a totally free God, unbound by rational laws and capable of creating the world by will alone. This assumption is then transplanted onto humans, whom Hobbes claims are not connected by an innate rational nature, instead assigning meaning to the world around them according to their own will and resembling totally unconnected "singular existents."[15] Any relations between humans are therefore externally applied to them through an act of will, and this has the effect of epistemologically prioritising the "empirical observation and investigation of efficient causes" over detached contemplation of abstract, universal truths.[16] This is the basis of Hobbes's state of nature, a pre-political realm wherein free humans impose relations on those around them, thereby bringing order to chaos. The origin of states, for Hobbes, is the amalgamation of speech acts by free "singular existents" who agree to form a civil constitution under a sovereign. States, or their sovereigns, then engage in a similar process of imposing relations on one another to establish an international order onto prior anarchy (and this is why Bain describes Hobbes as a theorist of order rather than the oft-assumed theorist of anarchy).[17]

Importantly, because the constitutions and covenants entered into by humans and states in the Hobbesian account are not derived from an innate nature or hierarchical interconnectedness, they are also not directed towards a final cause, or *telos*. Instead, reason in the Hobbesian account takes the form of efficient causes, or a logical series of cause and effect, which Hobbes describes as 'natural laws'.[18] This is the form of reason which justifies the authority of sovereigns within international order, the end result of a causal chain that begins with the metaphysical assumption of humans as unconnected "singular existents." But taken alone, Hobbes argued that 'natural law' leads to the "perfectly rational" accumulation of power without consideration for what is right. The result of this rational accumulation of power would be a form of ideological despotism, similar to Wight's concern that Kant's philosophy could justify the sort of totalitarianism of the mid-20th century. For Hobbes, the worry was that a purely logical approach would bolster the authority of different Christian confessions, and that their incompatible claims to a single, universal truth would result in war.[19] Consequently, Hobbes also introduced the idea of 'prophetic law' which derives from God's will and is revealed in scripture. These laws concern normative principles of right and wrong, rather than logical causes, and must be understood alongside 'natural laws' in order for a sovereign to wield their authority rightly.[20] In this way, Hobbesian thought takes the original concern of

[15] Ibid, p.129
[16] Ibid
[17] William Bain, 'Thomas Hobbes as a Theorist of Anarchy: A Theological Interpretation', *History of European Ideas* 41:1 (2015), pp.20-1
[18] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.132
[19] Ibid, pp.133-4
[20] Ibid

theories of imposed order with freedom, and contrasts it to theories of immanent order which, he claims, "deploy the 'senseless and insignificant' ideas of the ancients in the service of a chimerical universal monarchy."[21] A Hobbesian imposed international order is therefore a voluntary association of free wills which subsumes neither states nor singular humans under a universal reason, thereby ostensibly preserving their freedom.

But the form of freedom which Hobbes defends is far from the Kierkegaardian understanding. For Kierkegaard, freedom is a process of becoming, of straddling both objective knowledge and subjective belief in order to reach a state of higher subjectivity which defines a person as uniquely different from all other humans. In that sense, it specifically rejects any attempt to define the individual as a part of a group, especially when that group holds "any deciding significance"[22] over the person's actions. The Hobbesian international order, though, not only defines humans as undifferentiated units within a state and international order, it also does so in a mechanistic way which subordinates their subjective beliefs to objective knowledge. The result is that while Hobbes rejects the universal principles of immanent order, he replaces them with a transcendent, universal, structural logic instead. Freedom is not attained; the manner of human subjugation is altered.

Taking these points in turn, humans in the Hobbesian account are undifferentiated units, defined only by their relation to a political order, whether that be state-based or international. Humans are "discrete things in nature, complete in themselves and comprehensible in terms of their own powers of sensation, imagination and desire."[23] For Kierkegaard, though, humans are not necessarily discrete, only reaching a level of definitional uniqueness when they exhibit freedom. Nor are they complete in themselves, being instead riven between the body and soul and requiring an external unconditional commitment to give them their meaning. Without this commitment, humans are either incomplete animals or atomistic units within a larger 'complete' whole, such as the state. The Kierkegaardian individual is also not comprehensible insofar as the unconditional commitment cannot be made intelligible to other humans according to the accepted normative language of a particular community or universal reason. And the fact that comprehensibility is achieved through empirical observation of "sensation, imagination and desire" relates humans back to a chain of causal logic which makes knowledge of them independent of the knower – in other words, it underemphasises subjectivity in favour of objective knowledge. This latter point is especially evident in Hobbes's characterisation of humans as atomically constructed entities responding to causal inputs through pleasure and displeasure, their nature as rational beings defining their existence.[24] This leaves no scope for

[21] Ibid, p.135
[22] Søren Kierkegaard, 'The Single Individual: Two Notes Concerning My Work as an Author' in Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.106
[23] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.136 – my emphasis.
[24] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.37-40

the ability to define oneself as separate from the same efficient causes which impact all other humans, eradicating the scope for freedom.

The undifferentiated nature of humans in the Hobbesian account is further evidenced by Oakeshott's statement that they "may be collected together, may be added, may be substituted, or made to represent one another," but, he goes on, they "can never modify one another or compose a whole in which their individuality is lost."[25] In one sense, this captures a specific stage of development in the Kierkegaardian framework: *mediation* occurs when humans enter into a common (that is, universal) normative community from the stage of lower immediacy and become part of a whole. They are, in that case, collected together, substitutable and representative of other members of that community.[26] But in entering this community, the human has been modified by the other members of that community in a sort of intersubjective socialisation, contrary to Oakeshott's characterisation. Furthermore, humans can also enter such a community by falling back into it from higher subjectivity, that is by abandoning their individuality in favour of the security of a common normative bond. They then re-enter the universal. In that case, "their individuality *is* lost," again contrary to Oakeshott's statement. Indeed, by composing a whole, especially when that whole gains "deciding significance" over a person, their possibility of achieving individuality is necessarily foreclosed because they must define themselves by that community.[27] The Hobbesian account treats international order as a normative community, according to both 'natural laws' and 'prophetic laws', and therefore explains the process of mediation well. But its definition of humans denies the possibility for transcendence of that community towards higher immediacy, and therefore cannot account for the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value in the Kierkegaardian understanding.

Hobbes's "singular existents," then, remain in the universal. That may not be immediately apparent, for the Hobbesian international order is imposed, and therefore rejects the universal, rational human nature of theories of immanent order. But the emphasis on efficient causes replaces that innate nature with an alternative universal – causal logic. This Hobbesian universal is akin to Kierkegaard's "system for God"[28] in which international order is explained by reference to the human condition, which compels people to pursue self-defined desires according to inputs of pleasure and pain, and which are fully observable and understandable. From a chain of efficient causes, Hobbes can theorise from an anarchic state of nature to an imposed order based on atomistic responses to sensory inputs.[29] In the Hobbesian account of international order, then, humans are treated as manifestations of objective features, unable to freely determine a future different from the cause-effect prescriptions which logic dictates. Like Kierkegaard's

[25] Michael Oakeshott, quoted in Bain, *Political Theology*, p.137
[26] See Chapter 6.
[27] Kierkegaard, 'Single Individual', p.106
[28] Kierkegaard, *CUP*, p.100
[29] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.129

lower subjectivity, their actions are exhausted in their nature. They coincide totally with the world around them, becoming cogs in its mechanistic interactions rather than standing apart from it.

Of course, Hobbes tempers this universal logic with 'prophetic law', which combines the freedom of sovereigns with the need for restraint. The addition of 'prophetic law' is what stops his international order from being merely an extension of a universal logic from humans onto broader communities. But this does not resolve the issue that the Hobbesian international order is fundamentally universalistic, albeit of a different and less explicit form than in theories of immanent order. 'Prophetic law' – the normative rules derived from scripture – introduces an element of universal values into international order with the source of that universality being God, the normative foundation.[30] These values, furthermore, are reached in part from reason, insofar as sovereigns must resort to rational interpretation when scripture is not entirely forthcoming. Normative rules, then, are reached by both reason and revelation, and the conflation of the two cements the latent bias towards objective knowledge within the Hobbesian account. As Bain notes, "the laws of nature express, not moral subjectivism or amorality, but […] an *objective moral standard* that is equally applicable in the domestic and international realms."[31] The conflation of reason and revelation, or the 'natural laws' and 'prophetic law', also means that following the death of God, theories of IR based on the Hobbesian account have been able to easily substitute God as a normative foundation with the language of science. The result is theories like structural realism, which describe an international *system* governed by mechanistic laws of cause and effect adapted from Hobbesian metaphysical assumptions. The flawed Hobbesian attempt to synthesise body and soul, human freedom and transcendent value, results in a universal logic in which international order is established over humans "according to rules which govern their behaviour,"[32] far from the freedom Kierkegaard discussed. It is worth quoting Bain at length, here:

> "When transposed into the language of mechanical philosophy, the value of freedom is expressed as the independency of the parts of a machine. A spring is a spring, nothing more and nothing less, and its identity depends on nothing else but itself to exist. A spring may be combined with other parts to form a machine, and the behaviour of these parts is governed by contingent relations of cause and effect, yet it remains a spring. In other words, the relationships into which these parts enter do not transform their identity such that they are something else. Individuals similarly enter into constitutional arrangements for various contingent purposes, but their fundamental freedom remains intact, and, indeed, is often enhanced by these arrangements."[33]

[30] Ibid, p.142
[31] Ibid, p.150 – my emphasis.
[32] Ibid, p.166
[33] Ibid

If the value of freedom as defined by "independency," then it necessarily eschews the involved commitment of subjective belief, in which the individual is dependent on their beliefs for their being. Individuals are not the "parts of a machine," which would imply that they are lesser than the whole to which they belong (in other words, it would imply that the universal is greater than the individual). Nor are individuals "governed" by efficient causes. They lovingly obey their unconditional commitment, which gives them their meaning subjectively and which raises them above the universal. The Hobbesian account, then, demonstrates that theories of imposed order do not sufficiently account for human freedom in international order and so cannot redefine it such that it is commensurable with transcendent value.

This, in fairness, is not what Bain seeks to do in his political theology. He is instead highlighting the theological basis of contemporary understandings of international order and raising the issue of reason and freedom within that order. In this, he succeeds, and that is why despite the failure of theories of imposed order to synthesise human freedom and transcendent value, they are still useful to this thesis. As the above discussion has demonstrated, they provide a way of translating the Kierkegaardian framework into the language of IR. Consequently, the rest of this thesis seeks to follow on from the questions raised by Bain's political theology. Kierkegaardian thought provides a route to synthesis of immanent and imposed order which political theology nears but does not reach. It therefore also provides a way of resolving the paradox of human freedom and transcendent value *within* the contemporary international order without destroying that fragile pre-existing order. The first step in doing so is to show that Kierkegaard, far from being contemptuous of society's hold over humans, saw its advantages and incorporated it into his redefinition of freedom. In other words, it must be shown that Kierkegaardian thought can account for social order in general and, therefore, international order in particular. In this, it is worth examining Kierkegaard's own political theology.

Kierkegaard and Political Theology

Kierkegaard's thought interacts well with Bain's political theology because Kierkegaard also had a political theology. But the limitations of translating Kierkegaard's concept of the person through Bain arise because Kierkegaard's political theology is rooted in a different interpretation of Biblical scripture. Consequently, while the language used by Bain – and derived from the medieval debate between opposing theories of order – is a useful tool for opening IR to the Kierkegaardian framework, it must be deployed in support of an alternative ontological perspective which is distinctive to Kierkegaard. In other words, whilst Bain's political theology addresses the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological concerns raised by Kierkegaard, it does not derive the same conclusions as the latter and this explains its limitations in addressing resolving the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value in international order. This section will explore Kierkegaard's political theology, translating it into the terms already discussed in this thesis. The result is an ontological and normative approach which rejects all universals, whether

immanent or imposed, and thereby conceives of international order from the perspective of the free individual rather than the state or its sovereign.

A. Political Theology Against Christendom

The first point of note is that Kierkegaard's central question in his political theology is similar to that of the previously discussed theorists of immanent and imposed order and, by extension, Bain. Kierkegaard asks where sovereignty's authority lies in the modern age, whether it is found in God or nature.[34] In other words, he is attempting to locate a normative foundation for political order, and the two alternatives he considers equate to theories of immanent order (nature) and of imposed order (God). Notably, Saitya Brata Das, in his work *The Political Theology of Kierkegaard*, refers to "immanence as release *from*, or autonomy [imposed order] as freedom *from* all that is heteronymous," again equating imposed order with human freedom and immanent order as submission to transcendent value such that one can release themselves from their unique situatedness.[35] This is the same motivation behind the debate between immanent and imposed order. However, where Kierkegaard differs from this medieval debate is that he is not primarily concerned with the nature of God in a metaphysical sense. Whereas Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham were discussing the nature of God and their arguments had ontological and normative implications for humans, Kierkegaard began with an ontological observation. Specifically, he noted that the political order of his age was characterised by an alliance between the state and the church and that the actions of this alliance revealed how humans actually understood the nature of God.[36] Kierkegaard concluded that the impasse between theories of immanent and imposed order had resulted in a metaphysical confusion in which, following the death of God, immanence exacerbated rather than moderated the oppressive tendencies of imposed human will.

Taking a step back, Kierkegaard believed that the Christian God who could act as a foundation for knowledge and morality had passed long before the 19th century. The alliance between church and state had replaced Him with the God of Christendom instead. Christendom was, for Kierkegaard, wholly coincident with the world so that to be a good Christian meant also to be a good citizen of a state.[37] Morality had, then, become a public service to be provided "cheaply and comfortably" like "public security, water, lighting, roads [and] pavements."[38] The implication was that the Christian God – who called individuals to their unconditional commitment and was thereby the condition for freedom – was already dead, replaced by an ethical community or, in other words, a universal. Such a community – the state – was imposed

[34] Mike Grimshaw, 'The Exception of Transcendence: The Political Theology of Kierkegaard and Das', *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 13:2 (2021), p.189
[35] Saitya Brata Das, *The Political Theology of Kierkegaard* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p.1
[36] David Law, 'Kierkegaard's Anti-Ecclesiology: The Attack on Christendom, 1854-5', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7:2 (2007), pp.86-108
[37] Ibid, pp.92-3
[38] Søren Kierkegaard, 'The Moment' in Hong & Hong (eds.) *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p.109

through acts of will, leveraging its worldly material power to project norms of its choosing on its citizens.[39] But what makes the state a universal ethical community rather than the wholly arbitrary imposition of human will is that it *justifies* itself through reason, presenting itself in the image of God.[40] So far this resembles both Hobbes's international thought and the Deweyan observation that traditions of thought sought to legitimise themselves by appeal to reason. And, indeed, Kierkegaard recognises the necessity of such a "rational entity as the state"[41] when he argues that humans must enter the universal before they can transcend it to higher subjectivity and experience freedom. Reason, expressed through the state, can emancipate humans from base animal needs which prevent them from considering their ethical obligations.

But the state then suffers from the same flaws as noted in Hobbesian international thought: the ultimately imposed nature of political authority reveals it as a 'will to power', but the injection of immanence gives that power an absolute and universal end to tend towards. The unholy union of immanent and imposed order co-opts religion "as a supporter and guarantor of the legitimacy" of the state, which is then framed as "an expression and unfolding of God's will. For Kierkegaard this is pernicious, for it results in the conflation of the secular and the religious […] As a result of this confusion, being a Christian comes to be understood simply as being a good citizen. The 'Christian' is the person who fully supports the state and its values, for the state is the expression of the divine will."[42] Kierkegaard, on the other hand, believed the true Christian was synonymous with the free individual. In other words, the material progress achieved within the state and the political freedom this can lead to, does not translate into the spiritual world where Kierkegaard roots his more radical understanding of freedom. And the secularisation of divine will within the state, while certainly removing a foundation for knowledge and morality, has not negated the ability of states to impose their own morality on citizens. Though Kierkegaard sees this in the state religion of 19th century Denmark, it takes on a darker form in the 20th century totalitarian states of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. In terms of Bain's political theology, Kierkegaard's assessment divorces freedom from theories of imposed order and highlights a stubborn and dangerous aspect to theories of immanent order, especially their emphasis on hierarchy. The most dangerous aspects of both theories can support one another in a world without foundations, so long as humans accept their citizenship of states as "a matter of course rather than through our decision."[43]

The fact that this situation is arbitrary is noted by Kierkegaard, who argues that "it is abracadabra that the human protects the divine" and he goes on to ask "how in the world, then, could something like that occur to such a rational entity as the state?"[44] The answer lies in the overemphasis of the soul's infinite, eternal and necessary aspects which treat the world in terms of universal, absolute concepts. The alliance of the

[39] Law, 'Anti-Ecclesiology', p.91
[40] Grimshaw, 'Transcendence', p.189
[41] Kierkegaard, 'The Moment', p.112
[42] Law, 'Anti-Ecclesiology', p.101
[43] Ibid, p.93
[44] Kierkegaard, 'The Moment, p.112

state and the church aims (or, rather, pretends) to be an absolute concept,[45] in which the state claims absolute sovereignty and the church becomes the "foundation of worldly sovereignties."[46] And because the soul focuses on stasis or recurring patterns, this suggests that change is highly restricted: the state has been imposed by the universal logic of human will and maintains itself by appeal to eternal and infinite principles of immanence, over which it holds sway. The God of Christendom, for Kierkegaard, then becomes "either the legislative principle of the world, or a regulative principle of the world […] the principle on which every hegemony is founded."[47]

The conflation of immanent and imposed order allows the state to self-justify and self-legitimise. More importantly, it allows the state-based international order to do so too, by holding normative hegemony over the minds of humans within it (hence Bull's question of whether humans "need to liberate thought and action from [international order's] confines by proclaiming new concepts and normative principles […] against the existing system").[48] And this presents a problem for political theology, according to Kierkegaard. Political theology is animated by the idea that modernity – the secularisation of God within human institutions like the state – is in crisis because while God possessed the authority to impose His will in *exception* to natural laws, humans do not have such authority. Thus the sovereignty of the state is called into question and the legitimacy of the state-based international order is undermined (indeed, Carl Schmitt, who coined the term 'political theology', famously defined 'sovereign' as "he who decides on the exception").[49] In other words, political theology assumes a fragile international order in a state of ontological and normative flux. This is, to some degree, reflected in mainstream IR scholarship too, as discussed in Part I of this thesis and especially evident in the ES's debate between solidarists and pluralists. But the conflation of immanent and imposed order which Kierkegaard notes presents the opposite conclusion: the ontological and normative dominance of the state is stubborn and maintained by means of inherently oppressive institutions rooted in the discourse of immanence. More forthrightly, a self-justifying and self-legitimising international order which is its own absolute end has no 'outside' to escape to, and therefore no hope for human freedom to challenge transcendent value.[50] There can be no decision made which is not in accordance with the universal reason of the international order and therefore no exceptions. As Michael Burn writes, "Kierkegaard's prime contention against the established order is its failure to force individuals to make decisions and exist as a 'single individual'."[51] There is, then, no such thing as sovereignty within the state-based international order, for the order itself is sovereign. There is no crisis.

[45] Grimshaw, 'Transcendence', p.189
[46] Das, *Political Theology*, p.27
[47] Ibid, p.33
[48] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p.266
[49] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p.5
[50] Grimshaw, 'Transcendence', p.190
[51] Michael Burns, 'The Self and Society in Kierkegaard's Anti-Climacus Writings', *The Haythrop Journal* 51:4 (2010), p.630

B. Political Theology For Christianity

The above is essentially Kierkegaard's critique of the political theology of his age. Given that it anticipates Schmittian political theology, it can also be leveraged as a critique of the previously discussed work. Importantly, regardless of their origins or intent, Kierkegaard argues that theories of immanent and imposed order have the same effect: by treating God as a monist all-powerful being, they overemphasise the objective, absolute concepts of the soul and transcendent value to the detriment of the unique, subjective situatedness of the body and human freedom. Metaphysically, then, they establish a prison of universality which, when translated onto humanity, is evident either in an instrumental logic or in natural reason. The two can be mutually supporting such that the potentiality for humans to envisage alternative ontological or normative situations is narrowed. International order is not, then, torn between imposed order and the remnants of immanent order, as Bain suggests; it is instead subjugated by both, in service to a monist metaphysics.

But the world which Kierkegaard observes is not characterised entirely by such absolutist forces. He sees – not least in himself – an impulse to break free from the confines of the prevailing order. This perspective, derived from Schelling before him, is a form of eschatological political theology. That is, it assumes that there is an alternative beyond the current order – indeed, infinite alternatives – to which individuals can escape. There is the possibility of transcendence beyond the confines of the state-based international order, the possibility of making the sovereign decision to be the exception and thereby "[question] any claim of sovereignty based on metaphysical monism which is burst asunder by theological eschatology."[52] In more familiar terms, Kierkegaard's eschatological approach assumes there is a way to entirely escape immanent order, to conceive of international order as an imposed order but one in which freedom is regained, not just for God but for humans too. The key to this claim is that by acting towards an alternative possible future, individuals can prove that the state and the international order are not absolute concepts.[53] They therefore lose their main power to define humans in terms of the universal concepts which they themselves impose[54] – that is, they cease to be able to define humans as citizens of the state, and humans can therefore conceive of themselves and act in terms different to the prevailing order. The individual, exhibiting their human freedom as understood by Kierkegaard, therefore negates "world-historical politics," which is the unfolding of history as a universal reason or logic of progress.[55] This allows the individual to make an exception of themselves and become sovereign while at the same time undoing the sovereignty of the international order. In short, the individual "disrupts the world from *within* itself, whereas that which can

[52] Grimshaw, 'Transcendence', p.189
[53] Ibid
[54] Das, *Political Theology*, p.36
[55] Ibid, p.5

be termed the concept [any universal reason or logic] enables the sovereignty – or world of the divine – to continue, as is."[56]

Kierkegaard achieves this reconceptualisation not by abandoning the idea of God (and, by extension, metaphysics). He abandons only the God of Christendom, the monist God underpinning theories of immanent and imposed order. In its place Kierkegaard substitutes the God of Christianity. The God of Christianity is, as outlined in Chapter 1, not the metaphysical conception of God but the idea that "all is possible" – that the factors of the self must originally have been in "right relationship from the Hand of God" and therefore a seemingly impossible resolution to their paradoxical relationship between body and soul, human freedom and transcendent truth is, in fact, possible.[57] God is the calling to an individual's unconditional commitment.[58] In other words, the God of Christendom is a supreme being in whose image humans are made imperfectly; discussions of God's power and freedom can only be translated imperfectly onto humans, hence the crisis which political theology identifies following the death of God. But the Christian God is instead the condition for freedom, the possibility of an individual's unconditional commitment that is their subjective truth; individuals are not pale reflections of this God's freedom but the purest manifestations of it. Individuals for Kierkegaard therefore attain a level of divinity through which they can achieve an "eschatological suspension of worldly nomos,"[59] that is, a suspension of the ethical ends in pursuit of their subjective truth *outside* of the contemporary order in which most humans reside.

What does the Kierkegaardian international order look like, then? At first glance, very much like Hobbesian international thought suggests. Kierkegaard sees the value of states, and indeed of state churches, as providing a rational means of humans coming together within an ethical community to transcend lower subjectivity and realise their obligations to one another. In the Kierkegaardian framework, order is a means of humans escaping the animal impulses of lower subjectivity and reaching the universal through mediation. Indeed, Kierkegaard eventually came to consider the alliance between state and church as a "well-intentioned untruth."[60] In this sense, the state-based international order is a necessary imposed order which elevates humans from a 'state of nature' of lower subjectivity into the ethical sphere of mediation, where universal reason binds them together. The problem is when this reason is treated as immanent and therefore closes off the potentiality for transcendence from mediation to higher subjectivity. It becomes the only sovereign. At this point, oppressive hegemony must be countered by the "essentially Christian" realisation that "my kingdom is not of this world"[61] and that for an actor within the international order to achieve

[56] Grimshaw, 'Transcendence', p.192
[57] Dreyfus, 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology', pp.100-1
[58] Dreyfus, *Existentialism in Literature and Film*
[59] Das, *Political Theology*, p.4
[60] Søren Kierkegaard, 'What Must Be Done' in Hong & Hong (eds.) *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p.33
[61] Gospel of John, 18:36, *KJV*

sovereignty requires "a break, the most profound, the most incurable break with this world."[62] By doing so, an individual exhibiting human freedom prioritises their subjective truth over the objectivity of the international order and so proves that the latter is not absolutely sovereign, that it is not a self-contained concept. In turn, that individual weakens the authority of the international order to impose behaviour-limiting definitions on humans, such as the conceptualisation of humans as citizens of a state or a particular confession (we might expand this to include members of a class, gender, race or any other category in the contemporary order). For Kierkegaard, then, human freedom within international order is to transcend the international order according to a subjective belief. In this sense, he has redefined not only human freedom but also transcendent value eschatologically such that the two are mutually supportive.

Kierkegaard's synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value is similar to Bain's understanding of imposed order: both see universal values as contingent, arbitrary and fragile, at best increasingly irrelevant to social order and at worst detrimental to human freedom. But in his reconceptualisation, Kierkegaard frames the individual (specifically, the true Christian individual) as a sufficiently strong source of values to act as a normative foundation of social order, rejecting Bain's suggestion that normative force need be concentrated in statespeople. This suggests that the Kierkegaardian individual cannot only proclaim their subjectivity against objectifying universal values; they must also relate their subjectivity back to the universal – that is, back to the order within which they reside. Without being able to make themselves intelligible to others again, the Kierkegaardian individual's assertion of their individual freedom risks appearing as madness. Indeed, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky criticises Kierkegaard for espousing an individualism so radical that it has no place in society: the character of Father Ferapont, representing the Lutheran perspective which Dostoyevsky rejects in favour of Russian Orthodoxy, is portrayed as a lonely and insane ascetic.[63] However, this is an unfair criticism, for Kierkegaard does relate his individual – and the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value which it represents – back to social order. Moreover, he does so in a way that retains the separation between objectivity and subjectivity which are collapsed together in the poststructuralist account.

A Kierkegaardian individual who has synthesised body and soul, human freedom and transcendent value, does not stand apart from society but relates to it in a way that gives it meaning only through that individual's unconditional commitment. That unconditional commitment creates an individual's world; it is the basis from which they impose order on the world around them. Society – the universal ethical community which makes our actions intelligible to other humans – is reframed as a subordinate entity to that unconditional commitment and, consequently, is seen by an individual as no longer absolute but as

[62] Søren Kierkegaard, 'A Challenge To Me' in Hong & Hong (eds.) *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Hong & Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p.17
[63] Dostoyevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, p.168

contingent and provisional.[64] For an individual, then, truth is subjective in two ways: firstly, their 'thrownness' into a temporal and historical context prevents them from accessing a universal, objective truth, as demonstrated by society's rootedness in an intersubjective ethical language. Secondly, meaning is, for them, unique in that their unconditional commitment is theirs alone, unintelligible to anyone else and incapable of being shared.[65] The continuous process of recognising truth's subjectivity exposes society's arbitrariness as an imposed order lacking normative foundations.[66] An individual therefore perceives society as what Kierkegaard calls a "negative association" in which humans gain an identity only by their membership of a group and the internalisation of its values without critical reflection.[67] And that group – in this case, the state and its church – gains its power only through the numerical growth of its members, the opposite of the true Christian who exhibits their freedom *apart from* the crowd.[68]

This is the state of the contemporary international order. It is fragile because it can only be upheld so long as a sufficient number of humans obey its norms; these norms lack an inherent and independent normative foundation. It is, again, similar to Bain's argument regarding the imposed nature of *jus cogens* as customary rather than divine law. Kierkegaard does not deny the existence of such a social order. But he attempts to prevent the recognition of its arbitrariness from undermining it and, subsequently, 'deifying' humans such that everything is permitted. In short, he wishes to prevent the totalising logic of the universal from depriving individuals of their freedom. Herein lies the individual's importance to international order: they demonstrate the contingency of transcendent values and the moral necessity of the primacy of human freedom. Truth is never certain; values are always contingent.[69] The individual therefore possesses sufficient freedom, regardless of their physical security, that they can act as the normative foundation for an imposed order by their sheer example. By having an unconditional commitment – a truth for which they alone are willing to live and die – they provide a plural basis for all values while acting as an example to other humans of how to act. They perform the eschatological movement which breaks free of the false immanence of the contemporary order and punctures hegemonic claims to sovereignty by that order. To quote Camus: "I rebel, therefore we exist."[70]

Again, this relates to the synthesis of the body and soul within the individual, as well as the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value outside of the individual. Being a synthesis of the finite and the infinite, the individual is neither fully constrained by the universal nor so detached from society to be peddling mere abstract concepts. Furthermore, for Kierkegaard the infinite within us exists by virtue of

[64] Alistair Hannay, 'Introduction' in Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (London: Penguin, 1985), pp.27-8; Mark Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus: Søren Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001) pp.9-10
[65] Dooley, *Exodus*, p.3
[66] Ibid, pp.8-9
[67] Dooley, *Exodus*, pp.9-10
[68] Grimshaw, 'Anti-Ecclesiology', p.93
[69] Dooley, *Exodus*, p.xviii
[70] Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Bower (London: Penguin, 2013), p.10

Christ, who identified with the victims of the social order – prostitutes, lepers, the poor.[71] The specific Christian heritage of Western civilisation, combined with the assertion that human freedom is the ultimate normative good, therefore requires that an individual's actions should be oriented toward unselfish concern and respect for the human freedom *of all*.[72] And concern for the Kierkegaardian freedom to forge one's world, as opposed to, say, political freedom, requires the denial of authority over the choices of others. After all, another human can only achieve individuality and its concomitant freedom by being given the free choice to relate to the social order as they determine through their own unconditional commitment.[73] It is for this reason that later existentialists inspired by Kierkegaard have rejected the ideological aspects of revolutions, notably the French and Bolshevik Revolutions, while maintaining the right to assert freedom against any objectifying universal values (Raymond Aron noted that "a follower of Kierkegaard cannot at the same time be a follower of Marx.")[74] This is not to deny collective action. But such action which is directed toward purely abstract commitments (such as, for example, the solidarist discourse on human rights) is deemed normatively wrong so long as it fails to concretely affirm individual identities.[75] Indeed, while Kierkegaard saw the *potential* of the Revolutions of 1848 in Europe to achieve "radical individuation," he believed they ultimately focused on equal political rights rather than self-development towards human freedom, and that they remained entrapped in the drive for "the numerical […] These movements cultivated subservience to a national or class ideal, rather than developing a genuine individualism."[76] Human freedom is "not based on an abstract 'all or nothing' [but] accepts the value of associative links in which people preserve and even strengthen their individual identities."[77] The international order can, then, be one which is imposed by human will and yet which contains within itself a pluralist normative foundation within those individuals strong enough to support it.

As well as aligning significantly with Bain's political theology, this Kierkegaardian understanding shares many similarities with the poststructuralist approaches discussed in Chapter 5. Notably it suggests a similar 'politics of resistance' which exposes the arbitrariness of the given international order and attempts to open multiple centres of normativity amongst otherwise marginalised people. However, it differs in two ways. First, Kierkegaard's approach defines freedom with such a high bar that it is not enough for a person to simply assert their belief. Indeed, asserting a belief implies that it is intelligible and therefore universalisable and potentially totalising. Rather, Kierkegaard's understanding of freedom ensures that very few people will be able to synthesise human freedom with transcendent value and that, therefore, the number of alternative centres of normativity are strictly qualified by the individual's internal ability to synthesise the body and

[71] Dooley, *Exodus*, pp.11-3
[72] Alistair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.278-9
[73] Ibid, p.281
[74] Camus, *Rebel*; Raymond Aron, *Marxism and the Existentialists*, trans. Weaver, Addis & Weightman (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p.30
[75] Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, p.287
[76] Jamie Aroosi, 'The Causes of Bourgeois Culture: Kierkegaard's Relation to Marx Considered', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42:1 (2016), p.74
[77] Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, p.292; Merold Westphal, 'Kierkegaard's Politics', *Thought* 55:3 (1980), pp.320-32

soul. The consequence of this is that the Kierkegaardian individual, in synthesising human freedom and transcendent value, becomes a normative foundation based on their subjective belief and thanks to the retention of God, albeit reconceived in Kierkegaardian terms. This is counter to poststructuralist anti-foundationalism, but also prevents the poststructuralist fear that linguistic, historical or social forces will turn the assertion of subjective belief into a 'will to power'. The second difference between poststructuralism and Kierkegaard's approach is his prescription is not that all humans ought to pursue an ethics of 'silence and hearing', but that they ought to use reason to arrive at common ethical codes for their community while recognising its limitations, while those individuals capable of synthesising the body and soul act according to their unconditional commitment.

C. Limitations

There is a disjunct between Kierkegaard's political theology and his concept of the person. Throughout his works, Kierkegaard's purpose is to present individuals not as objects or as ideals, but as "the man who at the same moment actually walks by."[78] He argues that the way to achieve this goal is to pursue neighbourly love *as commanded in the scripture*. This raises two problems: first, his political theology seems too abstract to capture the concept of the person as "the man who actually walks by" because it lacks a detailed discussion of intersubjective relations. This makes it insufficient to tackle themes of community, let alone international order. And, second, the normative duty of neighbourly love – which is the means of moderating eschatological impulses and human freedom with a concern for others within a community and transcendent values – is still based on God. This God may not be the monist supreme being of theories of immanent and imposed order, but in order to be justified an individual must still be able to appeal to Him as a common foundation within their ethical community. This was a fair assumption to make in 19th century Denmark, but in the secular (or multi-faith) contemporary international order, it is not a sufficient normative foundation for the sort of eschatological political theology Kierkegaard espouses. This makes it liable to scepticism when deployed to tackle the modern issues raised by normative IR theory.

On the first point, that Kierkegaard neglects a detailed discussion of intersubjective relations, the main charge is that Kierkegaard's concept of the person is directed almost exclusively towards inward spiritual development. Taken to extremes, this means that Kierkegaard could argue that any action which alleviates the oppression of others is morally wrong if it is not done for the right reason, notably to achieve a synthesis of the body and soul within oneself.[79] The individual's impact on international order as an eschatological spur to synthesising human freedom and transcendent value might, then, seem to be a happy coincidence rather than a normative good. This might be acceptable were Kierkegaard to view the alleviation of others' oppression as a good, albeit not a primary one. But in his writings he takes a conservative tone to the social

[78] Kierkegaard, *WL*, p.89
[79] Mélissa Fox-Muraton, 'Kierkegaard and Beauvoir: Existential Ethics as a Humanism', *Kierkegaard Studies* 25:1 (2020), pp.255-6

problems of his age. For example, despite slavery being a major political issue in Denmark at the time (it was banned in the Danish West Indies in 1847), Kierkegaard not only does not reference this in any of his writings on freedom, he even noted that "the times are past when only the powerful and the prominent alone were men – and the others human slaves and serfs,"[80] in contravention of the prevailing reality. More explicitly, Kierkegaard took a conservative tone on women's rights, writing that "outwardly in a way the old remains – for man shall be the woman's master and she shall be submissive to him, but in inwardness everything is transformed, transformed with the aid of this little question to the woman, whether she has deliberated with her conscience about having this man – for a master."[81] Hence, Adorno could criticise Kierkegaard for an "isolated subjectivity" which ignores the meaningful intersubjective relations of the social world in which humans actually reside.[82] And Kierkegaard himself mentioned that "it is always easier to prove one's superiority by being fastidious about everyone else rather than by being severe toward himself."[83] This thesis seeks to base its understanding of international order on a concept of the person, but to move beyond that concept and incorporate the possibility for order itself requires an understanding of intersubjective relations which Kierkegaard's thought may not sufficiently provide.

On the second point, that Kierkegaard's approach relies on appeals to the Christian God, this thesis has already noted that the Kierkegaardian God is a concept which does not necessitate belief in a monist supreme being. Moreover, for Kierkegaard the exercise of neighbourly love is not a normative duty in the sense of a universal moral command, but as an outcome of the ontological state an individual achieves when they synthesise the body and soul, human freedom and transcendent value. In other words, when an individual synthesises their paradoxical aspects and achieves higher subjectivity, their outlook on the world will be such that they cannot help but relate themselves to others through neighbourly love rather than a transactional relationship.[84] This is what allows an individual to rebel against the bonds of international order, breaking universal normative rules, without arbitrarily harming others. The problem is that, though Kierkegaard goes into more detail on what constitutes neighbourly love than this thesis can discuss, the overall concept is ultimately rooted in a reading of Biblical scripture which requires a belief in the sacred source of that scripture and therefore the normative force of its implications. Again, in 19th century Denmark, this was a fair assumption. Indeed, Kierkegaard was essentially arguing for a reconceptualisation of Christianity within a Christian society, rather than bringing back the Christian God and imposing Him on non-believers. But this fundamental assumption cannot be made in the contemporary international order without risking a lapse into Wight's ideological despotism.

[80] Kierkegaard, *WL*, p.84
[81] Ibid, p.139; Fox-Muraton, 'Kierkegaard and Beauvoir', pp.256, 258
[82] Theodor Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.29
[83] Kierkegaard, *WL*, p.156
[84] Fox-Muraton, 'Kierkegaard and Beauvoir', pp.254-5

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Bain's political theology can translate the abstract philosophical concepts of the Kierkegaardian framework into terms of international order. Bain's discussion of the theories of immanent and imposed order captures many of the key aspects of the Kierkegaardian framework, specifically the metaphysical, epistemological and ontological-normative dimensions of the body and soul and of human freedom and transcendent value. Though Bain's approach is on the margins of IR scholarship, it is representative of a normative concern which appears in mainstream theories, most notably the ES. Specifically, it asks how human will can be moderated in an international order which is divided between appeals to freedom and appeals to universal reason. As noted, despite this contribution to the thesis, Bain's political theology does not fully account for a resolution of the paradox in international order because the theological approaches he discusses are both predicated on a monist conception of God, and this entails a latent universalism even in theories of imposed order which seek to justify divine and, by extension, human freedom. However, having redefined the central terms of the thesis in language more suitable to IR, his approach does act as a springboard to incorporate Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology.

Kierkegaard's political theology does two things to advance the conceptualisation of a resolution to the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value in international order. First, it argues that there is an 'outside' to international politics – that is, there is the possibility of transcending the existing international order. In broader terms, this represents a rebalancing of human freedom with transcendent value to reduce the analytical significance of objective knowledge and absolute concepts. Ontologically, it also empowers the individual against the state (and other institutions, such as the church) and so opens space for the exercise of human freedom in international order. And second, without intending to, Kierkegaard offers a first-image conceptualisation of international order. His political theology begins from the perspective of the individual. All order – including, through repeated references to the state, international order – is then understood and defined not in relation to self-legitimising absolute concepts but in terms of how they respond to the individual's exercise of their human freedom. In other words, international order is determined by how it responds to the convulsions brought about by human freedom; it is moved only by the transcendence of those individuals towards sovereignty, and they are the only entities who may claim sovereignty beyond international order. That is, international order is normatively defined by the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value. Where Kierkegaard's political theology requires more development is in its justification for how free individuals can pursue their unconditional commitment without then imposing it on unwilling humans. His religious response is potentially unsuited to a secular international order and may also regress into solipsism if it neglects intersubjective relations in favour of 'inward' spiritual development. Thankfully, Kierkegaard's work did not end with him. He influenced a number of notable secular philosophers who have collectively become known as existentialists.

Chapter 8

Existentialist Phenomenology

The Kierkegaardian concept of the person combined with his eschatological political theology offers a novel way of resolving the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value in international order. But it does not suggest how this conceptualisation of international order could be translated onto a secular age. This is the advantage of Bain's political theology: it is highly cognizant of the difficulty of justifying normative action following the death of God whilst also aware of the need to do so. This chapter will attempt to offer a development of the Kierkegaardian concept of the person and his political theology to make it suitable for a secular (or multi-faith) international order and yet retain the core contributions Kierkegaard made to synthesising human freedom and transcendent value.

Kierkegaard has long been considered the 'father of existentialism' for the influence that his work had on later generations of existentialist thinkers.[1] Existentialism is not a clearly defined school of thought. Rather, it designates a group of thinkers who share a "family resemblance."[2] The core of this resemblance is their starting point for philosophising: they begin with humans, not as rational meditative entities but as existents who experience the material world through the combination of action, feeling and reason.[3] By implication, existentialist philosophers reject the idea of an essential and innate human nature, arguing that a human is first born and then, through their choice and actions, decides what to be.[4] Their resultant works focus on the intimate connection between humans and the world in which they live, and the freedom they possess to relate to that world as they choose. That freedom is so radically unconstrained that it requires the creation of normative values which "honour the reciprocal interdependence of individual lives."[5] In other words, the existentialist approach to freedom mirrors Kierkegaard's concept of freedom but recognises the difficulties of employing such a concept within an inherently intersubjective world. Consequently, a chief goal of existentialism has been to understand how an individual relates to the social order in which they reside. Later existentialist thinkers, particularly those writing in inter-war and post-war France, expanded their concern to include the individual's relation to international order too.

Because existentialism covers such a broad family of thinkers, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to assess all of its varieties. Many existentialist thinkers, for example Heidegger and Sartre, disagreed with one another both intellectually and politically. Furthermore, as much as Kierkegaard may be termed the 'father of existentialism', many later existentialist works reacted against various elements of his own thought, not least

[1] Noreen Khawaja, 'Father Kierkegaard' in Grøn & Rosfort (eds.) *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), pp.153-70
[2] John MacQuarrie, *Existentialism* (London: Penguin, 1973), p.2
[3] Ibid, pp.2-3; David Cooper, 'Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement' in Crowell (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.29-31
[4] Heidegger, *BT*, p.67; Sartre, *EH*, p.20
[5] Cooper, 'Philosophical Movement', p.30

its explicit Christianity. However, this thesis will focus on a methodological approach employed by a sub-set of existentialist thinkers – particularly Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and, as seen in the following chapter, Beauvoir – which offers the potential for a secularised version of the Kierkegaardian framework employed so far. This approach is phenomenology. It is a self-consciously first-image method which reflects many of the themes already discussed in previous chapters: the paradoxical relationship between human freedom and transcendence, as well as their synthesis. Moreover, despite being first and foremost an approach to individual consciousness, phenomenology has been used by existentialist thinkers to conceptualise intersubjective relations within society and international order. It therefore provides a way of retaining the advantages of the Kierkegaardian framework while avoiding its anachronisms.

This chapter will employ phenomenology to conceptualise international order. In doing so, it will concretise the Kierkegaardian framework and his political theology in order to show what a synthesis of body and soul within the individual *is*. The following chapter will then explore the normative implications of this on the paradox of human freedom and transcendent value. This chapter will proceed in three sections. The first section will explain the phenomenological method and its relation to the body and soul in Kierkegaard's concept of the person. The second section will then provide a phenomenological ontology of the individual, essentially translating the Kierkegaardian concept of the person into secular terms. The third section will then offer a phenomenological ontology of international order, with particular focus on institutions in the existentialist sense of the term. Overall, this chapter will show what Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology looks like in the concrete and secularised context of the contemporary international order.

The Phenomenological Method

Phenomenology aims to describe the world through a first-person perspective. It argues that this is the only perspective available to humans; third-person approaches which aim to uncover objective truths are ultimately unverifiable by humans and so a fuller and more certain understanding of human experience is provided by starting from the first-person perception of the world. In relation to traditional philosophy, phenomenology accepts Descartes's dictum of *cogito ergo sum*, contending that human existence (the *sum*) can only be understood from the standpoint of the human consciousness (the *cogito*). To exist is therefore to appear in human consciousness, whether as a material object or as an intangible concept. Appearance is fundamental. Where phenomenologists diverge from Descartes is that the latter considered appearances to be "unstable manifestations" subject to misperception by humans. Sartre instead believed appearances to be "the being of an existent […] precisely the way it appears," placing great importance in "the idea of the phenomenon *as we encounter it*."[6] That is, the subjective manner in which humans perceive the world around them reveals as much or more about that world than does detached meditation of objective universals. For example, my perception of a chair is more important to my conception of the world than the abstract universal category which defines the ideal 'chair'. Phenomenology is not simply a detailed description of a

[6] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Richmond (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p.2

person's perception of their world; it grapples with important normative issues such as freedom. But in order to get to such conclusions, phenomenologists argue that everything must be understood "as we encounter it." Consequently, the question for phenomenologists is not 'what is an individual?' but 'what does it mean for an individual to experience being?'. They therefore bracket out ideas which lie beyond subjective experience of the world.[7]

The change from asking 'what is an individual?' to asking 'what does it mean for an individual to experience being?' is precisely why phenomenology can develop Kierkegaard's framework further because it is more concrete than the abstract concept of the person provided in Chapter 1. For example, phenomenology recognises the division of the individual between a finite, temporal and necessary body and an infinite, eternal and possible soul, but rather than representing them as abstract concepts, it treats them as phenomena, that is as features of the world revealed to human consciousness. This requires a shift in understanding of the body and soul, away from the neat definitions provided above which have compartmentalised their metaphysical, epistemological and ontological aspects. Phenomenology instead collapses such distinctions, such that the two aspects of the self become more amorphous entities. This is similar to Kierkegaard's argument in his political theology that metaphysics must be de-emphasised, focusing instead on the epistemological and ontological elements of the self and of human freedom and transcendent value. But phenomenology goes beyond this Kierkegaardian move.

Rather than treating the world in metaphysical, epistemological and ontological terms, phenomenology effectively abandons metaphysics, and then collapses the distinction between epistemology and ontology. Beginning with metaphysics, the reason for pursuing this aspect of thought is to locate an objective foundation for knowledge and values beyond the world as directly experienced. Within this thesis, metaphysics has been approached through the lens of theology, the attempt to prove the existence and the nature of God. If God as a metaphysical foundation is deemed to be an embodiment of reason, then humans are rational beings who must employ reason to achieve the only universal rational *telos*. If God is an embodiment of arbitrary freedom, then humans act according to their own will without the constraints of an immanent order. In other words, "traditional metaphysics sought to infer results about the constitution of things from the limits of what we can conceive or from the rules of the power of rationality we must employ."[8] Phenomenology follows the Kantian rejection of traditional metaphysics. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argued that because humans cannot be certain that phenomena *must* conform to the human ability to understand them, we cannot claim that they possess a true essence. In other words, humans can only perceive the world from their own perspective, so they cannot claim that phenomena possess an essence 'in themselves' which is independent of our perception of them. Consequently, philosophy cannot and should not attempt to discover a 'transcendental world' of purely objective knowledge, but should

[7] Daniel O'Shiel, *Sartre and Magic: Being, Emotion and Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), p.71; Heidegger, *BT*, p.51
[8] William Blattner, 'Heidegger: The Existential Analytic of Dasein' in Crowell (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.165

instead focus on how humans represent objects in their consciousness.[9] Heidegger described this latter task as ontology, which he claimed was already pre-reflexively available to humans because of how they perceive their world; they perceive a hammer as a hammer, that is, as a tool for hammering things rather than as a shaped piece of wood attached to a shaped piece of metal. Therefore, "what phenomenology aspires to for Heidegger is not something entirely new, lying outside, but mysteriously connected to, our various human ways of making sense of things; its goal is to precisely illuminate the structures of those ways of making sense."[10] For phenomenologists, then, metaphysics is a futile endeavour. The fundamental task is ontology, defined as understanding the world as it is revealed to human consciousness.[11]

If ontology is the fundamental phenomenological task, what does this mean for epistemology? The fact that the world is revealed subjectively to human consciousness suggests that objective knowledge is deprioritised compared to traditional philosophy. This is true, to an extent. The manner of deprioritisation suggests that, whereas traditional philosophy views subjectivity as antithetical to objective truth, phenomenology considers that objective truths can still be discovered but only through subjective experience of the world. Objective truths, therefore, rest within a broader subjectively experienced world rather than as a transcendental *telos* beyond it. To return to the Kantian critique, phenomenologists do not study the objective world as a realm removed from their subjective perceptions, rather they study the interaction between the two.[12] For example, phenomenologists might inquire about universal categories, deconstructing them to see how a person actually perceives them subjectively in the world, whilst also asking why multiple subjective perceptions of a phenomena align sufficiently to grant that phenomena a universal category. This is clear in Sartre's work, *Nausea*, in which the protagonist Roquentin describes the root of a chestnut tree; the phenomena he describes falls under the universal category of a root, but when he phenomenologically deconstructs it, it becomes an absurd collection of characteristics that simply "is what it is" and no more:

> "So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root anymore. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things […] And then, all of a sudden, there it was, clear as day: existence had suddenly unveiled itself […] You cannot pass from its function as a root, as a breathing pump, to *that*, to this oily, callous, headstrong look."[13]

[9] Ibid
[10] David Cerbone, 'Phenomenological Method and the Achievement of Recognition' in D'Oro & Overgaard (eds.) *Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.309-11
[11] See also: Heidegger, *BT*, 'Introduction'
[12] Dan Zahavi, *Phenomenology: The Basics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), pp.16-7
[13] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964), pp.126-7, 129

Steven Crowell refers to this difference between objective categories and subjective perception as "the gap between the generality of explanation and the 'in the way' (*de trop*) character of what is."[14] What makes it absurd is that as a human perceives an object for what it is in itself, the contingency of the objective categories used to describe it are revealed. This is why phenomenology emphasises the first-person perspective: because individual consciousness is world-disclosing, by understanding it we can understand why the world appears in the way it does and therefore the meaning behind phenomena and our perceptions of them.[15] It is, in short, a recognition that subjectivity deserves a more prominent role in descriptions even of objective concepts.

Phenomenology does not simply emphasise subjective experience over objective truth, though. It also collapses the distinction between ontology and epistemology. If objective knowledge is attained through subjective perception, then only by studying how the world presents itself to human consciousness can we understand how that consciousness works. In other words, how we know is determined by what we know. Epistemology requires a simultaneous appreciation of ontology. In much philosophical thought – including theories of both immanent and imposed order – the assumption has been that the human experience of the world is subjective in the negative sense of representing a biased or flawed perspective. To understand the true nature of entities and the world requires transcending personal categories of experience or, in other words, it requires thinking objectively in order to detach oneself from context-laden situations. By contrast, phenomenologists argue that there are not two worlds, one which is *merely* apparent and another which represents a hidden (and potentially unattainable) reality. Instead, they contend that "what the phenomenon gives is precisely that something in itself." That is, the way entities present themselves to humans is reality as we experience it. The difference between appearance and reality in traditional philosophy is in fact, to phenomenologists, the difference between a superficial observation and a scientific one; the former can be misleading and the latter represents the 'best possible' representation of an entity. The point is that there are not two separate worlds, as in Kant's noumenal and phenomenological realms, but different ways of being within the same world.[16] As Heidegger writes:

> "When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered. Nor is any inner sphere abandoned when Dasein dwells alongside the entity to be known, and determines its character; but even in this 'Being-outside'

[14] Steven Crowell, 'Sartre's Existentialism and the Nature of Consciousness' in Crowell (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.206
[15] Zahavi, *Phenomenology*, pp.26-8
[16] Ibid, pp.13-14

> alongside the object, Dasein is still 'inside', if we understand this in the correct sense: that is to say, it is itself 'inside' as a Being-in-the-world which knows."[17]

Phenomenology, then, captures many of the themes of this thesis. It drastically deprioritises objective knowledge relative to subjective experience, and it therefore accepts the contingency of the world. Abstract universals can exist in the phenomenological account, but they are subject to reinterpretation depending on the particular perspective being analysed. This also suggests that values are treated contingently, such that the imposition of a universal reason or logic, or of a common moral language, is not the natural progress of history or a mechanistic system; rather, it depends entirely on the individual subject on whom such values are being imposed. Finally, phenomenology appears to accept the anti-foundationalist critique of the death of God and the destabilising effect this has on traditional objectivist epistemologies (to the extent that objective knowledge is folded into the subjective world of perception). But, like Kierkegaard, though it rejects classical foundationalism, phenomenology does not entirely accept the anti-foundationalist critique. The first major phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl, did indeed seek out a foundation for knowledge and belief, though he tried to disassociate it from a 'natural attitude'.[18] Similarly, as will be shown below, existentialist phenomenologists pointed towards a normative foundation for international order in the subjective beliefs of individuals. All of this points to why phenomenology may provide a suitable means of secularising Kierkegaard's concept of the person and his political theology in the context of international order. It captures many elements of the key Kierkegaardian tension between the body and soul, human freedom and transcendent value, but concretises them, as will be seen in the next section, such that they can be applied to direct human experience.

As this section has suggested, though, the only way to 'do' phenomenology is to apply it ontologically. As Merleau-Ponty wrote, "phenomenology is only accessible to a phenomenological method. Thus let us carefully attempt to tie together the famous phenomenological themes as they are spontaneously tied together in life."[19]

Phenomenology and Freedom

Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* provides a phenomenological conceptualisation of the individual which draws on Kierkegaardian themes of a process of synthesising two opposing factors. The first move Sartre makes in defining the individual phenomenologically is to emphasise the importance of the world around the individual – that is, all other being. The individual, Sartre notes, is an actively revealing agent while other being is passively revealed *to* that individual's consciousness.[20] This establishes a distinction which Sartre

[17] Heidegger, *BT*, p.89
[18] Cerbone, 'Phenomenological Method', p.299
[19] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Landes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p.lxxi
[20] Hazel Barnes, 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being' in Howells (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.15; Sartre, *BN*, p.4

will use to better understand the individual. The key is that a being outside of the individual "reveals itself exactly as it is […] for it is absolutely indicative of itself."[21] In other words, external entities possess an essence which defines their purpose, sets expectations about how they will be in the future, and denies them the opportunity to project themselves differently by taking alternative courses of action in the future.[22] An external entity simply "is what it is."[23] Its entire existence is no more or less than what it is, and it therefore exhibits "full positivity."[24] As Heidegger terms it, such an external entity is an existent for whom, in its being, there is no question of its being.[25] It does not have the ability to be anything other than what it is. For that reason, Sartre calls it *being-in-itself*, an example of which might be a Ming vase which, when disassociated from human perception, is a particular configuration of clay, no more or less.

Being-in-itself explains one aspect of being but does not capture the full scope of human experience. Were humans to be defined in terms of being-in-itself, they would correspond to Hobbes's "singular existents," entities bound by the causal logic of an anarchic world whose atomistic responses to sensory inputs would result in a Hobbesian international order.[26] Indeed, Hobbes's characterisation of humans in *Leviathan* is of atomically constructed entities responding to causal inputs through pleasure and displeasure, their nature as rational beings defining their existence and denying them alternative possible futures.[27] Sartre's own example was Soviet communism, which he eventually argued essentialised humans according to class (defined as their loyalty to the Soviet Union). A human was by nature a bourgeois or a proletarian, a loyal communist or a counter-revolutionary traitor. Soviet communists "gave no place to the notion of freedom, [to the notion that people] could form themselves according to their own options and not as conditioned by society. The idea that a free man could exist beyond socialism […] that's an idea the Russians never had."[28] Notably, in this example it is the idea of a transcendent value in Marxism-Leninism which is considered oppressive to human freedom, not *necessarily* the application of that ideology through violent means, further aligning with the Kierkegaardian framework.

Being-in-itself, in short, possesses an innate and essential nature which precedes its existence: it "is what it is." Because individuals cannot be being-in-itself for the above reasons, Sartre instead defined them as *being-for-itself*, or that which "is what it is not" and "is not what it is." To be "what it is not" simply means that individuals are not being-in-itself; they are active revealers of being-in-itself, not passively revealed entities. But a revealer is dependent upon passively revealed objects to exist; without a world to reveal, human consciousness cannot be. Therefore, it is only by revealing a world outside of the individual that human

[21] Sartre, *BN*, pp.2, 27
[22] Sartre, *EH*, pp.20-1
[23] Sartre, *BN*, p.27
[24] Ibid, p.2
[25] Heidegger, *BT*, p.32
[26] Bain, *Political Theology*, p.129
[27] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp.37-40
[28] Jean-Paul Sartre quoted in Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, trans. O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1985)

consciousness exists and understands itself as a revealer. The individual is self-aware.[29] Specifically, the individual is aware in its self-awareness that it does not coincide with the world around it, that it is not confined to a pre-determined future according to its essential nature. The individual is aware that it is not being-in-itself, that it "is what it is not."[30] But an individual is also aware that they are "not what they are." Sartre means by this that precisely because they recognise themselves as not being being-in-itself, individuals are aware that they lack an essential nature which defines their existence.[31] This is the phenomenological description of Pascal's assertion that humans are torn between two extremes, or Kierkegaard's religious notion of despair. In other words, humans are relations between two contradictory terms, at all times trying to balance the competing impulses of these terms to establish a stable synthesis.

To take the example of the Hobbesian understanding of international order, humans are treated as being-in-itself and are consequently unable to project themselves differently into the future from the cause-effect prescriptions which Hobbes's logic dictates. Like being-in-itself, they are a "full positivity," their actions exhausted in their nature. They coincide totally with the world around them, becoming cogs in its mechanistic interactions. By contrast, treating humans as being-for-itself is to understand them as "nothing but the pure nihilation of the in-itself," as a total non-coincidence with the world.[32] Sartre thereby shows how humans are inherently free in that their mode of being (based on a rejection of a purely philosophical metaphysics) allows them to transcend the causal series and project themselves into the future as multiple different potentialities. To return to the Kierkegaardian terminology, individuals as being-for-itself can exist towards an unconditional commitment which they choose independently of a cause-effect logic or purpose of nature. They therefore possess the potential to act differently than any perceived human nature would dictate. For example, in line with Sartre's critique of Soviet communism, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The Gulag Archipelago* of those individuals who "form[ed] themselves according to their own options and not as conditioned by society," who resisted being treated as being-in-itself within the universal logic of the Soviet system:

> "[The Soviets] relied on certain invisible chains which kept the natives reliably in their place. The strongest of these chains was the prisoners' universal submission and total surrender to their situation as slaves. [But] how can one explain Grigory Ivanovich Grigoryev? […] His forthrightness gleamed from his big quiet eyes, some sort of unwavering forthrightness. This man was never able to bow in spirit. And he didn't bow in camp either […] He was subjected on all sides to the camp philosophy, to the camp corruption of soul, but he was incapable of adopting it. In the Kemerovo camps the security chief kept trying to recruit him as a stoolie

[29] Sartre, *BN*, p.12
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid, p.129
[32] Ibid, pp.798-9; Daniel O'Shiel, 'Drives as Original Facticity', *Sartre Studies International* 19:1 (2013), p.3

> [informant]. Grigoryev replied to him quite honestly and candidly: 'I find it quite repulsive to talk to you. You will find many willing without me.'"[33]

Sartre's description of being-in-itself as a "full positivity" and being-for-itself as "the pure nihilation of the in-itself" suggests the importance he places on negation in his understanding of the individual and of freedom. Indeed, the individual is, for Sartre, the being "through whom nothingness comes into the world."[34] Negation is the conceptual device through which individuals reject the conforming pressures of the world around them and determine multiple alternative possibilities instead – in short, it is how they disassociate themselves from the causal series of the world and assert their will. This is Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology put in the language of Sartrean phenomenology, not only describing what a free individual looks like in relation to an oppressive order, but also how they get to this stage through their first-person perspective of that order. Negation is key to this account. It stems from the fact that individuals are aware that they are *not* being-in-itself, that is that they do *not* coincide with the world. They consequently pre-reflectively understand the concept of non-being, specifically of "what is *not* but likely will be."[35] In other words, when individuals reveal the world around them, they are simultaneously aware that it will not retain its present state in the future. Because humans as being-for-itself are not bound to the present by any essential nature, they are able to understand the future as the non-being of the present. Consequently, they can imagine the future as multiple alternative forms of non-being, each of which is a possibility. As José Ortega y Gasset framed it, "man is an infinitely plastic entity of which one may make what one will, precisely because of itself it is nothing save only the mere potentiality to be 'as you like'."[36]

Though Ortega y Gasset's assertion suggests that the range of future possibilities for humans are infinite, they are limited for two reasons. The first is discussed by Kierkegaard, who notes the difficulty humans have in synthesising body with soul, human freedom with transcendent value. They therefore continue to live by prescribed rules and norms which limit their future possibilities. This is linked to the second limitation, which is discussed by Heidegger, who notes that humans are 'thrown' into a socio-historical situation which imposes expectations on them. In other words, they are not born into a 'state of nature' where they can pursue any course of action they choose, but are predisposed by their socio-historical context to certain actions which past cultural experience has developed a preference towards.[37] As Sartre puts it, humans tend to act pre-reflectively according to expectations that one specific future possibility is more likely to occur than others – a "mode of behaviour in the face of nothing."[38] What an individual expects to occur is a product of the meaning they give to the world. Specifically, to act in the expectation

---

[33] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, trans. Whitney & Willetts (London: Vintage, 2018), pp.255, 317-8
[34] Sartre, *BN*, p.60
[35] Ibid, p.153; Crowell, 'Sartre's Existentialism', p.210
[36] José Ortega y Gasset, 'History as a System' in *History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophical History*, trans. Weyl (New York: Norton, 1961), pp.203-4
[37] Blattner, 'Existential Analytic', p160; Heidegger, *BT*, p.321
[38] Sartre, *BN*, p.40

of one possibility coming to pass is to give the world a meaning which connects its present state to its future, "surpass[ing] an existent […] towards this being's meaning."[39]

For example, international order is a pattern of social relations. It is not inherently state-based or fragile, but to perceive it as such is to be aware of the possibility of its future non-being through its transformation into an alternative form of international order not centred around states. Consequently, members of international order act towards it with that expectation in mind, treating its pluralist architecture with care by establishing institutions to manage changes in its constitution. Through institutionalised social relations, humans establish norms which maintain international order's identity through change and define certain changes as sufficiently destructive to constitute the non-being of that order.[40] This is why IR is inherently value-laden: the perception of certain changes to international order as destructive presupposes that it *ought* to maintain a particular configuration according to given norms. Furthermore, the source of that normativity is individuals. A norm is a form of nothingness, a recognition of a specific form of non-being which must be pursued or avoided. Individuals, as being-for-itself, live under the "permanent possibility of non-being" and so bring norms into existence.[41] They then prioritise various future possibilities according to which they deem preferable, judging as 'destructive' those things they wish to prevent and 'fragile' those things they wish to defend. By contrast, international order is being-in-itself. It cannot project itself differently into the future, let alone determine which future possibility it *ought* to act towards. As Sartre wrote:

> "Thus it is man who renders towns destructible, precisely because he posits them as fragile and precious, and because he takes various measures to protect them […] We must therefore acknowledge that destruction is an essentially human thing and that it is man who destroys his towns through the intermediary of earthquakes, or directly."[42]

This understanding equates to Kierkegaard's conception of freedom, the infinite potential to exert shape one's world as described in Chapter 1. However, Sartre has conceived of it phenomenologically. In that sense, freedom is an individual's recognition that they are not being-in-itself, that they therefore stand beyond the causal series of universal logic or values, and that they alone are the source of normativity in their world. Individual freedom is the recognition that the individual is "the being through whom values exist."[43] This freedom is not a right bestowed on humans by others. Nor is it an innate or essential human nature. The phenomenological conception of freedom avoids the objective, universal aspects of transcendent value because it does not accord with a particular outcome. For instance, freedom as viewed

[39] Ibid, p.24
[40] Ibid, pp.39-40
[41] Ibid, p.40
[42] Ibid
[43] Ibid, p.78

through the lens of transcendent values might be a property which is inherent in humans but which is only occasionally manifest depending on whether a particular action accords with a perceived essential human nature – as Sartre puts it, freedom in this sense is merely "a small God inhabiting me and possessing my freedom as a metaphysical property."[44] This definition corresponds more to a Kantian *civitas maxima* or a Hegelian ethical language which makes human actions intelligible to others in a communitarian political unit. It is a way of "apprehend[ing] myself at the same time as being completely free, and as not being able to alter the world so that its meaning did not come from me."[45] By contrast, Sartre's phenomenologically conceived freedom is a conscious choice not to be defined by one's relation to the universal.

Phenomenology and International Order

If freedom involves a conscious choice, then few make it. Most humans do not recognise themselves as the source of values, instead accepting given values as determined by the world into which they are thrown. For Kierkegaard, this means that most humans willingly subsume themselves into the universal, accepting the need to do so to be intelligible to others, but not realising that they owe a higher loyalty to their unconditional commitment. Thus they cannot synthesise the body and soul or human freedom and transcendent value. He and Sartre both argue that humans do this because freedom implies an intolerable degree of responsibility. Insofar as accepting one's freedom roots an individual as the foundation of value, it provides them with nothing outside of themselves on which to fall back when justifying their actions.[46] That is why Kierkegaard claims that the true individual – Abraham, in his Biblical example – cannot communicate why he undertakes certain actions which go beyond the normative demands of the universal. It is also why Sartre says that "man is condemned to be free: condemned, because he did not create himself, yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does."[47] Because "nothing – absolutely nothing – can justify [their] adopting this system of values rather than that one,"[48] most humans refuse to accept future possibilities as *their* possibilities unless they accord with given societal values. They retreat into the universal. Social order as a recognition of intersubjectivity with others is, then, inherently oppressive insofar as it subjugates the individual to the universal – or, given the importance of personal choice to freedom, insofar as the individual chooses to subjugate themselves to the universal. This is why the universal can only provide a political rights-based form of freedom at best, because by existing wholly within it humans choose to deny themselves further choice; that is, they abdicate the moral responsibility of making agonising either/or decisions in favour of accepting given societal values.

These given societal values are the outcome of an individual's socio-historical context, intersubjective relations and the understandings which Gadamer would call their hermeneutic circle. But when a human

[44] Ibid, pp.82-3
[45] Ibid, pp.79-80
[46] Ibid
[47] Sartre, *EH*, p.29
[48] Ibid, pp.77-8

subjugates themselves to the universal by accepting these values as given, they act as though their situation is an innate and essential nature, constraining their behaviour and limiting their future possibilities. Christine Korsgaard refers to these perceived natures as *practical identities*, or "a description under which you value yourself […] under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking."[49] Practical identities limit an individual's possibilities for action by defining what they ought to be and so how they ought to act towards the future. In other words, practical identities based around given values prescribe socially accepted behaviour which limits the need for an individual to critically consider how they could project themselves differently into the future. Rather than consider their infinite possibilities, individuals can act immediately according to the dictates of given values, sufficiently reducing the temporal space between their present and future such that there is no time to posit alternative possibilities for action. Consequently, the ability to choose to exercise freedom is constrained.[50] In Sartre's phenomenological terminology, given values falsely portray humans as being-in-itself, supposing that they "are what they are" in "full positivity" and denying them the ability for negation which is the basis of freedom.

Given values do not have independent effects, though. Sartre, in keeping with the phenomenological method, roots the objectifying process of practical identities in the individual, in what he calls *le regard* – the look. In so doing, he demonstrates how any intersubjective interaction is necessarily conflictual. When an individual perceives another, they are pre-reflectively aware that this other constitutes *both* being-in-itself and being-for-itself; that is, the other possesses a material body but also exhibits consciousness, so they are simultaneously revealed and revealing. But because the individual cannot perceive the being-for-itself of the other (it is, after all, a form of non-being) they must instead act towards this other according to its being-in-itself. In other words, an individual must treat another as a form of being-in-itself whose possibilities are pre-determined by certain characteristics because they cannot perceive that other's freedom phenomenologically. Race is one such characteristic, for example. In Camus's *The Outsider*, the protagonist Meursault describes Arab characters only in relation to their race, which he implies naturally tends them towards certain behaviours.[51] Intersubjective interaction is therefore inherently objectifying in that it requires an individual to impose their own expectations upon another, narrowing that other's future possibilities to what the perceiver expects they ought to be. Another's actions are judged according to the perceiver's preferred values. Extrapolated across society, *le regard* creates social pressures to conform to widely-held expectations, the failure to do so resulting in the affective phenomenon of shame, which is to experience oneself as an object for another and simultaneously to experience the other's subjectivity, in effect establishing a social hierarchy.[52]

[49] Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.101
[50] Sartre, *BN*, pp.81-2
[51] Albert Camus, *The Outsider*, trans. Smith (London: Penguin, 2013)
[52] Sartre, *BN*, pp.307-9

At its worst, the conflictual nature of the existentialist account results in systems of oppression which utilise objectification as a tool to maintain power relations between different individuals (though systems in existentialist thought do not exhibit independent effects but are the aggregation of individuals' actions over space and time). Merleau-Ponty made this apparent in his discussion of institutions, which reflects Wight's definition of them as: "an enduring, complex, integrated, organised behaviour pattern through which social control is exerted and by means of which the fundamental social desires or needs are met."[53] The reference to "social control" is central, for it already hints at how limiting expected behaviour within certain social boundaries can impel individuals to act in a certain way and thereby constrain their freedom. Merleau-Ponty expands on this definition with his own: "[institutions are] those events in experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or a history – or again, those events which sediment in me a meaning […] as the *necessity* of a future."[54] In other words, institutions are a perceived causal chain in the minds of individuals, through which past actions appear to be connected as a behavioural pattern within "durable dimensions" and which offer a clear path of action into the future. They are perceptible only retrospectively as having guided human actions and are too volatile to be concretely discerned in the present.[55] Nevertheless, institutions do impact the present and future by the expectations they place upon individuals about how their present actions will translate into a future state. They therefore pre-reflectively confine our courses of action according to what we believe those institutions are.

In other words, the structure of a social order – including international order – is based on institutions which intersubjectively impose definitional characteristics on humans and thereby compel them to adopt certain pre-determined behaviours. Institutions thereby have the effect of forcing "a change in the structure of consciousness, the institution of a new dimension of experience, and the deployment of an *a priori*."[56] They cause humans to see the world in 'given' terms and values, such that "new meaningful intention only knows itself by donning already available significations, which are the results of previous acts of expression."[57] There is some advantage to this, insofar as institutions are what enable social orders to function. In the face of infinite possible courses of action, in order to avoid chaos humans must have ways of giving meaning to certain actions over others and consequently being able to act. Institutions do this: they provide pre-reflective meaning for certain actions by pre-coding responses in socio-historical traditions or, as Merleau-Ponty refers to it, in "cultural habits."[58] But clearly this infringes freedom to the degree that it necessarily limits choice and, more fundamentally, deprives humans of taking individual moral responsibility for their actions. That said, the oppressive power of institutions, phenomenologically

[53] Wight, *Three Traditions*, p.141
[54] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-55)*, trans. Lawlor & Massey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), p.77 – my emphasis.
[55] David Morris and Kym Maclaren, *Time, Memory, Institution: Merleau-Ponty's New Ontology of Self* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015), pp.11-2
[56] Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p.32
[57] Ibid, p.189
[58] Ibid

conceived, is far less than, say, the universal logic of the Hobbesian international order or the universal reason of Kantian thought. That is because institutions to existentialist phenomenologists are not independent structures so much as the amalgamation of individual actions over time and space. Merleau-Ponty gives the example of class as an institution of social order (and given that Sartre contemporaneously used the example of the Soviet Union and international communism, we can see how this might apply also to international order):

> "I am not conscious of being a worker or a bourgeois because I in fact sell my work or because I in fact show solidarity to the capitalist machine, and I certainly do not become a worker or a bourgeois the day that I commit to seeing history through the lens of class warfare. Rather, 'I exist as a worker' or 'I exist as a bourgeois' first, and this mode of communication with the world and society motivates both my revolutionary or conservative projects and my explicit judgements […] without it being the case that I can deduce the former from the latter, nor the latter from the former. *Neither the economy nor society, taken as a system of impersonal forces, determine me as a proletarian, but rather society or the economy such as I bear them within myself and such as I live them; nor is it, for that matter, an intellectual operation without any motive, but rather my way of being in the world within this institutional framework.*"[59]

In this example, then, the institution of class does not apply determinate power over humans independently. Rather, class holds ontological and normative power as an institution because of the historical actions of different people adopt the label themselves as a defining characteristic, bestowing value upon it as a normative good or bad and, through their personal actions, co-constituting what it means to belong to a particular class. This phenomenological moderation of the Kierkegaardian universal better reflects the constant flux of international order torn between competing impulses, representing the balance between human freedom and transcendent value but also their oppositional paradoxical relationship. It suggests an international order in which given structures and values – institutions – are simultaneously perniciously resistant to overthrow whilst also being open to change from below, from the level of the individual.

In the contemporary international order, we might look to the recent attention paid to global racial justice. For example, as well as traditional ES conceptions of institutions such as international law or war, existentialists might count race as an institution of international order. It can be viewed, after all, as a series of historical events which support racist values as apparently objective realities.[60] Consequently, in international order, race is given normative force as an individual characteristic which affects how individuals ought to act. That normative force is based upon the perpetuation of social expectations over time, through which a power hierarchy forms and exerts the "social control" of which Wight spoke.

[59] Ibid, pp.468-9 – my emphasis.
[60] Lewis Gordon, 'Phenomenology and Race' in Zack (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.298

Specifically, the institution of race in international order privileges certain individuals over others: humans categorise one another into groups based on race and deny different amounts of subjectivity to those groups based on their position on a perceived hierarchy. They do so by objectifying them, that is by assigning certain characteristics to each of the groups which place social expectations upon them and so limit their possible courses of future action. Simply put, the institution of race legitimises the suppression of freedom.[61] The language of the BLM movement demonstrates this point, as well as showing how discourse cannot escape these ingrained power structures. The fact that *black* lives must be singled out as mattering suggests that black people are characterised as possessing the essential characteristic of 'blackness'. By contrast, critics of BLM frequently argue that 'all lives matter', suggesting that white lives need only be referred to as 'lives'. Put differently, white lives constitute the baseline and other racial groups are perceived as sub-categories of 'all lives'. The implication is that the entire range of possible courses of action lies open to white people, with those possibilities increasingly constrained as an individual is placed further down the racial hierarchy. Not only is discourse of the Habermasian or Gadamerian sort unlikely to occur in the existential world of perpetual conflict, it is actively militated against by the institutions of international order in which it occurs.

For Merleau-Ponty, then, the aim of phenomenology is to direct attention to institutions in order to illuminate just how contingent given values are in any social order. Within this aim is an almost revolutionary goal of "overthrowing the givens."[62] The idea is that by becoming aware of the definitional constraints on their future courses of action, humans can reframe their defining characteristics as contingent and thereby break free of the overly oppressive institutions of international order. In other words, Merleau-Ponty offers a phenomenological description of Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology which legitimises individuals claiming sovereignty through their free choice, but which does not arbitrarily destroy order because it recognises that institutions are necessary to any order and will necessarily be co-constituted by individuals. In terms of the individual as a synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value, Merleau-Ponty notes that "overthrowing givens" ensures that the "unity of consciousness is gradually constructed."[63] In other words, he claims that the act of identifying and rejecting oppressive institutions is akin to recognising the futility of a metaphysical foundation for objective knowledge (hence values are reframed as contingent) and de-emphasising objective truth in order to put it in its proper relation with subjective experience. Returning to phenomenology's breaking down of the boundaries between epistemology and ontology, the individual's recognition that objective knowledge is foundationless and therefore contingent *but not without meaning* translates into the ontological exercise of freedom against potentially oppressive institutions. Again, Merleau-Ponty is explicit: "taken concretely, freedom is always an encounter between the exterior and the interior […] and it weakens, without ever becoming zero, to the

[61] Ibid, p.295
[62] Ibid, p.33
[63] Ibid

extent that tolerance of the bodily and institutional givens [that is, the synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity] of our life diminishes."[64]

Both Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's conceptualisations of intersubjective relations have implications for international order. Sartre considers that individuals are defined by their capacity to exhibit freedom, which is to acknowledge their fundamental higher subjectivity. But existing in a world of others with given societal values – Kierkegaard's universal – is to inhibit that subjectivity by framing humans as a form of being-in-itself. In other words, the chief threat to human freedom is objectification. "Hell is other people."[65] This is the phenomenological understanding of the threat immanent rhetoric poses to imposed order, as noted by Bain. It is also why existentialists share with ES pluralists a scepticism about the levelling effects of discourse: subjectivity and objectification are necessary characteristics of human existence, so the equality towards which Habermas and Linklater aim their communicative cosmopolitanism is not only illusory, it is inhuman. Nor does Sartre's existentialism align completely with Gadamer's hermeneutic circle. Philosophical hermeneutics aims to incorporate others' understandings into one's own self-understanding but existentialism treats that intersubjective process as subjugation to a higher form of the universal. Instead, it aims to break out of the hermeneutic circle entirely in order to assert one's subjectivity against the potential objectification of Gadamerian discourse. Indeed, existentialism can break out of the hermeneutic circle and counter the threat of immanent rhetoric precisely because it defines individuals according to their freedom, providing them with the normative force to act as the foundation of transcendent values in international order. This freedom allows individuals to transcend the causal chains imposed upon them by others, positing a synthesis between human freedom and transcendent value in a manner akin to Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology.

Merleau-Ponty's understanding of institutions suggests exactly how such an eschatological process can occur in a secular international order. On the one hand, it notes that human freedom exists hand-in-hand with institutions of that order, and therefore both oppression and freedom are exhibited on a scale rather than the Kierkegaardian binary in which an individual is either free, or is trapped in the universal. This, then, makes it easier to conceptualise the necessary transcendent onligations of international order co-existing in balance with human freedom, rather than an all-encompassing universal logic or reason which is latent in many contemporary normative IR theories but difficult to concretise. Consequently, Merleau-Ponty also explains fairly well why it is that Kierkegaard believes humans must exist in the universal before they can transcend it to higher subjectivity: because, as social animals, intersubjective meaning is vital to avoid the chaos of unregulated imposition of human will, but this should not be treated as the *telos* of normative action. This approach fits the balance of Kierkegaard's simultaneous rejection of classical foundationalism and his disregard for anti-foundationalism. Indeed, for Kierkegaard, the individual exists

[64] Ibid, p.481
[65] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Flies and In Camera*, trans. Gilbert (London: Hamilton, 1946), p.166

contentedly within society until the exact moment their unconditional commitment calls them to act against the normative values of that society. Merleau-Ponty suggests why those normative values can be considered valuable at all, given their contingent nature.

In short, then, the phenomenological translation of the Kierkegaardian international order is one which defines that order entirely from the first-person perspective. It begins from a definition of the individual as exhibiting both being-in-itself and being-for-itself (mapping onto the body and soul as well as human freedom and transcendent value) and, through the conceptual tool of *le regard*, demonstrates the process of socialisation within a broader order. On a grander scale, *le regard* is granted socio-historical force as various institutions of international order, which define humans according to pre-coded values and terms, but which are ultimately co-constituted by those humans. This allows the human impulse to freedom to moderate the potential oppression within institutions; that is, institutions cannot define humans entirely as being-in-itself because the humans who co-constitute them are also being-for-itself and therefore retain an element of sovereign independence (their exceptionalism), no matter how qualified it may be. When that being-for-itself rebels against institutions by rejecting definitional characteristics and choosing a future course of action independently of the confines of institutional prescriptions, then the free individual has eschatologically reclaimed full sovereignty from the international order. They have revealed that order's values to be contingent, but still inherently valuable as a tool of intersubjective interaction. Nevertheless, the free individual has asserted that their freely chosen values are *more* valuable, or transcendent.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to translate the Kierkegaardian framework – his concept of the person and his political theology – into secular concepts applicable to the contemporary international order. It employed phenomenology, and specifically existentialist phenomenology, to do so, arguing that it contains many of the features which characterise the Kierkegaardian framework such as the definition of the individual as a paradox between body and soul, the relation of this paradox to that between human freedom and transcendent value, and the ability to synthesise these paradoxes. Furthermore, in abandoning metaphysical examinations and collapsing the distinction between epistemology and ontology, phenomenology continues the concretisation of the abstract concept of the individual which was begun in Kierkegaard's political theology and is made much more evident in Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's work. This allows phenomenology not only to secularise the Kierkegaardian framework but show how synthesis of body and soul leads to a similar synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value through an eschatological breach of international order's ontological and normative boundaries.

Implicit in phenomenology's approach is a description of international order, albeit from the first-person perspective rather than from the view of states or systemic features. International order in phenomenological terms is the socialisation of individuals into institutions, which bestow upon them

defining characteristics and therefore expected courses of behaviour. Consequently, the future is 'locked in' based on the causal outcomes of that expected behaviour, and so the contours of a predictable international order come into focus. This process of socialisation within institutions results from individuals objectifying others because they cannot comprehend others as being-for-itself, and so treat them only as being-in-itself – akin to prioritising the infinite and eternal aspects of the soul. In the case of international order, we might say that humans are treated as being-in-itself insofar as they are defined as citizens of a state, and are therefore expected to act in furtherance of the state's existence and interests. This chapter has also noted how both race and class can be viewed as institutions in international order. However, phenomenology also notes how institutions and the behaviour they prescribe – what we might call the normative basis of international order – is highly contingent, not rooted in any foundation. The only foundation is the individual who can access their being-for-itself, define themselves in opposition to international order, act against its dictates, and thereby show through their contrarian actions how international order might be willed differently than it currently is. This is the secular description of Kierkegaard's concept of freedom and the eschatological political theology which results in a synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value.

Of note is the similarity between the phenomenological description of international order and many aspects of ES scholarship, especially from the school's pluralist wing. First, as noted in Chapter 4, many ES scholars give rhetorical precedence to individuals as the normative foundation of international order (though they do not capture this sentiment in their theories). As a first-image account, phenomenology shows precisely how the individual can act as a normative foundation of international order; individuals are, phenomenologically, the only justifiable source of values and so any normative force in international order exists only through the imposition of human will and others' acceptance of it. This also aligns with Bain's argument that, following the death of God, international order is an imposed order with immanent norms holding merely rhetorical power. Second, by providing a justification for individuals as the normative foundation of international order, phenomenology argues that that order is and should be a pluralist order. Indeed, the phenomenological international order is arguably more pluralist than ES conceptions because it does not confine individual agency to certain groups of humans – for example, statespeople – but rather makes international order contingent on every individual human residing within its normative boundaries. Third, phenomenology (particularly Merleau-Ponty's) places great emphasis on institutions as the way in which international order functions and is sustained. Merleau-Ponty's account even resembles elements of Wight's definition of institutions as exerting "social control."

However, the phenomenological account also differs from the ES in many key aspects. One of the critiques of the ES was that because it limits individual agency to statespeople or other humans with direct decision-making power in international politics, it was inherently conservative. In other words, it normatively justified what is empirically evident. Phenomenology, on the other hand, normatively empowers all

individuals and focuses on both the oppressive nature of institutions as well as their contingency. In so doing, it is better suited to accounting for human freedom in relation to transcendent value, expressed through individuals' being-for-itself (hence it captures the essence of Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology). And yet, phenomenology also recognises the necessary intersubjectivity of international order. This tension brings both stability – insofar as contingent values are still seen as contributing positively to international order – and flux – as those contingent values can become too oppressive to be sustained in a world of multiple normative foundations. In short, because the normative superiority of perceived transcendent values – whether the state, race or class – cannot be guaranteed against human freedom, international order is perpetually open to destabilising change from below. This begs the question of when and how it is right for an individual to rebel against the institutional constraints of international order. Existentialist phenomenologists were aware of the ethical difficulty in answering this question, and they applied their thought to the concrete issues dominating their lives in order to create an existentialist normative theory.

Chapter 9

Existentialist Order

Under the existentialist ontology discussed in the previous chapter, redefining human freedom such that it can by synthesised with transcendent value drives an eschatological change to international order. This synthesis is located within the individual, who synthesises the infinite, eternal and possible soul with the finite, temporal and necessary body and so freely transcends the normative limits of the universal in which they reside. The seemingly immanent order is exposed as an imposed order, allowing the individual to reshape their world according to their unconditional commitment. This results in something very close to the poststructuralist 'politics of rebellion', and therefore raises the question of intersubjectivity. Poststructuralists collapse subjectivity into objectivity, as discussed in Chapter 5. Kierkegaard did not extensively discuss the problem because he conceived of the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value as a stage of inward spiritual development. To the extent that he explored intersubjective relations it was to prescribe 'neighbourly love' with others.[1] The French existentialists, however, wrote in the shadow of 20th century totalitarianism, especially the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. They therefore recognised that the actions of an individual – for example, a French collaborationist or Nazi war criminal – could lead to the wholesale oppression and destruction of huge numbers of others. This necessitated a search for an ethics to ensure that a redefined human freedom could not result in the imposition of one's world on others within the intersubjective context of social order. Consequently, existentialist thought holds a similar concern to Bain's, albeit from a different perspective: how can human freedom be exercised in an imposed order while retaining a theory of obligation to others. It gets to the normative crux of the research question.

While Sartre contributed greatly to the existentialist phenomenological ontology of international order, he struggled to develop this approach into an ethical theory. Indeed, his attempt to do so resulted in a series of notebooks with which he remained dissatisfied and which consequently remained unpublished until after his death. Sartre himself said that "I wrote ten big notebooks which represent a *failed* attempt at building an ethics […] I did not finish it because […] building an ethics is tough!"[2] He concluded that his efforts were both too idealistic and too individualistic.[3] Alain Renaut suggests that part of the reason Sartre abandoned the ethical project, though, was that his close friend Beauvoir had published her *Ethics of Ambiguity* in 1947, providing such a convincing existentialist ethics stemming from *Being and Nothingness* that Sartre felt no need to carry on and shifted his views to align more with Beauvoir's.[4] Whatever the reason for Sartre abandoning

[1] Kierkegaard did address criticisms that his thought was not socially involved in *Works of Love*. Due to space constraints, this area of Kierkegaard's thought is not extensively addressed in this thesis. Relative to the rest of the discussion in this chapter, however, Kierkegaard's thought does not concretely tackle the degree of risk in an imposed international order to the same extent as French existentialist thinkers.
[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, quoted in Christine Daigle, 'The Ambiguous Ethics of Beauvoir' in Daigle (ed.) *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), p.120
[3] Ibid, p.121
[4] Ibid; Christine Daigle, 'Unweaving the Threads of Influence: Beauvoir and Sartre' in Bauer & Hengehold (eds.) *A Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017), p.263

his *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Beauvoir developed an existentialist normative theory which accounts captures the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value such that both are mutually supportive rather than incommensurate. As this chapter contends, one of the principal reasons that Beauvoir was able to do this while Sartre was not was because her understanding of intersubjectivity included the notions of interdependence and reciprocity, whereas Sartre's was characterised by *le regard* and its unavoidable conflict and subjugation (in this sense, Sartre's understanding is perhaps closer to the poststructuralist account discussed in Chapter 5).

This chapter will use Beauvoir's existentialist normative theory to develop the its account of international order further by not only claiming that the normative foundation of that order lies in the individual who has synthesised the paradox, but that it also *ought* to reside there. Its core argument is that, per Beauvoir, the freedom of one necessitates the freedom of all. It will proceed in two sections. The first section will elucidate Beauvoir's normative theory and how it ties together the existentialist phenomenological ontology with the Kierkegaardian framework. Beauvoir also provided numerous concrete examples of how her thought applied to the world, notably through her experience of the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War; these examples will be incorporated within this section to provide context for a state-based international order. The second section recognises a limitation in Beauvoir's ethics in her defence of the use of violence in certain circumstances, which risks undermining her injunction for free individuals to pursue the freedom of all. It incorporates the similar work of Camus to rectify this flaw and better justify an eschatological function of the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value within an international order of which individuals are the only normative foundations.

Ethics of Ambiguity

Beauvoir was able to develop Sartre's existentialist phenomenology into a normative theory for three reasons. First, she supplemented Sartre's highly conflictual account of intersubjectivity (*le regard*) with the potential for co-operation, allowing humans to rightly relate themselves to one another. Second, she was therefore able to phenomenologically conceive of freedom in a more nuanced way than Sartre, and in a way which accorded more with Kierkegaard's radical definition. And third, she concretised her normative theory by situating it within the contemporary international order, as evidenced through her engagement with one of the defining issues of her day: the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War.

A. Ethics and Intersubjectivity

Beauvoir held that a normative theory must address how to act rightly towards others in the world. This simple assertion contains many implications. First, it treats humans as acting beings. Second, it claims that humans are situated in the material world. Third, because humans can act rightly *or* wrongly, they possess a freedom of choice which strains against their material situatedness. And fourth, whichever action a person

chooses to take, they do so alongside other humans who are also making choices. This approach fits with the Kierkegaardian framework used throughout the thesis, insofar as it presents humans as a paradoxical relation between two incompatible aspects – the soul (represented here by their freedom to transcend their material reality) and the body (their embodied situatedness). In other words, Beauvoir agrees with Sartre's characterisation of humans inhering both being-in-itself and being-for-itself. However, her fourth implication – the presence of other humans, what can be called *being-in-the-world* – adds the possibility for ethics. That is because if an individual were alone in the world, surrounded only by objects and not other humans, any choice they made to transcend their situation would not have to account for whether the individual were relating rightly to others. In other words, because everything else would be being-in-itself, there would be no alternative potential futures to constrain or compete with the individual's projected future according to their defining commitment. As Beauvoir writes, "for a being who, from the very start, would be an exact coincidence with himself, in a perfect plenitude, the notion of having-to-be would have no meaning. One does not offer an ethics to a God."[5] Ethics, therefore, requires others and, moreover, requires those others to be equally free to envisage alternative futures. A person who is fully transcendent – one who is fully within the universal – requires no ethical debate because they are assured that every action is right.

This leads Beauvoir to conclude that others are a necessary part of a human's phenomenological experience of the world. Far from being a threat to subjectivity, as the Sartrean interpretation has it, intersubjective relations for Beauvoir are both alterity and reciprocity.[6] What does this mean? Alterity – the otherness of the other – relates to Sartre's *le regard*. In this sense, when a human perceives another, they perceive that other's being-in-itself. Yet they are also aware that the other contains an element of being-for-itself. Because that being-for-itself is not phenomenologically accessible, though, the perceiver acts towards the other according to the being-in-itself which *is* evident. That is, the perceiver imposes expectations on the other's behaviour according to material characteristics such as race, gender or nationality. They treat the other as an object, and this objectification often occurs according to given values which are the outcome of institutions. In Kierkegaardian terms, this is how humans residing within the universal strip others of their potential individuality, by denying the possibility that others might possess their own unconditional commitment and therefore preventing them from eschatologically breaking free from the confines of the prevailing order. Beauvoir describes this as the perceiver's "power to define [the other] from the outside,"[7] the imposition of one's own subjectivity onto the other. This is where Sartre ends, and it results in the familiar problem in normative IR theories that the exercise of one's own freedom in a foundationless world can result in the oppression of others.

[5] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.10
[6] Daigle, 'Ambiguous Ethics', p.122
[7] Kristana Arp, 'Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialism: Freedom and Ambiguity in the Human World' in Crowell (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.254

However, Beauvoir notes that intersubjective relations are not only defined by alterity; they also involve reciprocity. This claim contains a deeper phenomenological assertion: that, unlike Sartre's perspective, the perceiver and the other are not strangers, but in perceiving one another they engage in a process of "communication and communion."[8] This means when a person perceives another, they recognise that the two of them share a common world – a common home. Therefore "the category of *Other* is as original as consciousness itself,"[9] because for the perceiver to recognise that they are being-in-the-world is to recognise that they are defined as an individual by being defined as 'not another'. In other words, when Sartre noted that consciousness "is what it is not," Beauvoir applies this to other consciousnesses to argue that human existence is wholly dependent on the phenomenological realisation of being separate from others – as being fully sovereign in oneself. By implication, there is an aspect of every human – their being-for-itself – which is completely inaccessible to all others and so humans have no choice but to treat one another at least partially as subjects rather than wholly as objects.[10] For Beauvoir, beginning from the same separateness as Sartre and agreeing with him that another's subjectivity (and therefore freedom) is not phenomenologically accessible, she nonetheless concludes that this realisation can make a person aware of the irrepressibility of human consciousness in the other. Consequently, there is an element of all humans that will resist objectification within a universal, and so the Sartrean world of conflict is not a given. This outlook is reciprocal insofar as it is rooted in the perceiver's own understanding of themselves as containing being-for-itself and therefore their own capacity for freedom, which they then reciprocally recognise in the other: "as freedom, the other is radically separate from me."[11]

As with Kierkegaard's understanding of subjectivity (specifically, of higher subjectivity) and freedom, it is difficult in Beauvoir's approach for humans to fully accept the being-for-itself within others. This is because humans are still a paradoxical relationship, and so being-for-itself coexists with being-in-itself; freedom coexists with situatedness. And that situatedness is given greater normative force by the institutions which make certain elements of it more noticeable – for example, it becomes easier to treat another human as a citizen of a state when so many given values direct meaning toward the state, and therefore condemn those who attempt to transcend it through their free choice. It is in this ambiguity that a theory of ethics resides, rather than the Derridean ambiguity of the moment of decision; that is, existentialist ambiguity is a necessary condition of the person, whereas poststructuralist ambiguity is a discrete type of situation. There are multiple ways of relating to others – in conflict, in mutual affirmation, or any combination of the two – and therefore a choice must be made when a human encounters another. This choice is ethical because any actions taken based upon it will be acting towards the goal which the perceiver deems to be most valuable, the goal which will put them in right relation to the other. The question then becomes, what *is* the right

[8] Simone de Beauvoir, quoted in Daigle, 'Ambiguous Ethics', p.123
[9] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* trans. Borde & Malovany-Chevallier (London: Vintage, 2011) p.21
[10] Ellie Anderson, 'From Existential Alterity to Ethical Reciprocity: Beauvoir's Alternative to Levinas', *Continental Philosophy Review* 52:2 (2019), pp.176-7
[11] Simone de Beauvoir, 'Pyrrhus and Cineas', trans. Timmermann & Keltner in Simons (ed.) *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp.125-6

relation between humans given the ambiguity of their condition.[12] Importantly, Beauvoir does not prescribe specific conduct in offering her ethical theory; rather, she presents an ethics of character, similar to Kierkegaard's notion of the individual's spiritual development but placed in an intersubjective context of being-in-the-world. It is an ethics which justifies why the Kierkegaardian and phenomenological identification of the free individual as a normative foundation is not just ontologically right but ethically right, too.[13]

B. Ethics and Individual Freedom

So far, Beauvoir's approach is differentiated by its focus on others as a vital aspect of a person's being-in-the-world. This allows her to posit an alternative form of intersubjectivity than Sartre's *le regard* and its implied state of conflict. But because she still implicitly values human freedom in her phenomenological description of human experience, it is unclear how she can avoid the inward-looking solipsism of which Kierkegaard's thought was accused. Beauvoir addresses this problem in two ways: first, divides freedom into multiple variants – ontological, concrete and moral – and she accords greater emphasis to socio-political aspects of freedom as a necessary step in achieving human freedom. Second, she asserts that for a person to exercise freedom requires that they simultaneously will the freedom of others. In making this argument, Beauvoir locates human freedom as the basis for all values – hence it is the free individual rather than humans *per se* who acts as a normative foundation – and allows it to be concretised within the contemporary order.

The core of Beauvoir's ethical approach to freedom is the notion that "it is not true that the recognition of the freedom of others limits my own freedom: to be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future."[14] This implies, somewhat paradoxically, that an individual can be free at the same time that they are constrained (and this marks another example of ambiguity between freedom and situatedness in Beauvoir's normative theory). Beauvoir can take such a stance because she divides freedom into three forms:

1. *Ontological freedom* is the basic phenomenological assertion that humans are able to transcend their situation by acting towards an alternative possible future. Because it is based in the phenomenological reality of humans as, in part, being-for itself, it is reflected in the freedom to choose a future outside of the material constraints of bodily impulses or causal inputs. It confronts

[12] Daigle, 'Ambiguous Ethics', pp.122-3
[13] Ibid, pp.124-5
[14] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.97

humans with their moral responsibility, the realisation that their choices and actions imply a value judgement, but that these values are contingent.[15]

2. *Concrete freedom* is the degree of material potential a human possesses within their situation, and it affects to what extent they can practise their capacity for ontological freedom. It resides outside of the particular human – it is not a feature of their ontological being but of their intersubjective being-in-the-world with others. When concrete freedom is denied, it is done so by objectifying the victim which, in turn, makes political rights which enhance freedom of choice superfluous.[16]
3. *Moral freedom* is the ability to choose to act in a way which not only enhances one's own freedom but the freedom of all others too. It is similar to the Kierkegaardian concept of freedom insofar as it requires a person to relate rightly to themselves by exercising their ontological freedom towards an unconditional commitment (what Beauvoir calls a 'project') but adds the caveat that they must relate rightly to others by willing that all others be able to pursue their own unconditional commitments. The Kierkegaardian individual relates to others within the universal and relates to their unconditional commitment alone, as an individual. But Beauvoir's individual relates to their unconditional commitment alongside all other individuals. In other words, Beauvoir's individual is simultaneously entirely separate from all others *and* entirely dependent on them – the other is full alterity and full reciprocity.[17]

It is evident that Beauvoir's understanding of intersubjectivity influences her understanding of freedom. It is worth exploring this in detail to get a fuller picture of how the freedom of one necessitates the freedom of all. Beauvoir's division of freedom into three forms implies that the socio-historical situation which defines the extent of a person's ontological freedom is as important as that person's subjective realisation that they can and must choose according to self-determined values. In other words, Beauvoir makes the other a necessary part of a person's development towards higher subjectivity. Encounters with others – that is, intersubjective relations – are an unavoidable part of the human experience and, consequently, of the free individual's experience. Beauvoir's normative theory cannot, therefore, be entirely subjective and so cannot be accused of the individualism and solipsism with which Kierkegaard is sometimes labelled. But it also recognises the loneliness of the individual pursuing their unconditional commitment and exercising freedom alongside transcendent values.

But this raises another issue for Beauvoir. She claims that the freedom of one individual necessitates the freedom of all,[18] but this potentially constrains the individual's ability to achieve freedom and exercise it according to their unconditional commitment. In order to resolve this paradox, Beauvoir makes two

[15] Tove Pettersen, 'Existential Humanism and Moral Freedom in Simone de Beauvoir's Ethics' in Pettersen & Bjørsnøs (eds.) *Simone de Beauvoir: A Humanist Thinker* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p.71
[16] Ibid
[17] Kristana Arp, 'Conceptions of Freedom in Beauvoir's "The Ethics of Ambiguity"', *International Studies in Philosophy* 31:2 (1999), p.28
[18] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.73

arguments. First, she re-emphasises that a human is defined as a paradoxical relation between the body and soul and that a free individual is one who successfully synthesises these two factors of the self. In phenomenological terms, individuals recognise the ambiguity of existing simultaneously as a situated being-in-itself and a transcendent being-for-itself. Beauvoir adds to this definition the necessary element of being-in-the-world alongside others. And because when encountering these others, humans are aware that an indomitable freedom (that is, being-for-itself) exists within all, they are also aware that contingent values and meaning are co-constituted by a multitude of humans. That is, each person, by virtue of their positive freedom, imposes meaning on the world by acting within it, and the interaction of these different meanings affects how others act towards the world. This, again, reflects the importance Beauvoir attaches to intersubjective relations compared to Kierkegaard or Sartre, as well as the contingency and flux of given values.

If all others were to be denied their freedom, however, they would become fully objectified as being-in-itself and, by extension, would lose their being-for-itself. This would prevent them from imparting meaning onto the world through their actions. From the perspective of the solitary individual, then, they would exist without the objectifying gaze of others – *le regard* – and so would lose all situated constraints on their freedom. They could act towards the world in any way they desire without needing to interact with others. But this would also mean that their self-chosen values and meaning could not be affirmed by others. Put differently, if no other were free then all humans would exist fully in the universal without any possibility of transcending that universal towards an alternative future. The universal would hold absolute normative force over humans. The solitary individual could then transcend that universal in an eschatological movement, as per Kierkegaard's political theology, but their action would not be seen as valuable by anyone else because no others could replicate such a transcendent move. Consequently, the individual's attempt at transcendence would not change the world in any way – the international order would remain exactly as it is because no others would take up the rebellion initiated by the single individual; all others would be trapped within the universal and the single individual would be considered a lunatic.

Importantly, in this understanding, freedom is not a value in itself. Freedom is nothing, or rather it is negation of the world as-is towards a world as-desired. It is the concrete value which arises from the exercise of freedom which is valuable. In other words, freedom represents the individual's capacity to be a normative foundation through sovereign choice, and it is the concrete outcome of that choice which is a value. But because meaning is co-constituted through intersubjective relations with other free humans, that concrete outcome can only be a value *in-the-world* if others freely act towards it as such. Given values are granted normative force because a sufficient number of humans act towards them as though they are meaningful; the same must apply if an individual's exercise of freedom is to reflect the concrete, situated aspect of their world. In other words, the individual must embrace the soul's capacity for transcendence and then recognise that their embodied situatedness within through the body requires applying their value in the socio-

historical context of their world. Without that recognition of other free individuals, the individual would have to confront the meaninglessness of their actions and would cease to be foundational:

> "I need those foreign freedoms since when I have achieved and gone beyond my own goals, my actions would fall back upon themselves, inert, useless, if they would not be carried away by new projects toward a new future […] The movement of my transcendence appears futile to me as soon as I have transcended it; but, if through other men my transcendence is prolonged always further away than the project that I form in the present, I will never be able to go beyond it."[19]

The second argument Beauvoir makes to justify the interdependence of free individuals on the freedom of others is similar to her first point, but focuses more on the act of rebellion against objectifying institutions. Humans act in a world populated by others, and this is a conflictual world based on the struggle to retain one's subjectivity in the face of objectification. They bolster their subjectivity by asserting their ability (and their responsibility) to freely choose an action out of infinite possibilities and by recognising that this action is justifiable only to themselves. Against this, they face not just the objectifying glare of other individuals, but the objectification of institutions which seek to constrain individual choice by forcing on them definitive characteristics, such as race or citizenship. Therefore, for an individual to assert their freedom requires them to remove objectifying forces. They do so through revolt, specifically a metaphysical revolt by which they identify institutional objectification and relate it to an imbalance towards transcendent value which prioritises objective truth over the subjectivity of human freedom. Metaphysical revolt then involves reasserting human freedom as a rejection of restraints on individual choice. In other words, individuals must actively cultivate their freedom against oppression by consciously embracing it, by refusing to allow others to define them according to some external characteristic. This enhances the normative force of the individual and diminishes the normative force of the institutions against which they revolt, in turn better enabling others to exert their own freedom. So it is that for an individual to will their own freedom is for them also to will the freedom of other individuals. Put differently, *freely* interacting with other *free* individuals expands the possibilities for choice of all involved, permitting them to forge their own values unburdened by the limitations of institutional objectification.[20]

Through these two arguments, Beauvoir asserts that to will one's own freedom is to will the freedom of others. Unlike Kierkegaard, this also requires that the individual desire the concrete social and material improvement of others' situations in order that they have the means to act on their inherent capacity for freedom, and hence Beauvoir's political writings focus on issues of social justice, such as reducing poverty and actively resisting defining labels such as gender or race. Unlike Sartre, too, Beauvoir's focus on

[19] Beauvoir, 'PC', p.110
[20] Kristana Arp, *The Bond of Freedom: Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Ethics* (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), pp.71-3

intersubjective relations permits a conception of freedom which reciprocally respects the freedom of others, although it is worth noting that because humans can fail to will their own freedom, they can also fail to will the freedom of others; this resembles Kierkegaard's belief that only the spiritually strongest humans can transcend to higher subjectivity. All of this is to say that Beauvoir's normative theory strengthens the existentialist response to the research question in two ways: it ethically justifies making free individuals the normative foundation of international order by asserting that it is only through the freedom of all that human existence can have any meaning.[21] And it permits the rebalancing of human freedom *alongside* transcendent values such that the two can be synthesised. The result is a normatively justified variant of the phenomenological ontology of international order, specifically: international order is *not* an aggregation of individuals into a universal humanity directed toward one concrete output of freedom, rather it is the co-existence of multiple, particular, concrete unconditional commitments rooted in free individuals but which "honour the reciprocal interdependence of individual lives."[22]

C. Ethics and International Order

With both a phenomenological ontology and an ethics in place to support the Kierkegaardian framework, the implications of Beauvoir's thought for international order can be examined. As noted, this international order resembles in many ways the pluralist understanding of order within the ES. But by shifting the locus of normative force from states and particular groups of humans towards free individuals, Beauvoir's normative theory can address the major issues with the ES approach: first, a Christian pessimism or moral scepticism which worries that power politics can result in nihilistic violence; second, a normative preference for the *status quo* as that which is empirically and therefore ethically valid; and, third, a concern that the imposition of universal values in a foundationless world will lead to ideological despotism.

Against the first claim that existentialist ethics results in potentially violent nihilism, Beauvoir makes a particularly strong defence. She argues that the individual's normative injunction to pursue their freely chosen commitment necessarily precludes nihilism as much as it does ideological despotism. Fundamentally, nihilism is the incomplete application of freedom. The nihilist must, in "rejecting his own existence […] also reject the existences of those which confirm it."[23] By this, Beauvoir means that individuals recognise their subjectivity only when it is targeted by others in intersubjective interactions, as discussed above. For the nihilist, the aim is to confirm the meaninglessness of their life – that is, they wish to confirm the lack of any values at all. This also requires them to reject the responsibility they hold for establishing their own values through their freedom. In other words, the nihilist must deny their own subjectivity. Therefore, to be confronted with their subjectivity through intersubjective interactions with others is a direct attack on the nihilist's world view, and the way to avoid it is to destroy all others. This

[21] Daigle, 'Ambiguous Ethics', p.127; Anderson, 'Existential Alterity', p.179
[22] Cooper, 'Philosophical Movement', p.30
[23] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.59

necessarily requires treating those others as means to an end and thereby objectifying them as tools towards the nihilist's self-fulfilment.[24] This is, in other words, the case of the solitary individual who wills their own freedom but, in failing to recognise the co-constituted nature of the world, does not simultaneously will the freedom of others. Hence, nihilism is the incomplete application of freedom.

Nihilism is therefore simultaneously the Nietzschean will to power (through objectification of others) and the will to suicide (through denying one's own meaning as a human both situated and free), a characteristic which Beauvoir cited in Nazi Germany's persistent violent revolution.[25] Indeed, Ian Kershaw argues that Nazi Germany was distinguished from contemporaneous dictatorships in two ways: its cumulative radicalisation and its capacity for violence, both of which made it particularly liable to seek the destruction of others and were embodied in one person, namely Adolf Hitler.[26] Pure nihilism, then, is as pernicious as the threat of ideological despotism represented in its antithesis: universal values. Indeed, morally sceptical or tragic scholars have argued in favour of values as an important check on nihilistic destruction.[27] Nevertheless, Beauvoir disputes that her approach is nihilistic insofar as the nihilist "is right in thinking that the world *possesses* no justification and that he himself *is* nothing. But he forgets that it is up to him to justify the world and to make himself exist validly."[28] Nihilists challenge the situation in which they find themselves – the institutions of international order which constrain their actions – but they don't realise that they are the source of their own new values. Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity does, avoiding a reversion to amoral anarchy.

This leads to the second flaw of pluralism, one which is shared by Kierkegaard's concept of the person. If an individual's freedom precludes them from treating others as a means to an end – in other words, if it constrains them by requiring them not to impose their own views on others – then how can individuals escape from the prevailing institutions of international order? That is, how can a pluralist international order avoid preferencing the *status quo* institutions such as the state in its efforts to prevent the arbitrary imposition of human will? Beauvoir again pre-empts this possibility, partly by rooting values in spontaneous and ever-changing individuals, but also by rejecting stasis within a state-based international order. In this, the state can be viewed as an institution of international order as defined above, not least because it imposes the defining characteristic of citizenship or, arguably, nationality on individuals. Consequently, those who relate themselves to a state are falling into a form of universalism insofar as they are projecting their freedom onto an external, objective cause which mediates their behaviour through social expectations.[29] There is some value to doing so, and the aim of synthesising human freedom with transcendent value means that Beauvoir cannot outright reject universalising impulses. Indeed, as Kierkegaard noted, the shared ethical

[24] Ibid
[25] Ibid, p.60
[26] Ian Kershaw, 'Hitler and the Uniqueness of Nazism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 39:2 (2004), p.244
[27] See, for example: Recchia, 'Restraining Imperial Hubris'
[28] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.61
[29] Ibid, p.49

vocabulary which Hegel embodied in the state is vital to human existence in a world of others because it makes individuals intelligible to one another and allows collective action; for Beauvoir, the phenomenological equivalent is that humans co-constitute the world and so must necessarily share certain understandings.

But both thinkers also warned against the totalising logic of the Hegelian 'system', wherein the freedom to pursue infinite possibilities is annihilated by increasingly abstract forms of reason. This concern was given a modern perspective by Camus, who argued that the state shifts normative force from individual values to the abstract concepts of power and efficiency.[30] The individual resides in the universal insofar as it permits them to exist socially with others. But their highest loyalty is to their freedom – their unconditional commitment. In pursuing their freedom, an individual may be required to act in a way that is deemed unethical by the standards of the universal – whether this be the church-state alliance for Kierkegaard, the totalitarian state for Beauvoir, international society in the ES, or the *civitas maxima* in cosmopolitanism – and this action will be entirely unintelligible to anyone but the individual because it exists outside a shared ethical vocabulary.[31] Beauvoir agrees that the conservative maintenance of the state as a central institution of international order deprives individuals of their freedom. She notes that those who forget their own freedom by subsuming themselves into the state are apt to engage only in prudential action by which they judge their actions through their utility to the state. They therefore become dependent on the state for their identity, treating everything as a potential threat to this external entity over which they possess no control. This simultaneously strengthens the *status quo* against demands for change and reduces the potential for non-prudential considerations as a "moral veto" on the actions of statespeople, as Bull and MacKinnon perceive the role of secular natural law. Consequently, the institution of the state possesses the inherent potential for tyranny, for in "dishonestly ignoring the subjectivity of his choice [to subsume himself to the state, the patriot] pretends that the unconditioned value of the object is being asserted through him; and by the same token he also ignores the value of the subjectivity and freedom of others, to such an extent that, sacrificing them to the thing [the state], he persuades himself that what he sacrifices is nothing."[32]

In other words, the prioritisation of the state as the immediate unit of international order necessarily treats individuals as objects and so legitimises their use as means to an end. This is why Beauvoir counters the well-intentioned caution of pluralist ES approaches towards individual agency against the *status quo*: she argues that it results in a tyranny that is as bad as the ideological despotism inherent in cosmopolitan theories. Of course, other institutions will counter the totalising tendency of the state. But the point made by Beauvoir is that to give meaning to the assertion that individuals are the fundamental units of international order, they must be recognised as the only entities by which values are justified. Attempts, such as Jackson's, to abstract out freedom from individuals to the state only serve to plant within pluralist

[30] Westphal, 'Kierkegaard's Politics', pp.320-32
[31] Kierkegaard, *FT*, pp.83, 96; Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, pp.72-3
[32] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.53

thought the seeds of its own destruction. As Beauvoir wrote, glorifying the state results in a "political fanaticism which empties politics of all human content and imposes the state, not *for* individuals, but *against* them."[33] Where she differs from the ES's pluralist wing is that the latter implies the partial solidification of international order into the *status quo*, not recognising the fluidity of its normative foundations.[34]

Finally, Beauvoir deals with the issue of ideological despotism, which is the reverse side of the coin from nihilistic violence in terms of its impact on freedom and international order. Ethically, if freedom is the ultimate goal, then evil is that which actively denies freedom. Moreover, because freedom necessitates that the individual will the freedom of others, freely choosing to commit evil is to deprive oneself of one's freedom as well. In other words, the oppressor is oppressed in the act of oppression as much as their victim. From this, we can see in more detail how institutions such as the state can be imposed "not *for* individuals, but *against* them." Beauvoir uses the concrete example of the Nazi occupation of France during the Second World War, in which she specifically condemned the actions of the French collaborationist journalist Robert Brasillach. Brasillach accorded greater normative force to the state – and specifically the collaborationist Vichy state – than permissible in order to preserve human freedom whilst allowing humans to act within a framework of given values. Instead, he identified himself entirely with a fanatical fascist ideology which was concretised in the state but which treated humans entirely as being-in-itself, devoid of the freedom to act towards a future different than that dictated by fascism.[35] For Beauvoir, this constituted a false assumption that universals can absolutely control humans and mobilise them as automatons towards a pre-determined future.[36] It meant that Brasillach had refused to accept the paradox at the heart of his existence, had therefore retreated to the relative comfort of a transcendent value, and so had abdicated the moral responsibility and choice which is central to human freedom.[37]

So far, Brasillach could be accused of failing to will his own freedom, but not necessarily of evil. What made Brasillach and other perpetrators of Nazi war crimes evil was that they also actively militated against the freedom of others. That is because, by fully identifying with a totally transcendent universal ideology, Brasillach rejects the essential element of being-in-the-world which constitutes human experience. He cannot therefore reciprocally recognise that others are beings containing the potential for transcendence according to their own defining commitments. In determining his choices – which are entirely in the service of the fascist state – he ignores the context of co-constitution which would force him to account for the freely chosen values of others, and so does not consider how his actions will negatively impact others' capacity for freedom. In other words, he imposes a false immanence on the world which prevents him from

[33] Ibid
[34] Ibid, p.55
[35] Lori Jo Marso, *Politics with Beauvoir: Freedom in the Encounter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p.45; Simone de Beauvoir, 'An Eye for an Eye', trans. Arp in Simons (ed.) *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p.248
[36] Marso, *Politics with Beauvoir,* p.45
[37] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.45

relating rightly to others.[38] Brasillach thereby wills others not to be free by actively objectifying them as means towards an end which is dictated by the universal ideology of fascism. He either cannot or will not comprehend the individual as constituted by both being-in-itself and being-for-itself, and prioritises only the former while denying the hope for transcendence inherent in the latter. Practically, this was manifest in occupied France in Brasillach's support for policies which visibly demarcated the objectified status of people within a fascist hierarchy, for example the value attributed to supposedly Aryan physical features or the forcing of Jews or homosexuals to wear yellow stars or pink triangles, respectively. More extremely, because they were perceived as objects, the Nazi occupiers and their collaborationist allies were justified in depriving people of their concrete freedom (according to Beauvoir's division) by employing deliberate violence, including torture and, ultimately, death. In this case, those who displayed a greater capacity for freedom were subject to harsher tools of oppression in order that their alternative, non-fascist conceptions of the future state could be negated.

This sort of evil is especially pernicious because, unlike nihilistic violence, it is justified by its perpetrators through a transcendent value whose contingency is not accepted. This means that if it is allowed to continue unopposed – that is, without individuals acting towards alternative possible values – then it can slip into the conservatism which Beauvoir criticised. By cementing given values through perpetual repetition of actions like "derogatory language, restrictive policies, and structural and physical violence" – in other words, by normatively empowering institutions – the self-imposed constraints which people impose on themselves are strengthened; they cease to consider that they have the potential to transcend their situation because their situation begins to hold increasing normative control over them.[39] Interestingly, in her condemnation of Brasillach, Beauvoir deployed this argument not just against collaborationists who had subsumed themselves into the ideological universal of fascism; she made the same point about the French state in its post-war trials and execution of those collaborators. Again highlighting the normative contingency of the state in international order as against individuals, Beauvoir noted that executing people like Brasillach was motivated by a desire for the state to regain the normative force which it had lost during the war by objectifying those who had rejected it. Her argument was, essentially, that while Brasillach deserved punishment for his objectification of specific, embodied individuals, "for France to condemn its traitors and collaborators was to flex its muscles following deep humiliation and impotency."[40]

That Beauvoir argues Brasillach deserves punishment, albeit from a different motivation than that of the French state, opens two potential flaws in her normative theory. First, she believes that perpetrators of evil can justifiably be objectified by having violence applied against them if it allows the victim to regain their sense of freedom. Second, her solution to pre-empting and preventing evil also risks empowering the state by idealising humans as abstract recipients of basic rights. On the first point, it is worth summarising the

[38] Marso, *Politics with Beauvoir*, p.55
[39] Ibid, p.56
[40] Ibid, p.48

issue of evil and ideological despotism. The agents of the Nazi occupation committed evil because they targeted others as objects to whom they could do as they wished.[41] These war criminals recognised only their own subjectivity, treating others as means to an end. In this, they were supported by institutions such as race, religion and the state, which came together in the especially horrific example of the Holocaust. This was, at its core, the presumption by the Nazis that they could define "those whose misery, whose very birth, places them outside of the human community."[42] For Beauvoir, violent punishment offered a means to redress this objectification; victims of Nazi oppression were permitted to objectify war criminals in order to demonstrate their own subjectivity and 'teach' those criminals that they could not treat others as objects. Simultaneously, on the second point, Beauvoir advocated actions which enhanced the ability of individuals to communicate their freely chosen choices to others in order to fulfil the dictum that in exercising their own freedom, an individual must will the freedom of others. Such actions include the provision of food, security and healthcare so that bodily limitations do not unduly hinder an individual's free choice, as well as violent resistance against those who seek to subjugate the individual's freedom to some universal cause.[43] The risk with Beauvoir's position is that it slips into universalism by abstracting and idealising individuals in the manner that O'Neill warned against, ultimately bestowing on them desires which are instead reflective of the perspective of the rights-giver, namely the state. And her justification for violence, both as a form of punishment and resistance, possesses few guardrails against either nihilist destruction or the despotism of an alternative ideology.

Consequently, while Beauvoir's normative theory shows how freedom can be accounted for in international order in synthesis with transcendent value, as well as the manner in which it should be employed, her acceptance of violence risks producing contradictory outcomes to what her ethics demands. In order to escape this pessimistic cycle, her theory must be modified. This is what Camus, through his 'absurdism', does.

Ethics of Absurdity

Even though Camus rejected the label 'existentialist' in favour of what he called 'absurdism', his normative thought is not far removed from Beauvoir's. Hence it can be used to modify the limitations in her ethics of ambiguity rather than replace it with an entirely different approach. This is important, because Beauvoir shows phenomenologically just how interdependent and reciprocal intersubjective relations can occur, and therefore how she can claim that the freedom of one individual necessitates the freedom of all. Camus engages with similar issues to Beauvoir, asking in *The Rebel* whether revolt – that is, the eschatological exercise of human freedom – must necessarily fall back in on itself by transitioning into an absolutist, universal transcendent value. First published in 1951, the examples Camus has in mind are the Bolshevik

[41] Beauvoir, 'EE', p.257
[42] Ibid, pp.245-6
[43] Debra Bergoffen, 'Introduction to Pyrrhus and Cineas' in Simons (ed.) *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p.86

Revolution of 1917 and its transformation into Soviet tyranny, and the French Revolution in 1789 and its eventual collapse into regicide and terror. Similarly to Beauvoir's condemnation of fanatical Nazi and collaborationist ideologues, Camus concludes that both the Bolshevik and French Revolutions did indeed collapse into absolutism and therefore betrayed their original motivation towards freedom by failing to recognise that freedom requires self-imposed constraints. Though he did not approach the issue phenomenologically as Beauvoir did, Camus did reflect some of her concerns with freedom when he stated that "absolute freedom is the right of the strongest to dominate. Therefore it prolongs the conflicts which profit by injustice. Absolute justice is achieved by the suppression of all contradiction: therefore it destroys freedom. The revolution to achieve justice, through freedom, ends by aligning them against one another."[44] Consequently, Camus argues, like Beauvoir, that a concept of freedom which includes limits on the imposition of human will would be the only way to ethically justify its synthesis with transcendent value in the international order.[45]

When exercising human freedom, then, Camus claims that "a revolutionary action which wishes to be coherent in terms of its origins [i.e. will the freedom of the individual and of all others simultaneously] should be embodied in an active consent to the relative. It should express fidelity to the human condition. *Uncompromising as to its means, it should accept an approximation as far as its ends are concerned.*"[46] Within this point, Camus is reflecting Beauvoir's observation that freedom is not a value in and of itself. Rather, as negation, it is condition for all values insofar as it permits the individual to project themselves into a future which is *not the present*. The future state the individual acts towards is the value. Consequently, the above claim can be rephrased as asserting that any exercise of freedom as the means to an end must recognise the requirement that the individual will the freedom of others. But the ultimate ends will necessarily be intersubjectively co-constituted with others due to the individual's being-in-the-world. In other words, the individual's eschatological act of rebellion will be driven by their unique unconditional commitment which tears them away from the prevailing international order, but must be moderated with the freedom of others upon re-encountering that order. This is, in essence, the interaction and synthesis of body and soul within the individual and human freedom and transcendent value within the world they co-constitute. Camus's conception of freedom, then, contains many of the same features as Beauvoir's – especially the injunction that it is interdependent on the freedom of others. With this insight maintained, Camus can attempt to legitimise freedom and without recourse to objectifying violence.

Again, Camus makes his point in relation to the concrete historical examples of the French and Bolshevik Revolutions. These revolutions begin, according to Camus, as the exercise of human freedom against the prevailing norms of the international order at the time. In 1789, a disparate and pluralistic coalition came

[44] Camus, *Rebel*, p.229; John Foley, 'Camus and Rousseau: Freedom, Justice, and the "Despotism of the General Will"', *History of European Ideas* 48:5 (2022), pp.614-5
[45] Foley, 'Camus and Rousseau', p.615
[46] Camus, *Rebel*, p.232 – my emphasis.

together, each with their own normative projects and vision for the future, to rebel against the oppression of dynastic sovereignty which shaped their entire world. In 1917, the same motivation was supplemented by the identification of class as an oppressive institution alongside not just the dynastic state but the very notion of the state-based order itself. But Camus argues that neither of these revolutions is ethically justified because they compromise their means whilst refusing to moderate their ends. That is, in their efforts to impose their will, the leaders of these revolutions compromised the notion that freedom requires the freedom of all, and they therefore instituted their own absolutist values without reciprocating the alternative values of others. In the case of the French Revolution, Camus notes, the revolutionaries – and specifically the Jacobins – imposed their own understanding of the value of popular sovereignty, failing to recognise that this value was as contingent as that of dynastic sovereignty which they had overthrown. The structure of international order had not been destroyed, then, but inverted, such that a universal concept remained sovereign, albeit a concept which was numerically more inclusive than the previous structure. Nevertheless, by asserting sovereignty in the place of existing individuals, the result was a shift in the norms of international order which remained exclusionary and therefore oppressive insofar as "citizens are inviolable and sacred and can only be constrained by the law which is an expression of their common will. Louis himself does not benefit by this particular inviolability or by the assistance of the law, for he is placed outside the contract. He is not part of the general will; on the contrary, by his very existence he is a blasphemer against this all-powerful will."[47]

In the name of an absolutist transcendent value, the French revolutionaries had exposed the contingency of the existing international order but then imposed an equally contingent order in its place, justified by the false rhetoric of immanence and therefore blind to the limits of its normative force. By not accepting self-imposed constraints, the revolutionaries perceived their new order as the fully transcendent manifestation of infinite, eternal and possible, legitimising the objectification and oppression of, firstly, those in the old order they had rebelled against, secondly, those who held any alternative values which they wished to see reflected in the future order, and thirdly, themselves as reflections not of free individuals but of an unchanging absolute. The result was escalating terror within France and war without. Camus, then, provides a normative account of the historical development of international order which bolsters Bain's claim of the tension and instability between immanent rhetoric and an imposed order. Simply put, Camus highlights how incomplete attempts to synthesise human freedom with transcendent value – what Kierkegaard would call a negative unity – demonstrate the contingency of both pluralist and solidarist values and, therefore, the fragility of international order. But without respect for human freedom, the values derived from an act of choice are equally contingent and yet prone to be justified by absolutist immanent rhetoric, thereby contributing further to the fragility of international order.

[47] Camus, *Rebel*, pp.70-1; Foley, 'Camus and Rousseau', p.615

The fundamental problem for Camus is the same as for Beauvoir, that to make an ethical choice without self-imposed constraints directed towards the freedom of others is merely "a harbinger of contemporary forms of society which exclude not only opposition but even neutrality."[48] This is the same point Kierkegaard made when he argued that the limitless normative power of the church allied with the material power of the state would be used to further the oppression of humans as citizens within the state-based international order. In contemporary international order, there is no need for such an alliance because a civic religion of sorts has taken hold which compels humans to see themselves only as citizens – that is, as being-in-itself defined by the state rather than as being-for-itself with the capacity for individual freedom – and thereby normatively justifies the state's endurance as an institution of international order through sheer numerical acceptance. The concern with Beauvoir's tolerance for violence is that it reinforces the normative pull of absolutist values by more easily justifying their marriage with material power and so enhancing their ability to objectify others and impose themselves on the world. For example, Beauvoir sees violence as permissible for a victim to regain their capacity for freedom against someone who has committed evil, hence she thought that the execution of Nazi war criminals and collaborators was justified so long as it was not done to bolster the state's authority over individuals. The problem is that, for Camus, this approach does not respect the need for a free individual to be "uncompromising in its means" or to "accept approximation" in its ends. That is, it does not respect the freedom of all and so does not moderate values in line with the co-constitution of the person who is being punished. Given that these two requirements are necessary to avoid rebellion turning into the arbitrary imposition of human will, it is too great a risk for Camus to ethically allow violence in the exercise of human freedom.

To be fair, Beauvoir does argue that punishment should be pursued only insofar as it allows the punisher to reclaim their lost being-for-itself, and for the punished to be confronted with the being-in-itself which they excessively transcended in their acts of evil. In that sense, it is an effort to rebalance human freedom and transcendent value intersubjectively and regain the capacity for freedom if not the actualisation of that freedom. However, given that Beauvoir's ethics is an ethics of character, it is difficult to reconcile her belief that all free actions ought to be undertaken in respect of a concrete, particular other's freedom with her claim that in certain circumstances, concrete, particular others may be treated as objects. Furthermore, because it is so difficult for a person to recognise and live fully within their freedom, the more likely outcome from violence is either its expropriation by people committed to existing institutions of international order (like the judicial organs of the French state, in Beauvoir's example), the acceleration of ideological despotism (the Jacobins or Bolsheviks, in Camus's example), or the nihilistic destruction of all (we might potentially use the example of Hitler in the dying days of the Second World War).

Camus is particularly troubled that the violence of the Bolshevik Revolution turned what might have been a true rebellion (in the sense of expanding human freedom) into an absolutist revolution designed to impose

[48] Camus, *Rebel*, p.68

a transcendent value onto others. Indeed, the issue of Soviet state terror is one of the main reasons for his rift with Sartre and Beauvoir, whom he criticised for espousing, respectively, a necessarily conflictual intersubjectivity and the use of violence to attain one's ends.[49] He even strikes a Kierkegaardian tone, comparing the free individual to the manifestation of God as a normative foundation when he says that "the revolution based on principles kills God in the person of His representative on earth. The revolution of the twentieth century kills what remains of God in the principles themselves, and consecrates historic nihilism."[50] Camus's argument against the Bolshevik Revolution is that it began from a "concrete basis, the basis of professional employment" in the trade union movement, which represented the negation of abstract, universalist, bureaucratic centralism within the state, and therefore better reflected the reality of human experience. But by absorbing a Marxist doctrine which "forcibly reduces reality into [the doctrine]," the Bolsheviks were required by their own abstract ideas to employ violence against all reality in order to make it conform to their will.[51] Violence, then, is a symptom of human wills which have not adequately synthesised the body and soul and therefore have not achieved freedom. It is intrinsically related to oppression: "systematic violence positively destroys the living community [i.e. reciprocal intersubjective relations] and the existence we receive from it […] In history, considered as absolute, violence finds itself legitimised; as a relative risk, it is the cause of a rupture in communication."[52]

That is, for Camus, the tension in human existence – the necessary presence of the absolutist and universalistic impulses of transcendent values – mean that violence will more likely transform into arbitrary imposition than limit itself according to the values of others. This is because rebellion is the act of negating an objectifying institution; its *logical* end is the absolute negation of all – that is, the destruction of all others who could objectify the rebel, as decreed in nihilist thought.[53] This logical end is the outcome of an overreliance on the infinite, eternal and possible of the soul and of transcendent values, which champions detached logic. Incorporating the finite, temporal and necessary body, as existentialism tries to do, moderates that logic by limiting an individual's ends to concrete projects and making them interdependent on others. But as a further guardrail against the oppressive effects of institutions, which are a fact of individuals' situations, Camus prescribed non-violence. Unlike Beauvoir's approach, which risks tyranny and ideological despotism, Camus's could perpetuate oppression by adopting a conservative, incremental approach to change. For example, though he recognised the French oppression of the people of Algeria in the mid-20th century (especially through the institution of race), he did not support the nationalist movement's violence in the Algerian War of Independence. Nor did he support right-wing terrorism in that conflict, or the violence of the French state. Rather, he hoped for a federal solution which would avoid further violence while reducing the hierarchical distinction between the Algerian people, the *pieds-noir*

[49] Emma Kuby, 'Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre: French Intellectuals "Embedded in the World"', *Modern Intellectual History* 17:4 (2020), p.1237
[50] Camus, *Rebel*, p.191
[51] Ibid, pp.239-40
[52] Ibid, p.233
[53] Bernard Schweizer, *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp.15-6

settlers, and the French metropole.[54] Not only was this change incremental, it was also unrealistic in Camus's eyes – even as he campaigned for it – reflecting a moral scepticism that mirrors that in certain pluralist ES scholars.[55]

Nevertheless, Camus's fundamental belief that individuals assert themselves by peacefully rejecting institutionalised values and power structures is not inherently incapable of accommodating human freedom, though he could perhaps not identify what the resultant change ought to look like in the specific context of the Algerian War. It is therefore preferable to Beauvoir's approach, which risks falling into the nihilism and universalism which she had already rejected, though the difficulty Camus had in forming a practical response to specific situations suggests that freedom can only be exhibited by especially strong-willed individuals (Kierkegaard cited only four examples of such people: Abraham, Diogenes the Cynic, Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ). Camus, then, arguably better represented Beauvoir's claim that: "for existentialism, it is not impersonal universal man who is the source of values, but the plurality of concrete, particular men projecting themselves toward their ends on the basis of situations whose particularity is as radical and as irreducible as subjectivity itself."[56]

What, then, is Camus's normative prescription? How ought human freedom be exercised in order to respect the freedom of all in a transcendent theory of obligation? Camus favours a dialogical ethics which affirms the Beauvoirian understanding of humans as engaged in both conflictual and reciprocal intersubjective relations in the world. This is not the dialogical ethics of communicative cosmopolitanism with its underlying universal reason, nor of certain pluralist ES approaches with their focus on strategic dialogue. Rather, it is existentialist dialogue. Camus claims that freedom is simultaneously an act of refusal of the world which separates the individual from all others and affirms their freedom, as well as an act which endorses a particular value which has the potential to be accepted into international order through co-constitution with others. For example, Camus discusses a slave rebelling against being labelled a slave, with the behavioural requirements this entails: "immediately the slave refuses to obey the humiliating orders of his master, he rejects the condition of slavery."[57] John Foley provides more detail, explaining that "the slave's realisation of a value which the master cannot be allowed to disregard is simultaneous with his realisation that the value must also be recognised in the master. His refusal is a refusal of both servitude and oppression: the master is repudiated as a master, not as a human being."[58] This might be labelled civil disobedience in its physical manifestation, but it is not directed purely or even necessarily towards social justice or political rights. Rather, it is an affirmation that the individual is the only true source of their values

[54] Ieme Van Der Poel, 'Camus: A Life Lived in Critical Times' in Hughes (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Camus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.21-2
[55] Ibid
[56] Beauvoir, *EA*, p.17
[57] Camus, *Rebel*, p.2
[58] Foley, 'Camus and Rousseau', p.623

and that they can craft the world according to those values, but that in doing so they must never infringe on the inescapable and inaccessible freedom of others.

This means that Camus rejects the violence which Beauvoir permits, precisely because it is symptomatic of an absolutist view which would purposefully seek to limit the freedom of others in mistaken service of one's own freedom. Camus does not reject violence as the taking up of arms, but he does deny that it should ever be used in a way which objectifies the other. This is what it means, for him, to be uncompromising in ends but approximating in means, and it requires that "authentic acts of rebellion will only consent to take up arms for institutions which limit violence, not for those which codify it."[59] Practically, this means that if the state-based international order – or even the single state – is perceived by individuals to lose normative force over them, then "an excess of injustice renders [insurrection] inevitable [but] the rebel rejects violence in advance, in the service of a doctrine or a reason of state."[60] Essentially, "when the end is absolute, historically speaking, and when it is believed certain of realisation, it is possible to go so far as to sacrifice others. When it is not, only oneself can be sacrificed, in the hazards of a struggle for the common dignity." And that is what justifies freedom.[61]

In Chapter 8, the example of Grigory Ivanovich Grigoryev was given, a prisoner in a Soviet gulag who "form[ed himself] according to [his] own options and not as conditioned by society." It is worth repeating here in the context of Camus's ethical account of the rebel:

> "[The Soviets] relied on certain invisible chains which kept the natives reliably in their place. The strongest of these chains was the prisoners' universal submission and total surrender to their situation as slaves. [But] how can one explain Grigory Ivanovich Grigoryev? […] His forthrightness gleamed from his big quiet eyes, some sort of unwavering forthrightness. This man was never able to bow in spirit. And he didn't bow in camp either […] He was subjected on all sides to the camp philosophy, to the camp corruption of soul, but he was incapable of adopting it. In the Kemerovo camps the security chief kept trying to recruit him as a stoolie [informant]. Grigoryev replied to him quite honestly and candidly: 'I find it quite repulsive to talk to you. You will find many willing without me.'"[62]

For Camus, freedom finds its justification in the freedom of others. Solidarity emerges from the assertion of a plurality of free individuals, and the assertion of that plural order is given meaning through the solidarity

[59] Camus, *Rebel*, p.233
[60] Ibid
[61] Ibid, p.234
[62] Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, pp.255, 317-8

it fosters. The previously incommensurable body and soul, human freedom and transcendent value are synthesised. So Camus can meaningfully claim: "*I* rebel – therefore *we* exist."[63]

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that for a normative theory to account for the synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value in international order, it must follow two fundamental precepts: that the freedom of one necessarily entails the freedom of all; and that whilst being uncompromising in its ends, freedom must always seek to approximate its means. That is, freedom as the freedom of all must never cease asserting itself but can never impose itself. This claim, adopted from Beauvoir and Camus, is enabled by the original Kierkegaardian framework in which freedom entails constraints for the individual involved. This is a controversial approach to freedom, especially in the context of normative discussions in IR which posit freedom as the unrestricted imposition of human will. But it is an approach which, as Beauvoir argues, better reflects the paradoxical reality of human experience as torn between being-in-itself and being-for-itself, the body and soul, all within a co-constituted world of intersubjective relations. Moreover, it is an understanding of freedom which resolves the incommensurability between human freedom and transcendent value. In the language of political theology, it allows for an eschatological move which negates the tension between immanent rhetoric and an imposed order by giving the latter a normative foundation in freedom and exposing the former as one amongst many contingent values imposed on the world.

[63] Camus, *Rebel*, p.10 - my emphasis.

Chapter 10

Racial Justice

The previous chapters have shown how the Kierkegaardian framework and its later development in existentialist phenomenology can provide a normative understanding of international order in which human freedom and transcendent value are treated as commensurable rather than paradoxical. Based on Kierkegaard's eschatological political theology, they promote an ethics of rebellion against the prevailing institutions of international order. In the examples given so far, this has been framed in terms of individuals rebelling against the contingent normative force of the state and asserting their freedom as a normative foundation. This spurs not only a synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value, but also shapes the normative development of international order. Kierkegaard, for example, saw his work as an exercise of freedom against the alliance between the Danish state and the Lutheran church; Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and Camus used their writings to oppose the totalitarian ideologies of fascism and (eventually) Soviet communism which had been given material power through the state. However, with the secularisation of international order (or perhaps the relative decline of Christianity's normative force) and the decline of totalitarian states, these examples, while useful for making the argument of this thesis, are not directly relevant to the contemporary international order.

But there is a stream of thought amongst the French existentialists which focuses on an institution especially relevant to today's international order: race. Sartre, Beauvoir and Camus all wrote about the Algerian War of 1954 to 1962, discussing the freedom of Arabs not only with regards to political oppression but racial oppression too. Beauvoir incorporated race into her ethical theory in *America Day By Day*, and Sartre did so in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. They were not the first to do so. Black thinkers have since at least the 19th century produced works which share in the existentialist 'family resemblance'. Paget Henry identifies the roots of black existentialist thought in pre-colonial African perspectives which combine a subjective inner nature with an intersubjective outer nature.[1] Such ideas, when confronted with universalistic and essentialising philosophies which idealise humans according to a European perspective, respond by highlighting the socio-historical context of black people. Specifically, black existentialists have consistently identified international and domestic orders with an overreliance on the infinite, eternal and possible and, consequently, the institutionalised suppression of human freedom under transcendent values. Though that oppression affects all humans to some degree, its burden has fallen disproportionately on black people. This was raised in an international context most notably by Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, who applied existentialist thought to the anti-colonial struggle and are explored in this chapter. But their ideas were influenced by and went on to influence other black existentialists who highlighted the racialised nature of a state-based international order. Underpinning this approach is the same fundamental argument made by

[1] Paget Henry, 'African and Afro-Caribbean Existential Philosophies' in Gordon (ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.18-20

Sartre, Beauvoir and Camus: in the context of given values and institutions, intersubjective relations are conflictual and objectifying; this must be countered by appealing to the paradoxical human condition as caught between the body and soul in order to assert human freedom for one and for all through moderated means as a way to synthesise that freedom with transcendent values. In short, black existentialism prescribes rebellion in the specific context of racial oppression. It therefore offers a concrete manifestation of the abstract points made so far in this thesis.

This chapter will explore black existentialism for its understanding of the historical normative development of international order and its impact on contemporary efforts to change the normative discourse of that order. To that end, it will offer concrete examples of Camusian rebellion, manifest in the anti-slavery, anti-colonial, anti-apartheid and BLM movements. Black existentialist thinkers will be heavily referenced, partly because they perceive of international order and the institution of race in the same manner as developed in this thesis, but also because many of them were actively involved in these movements. Just as Beauvoir and Camus were Resistance members and subsequently engaged in public debates on the Algerian War and the Soviet Union, so W.E.B. Du Bois was a prominent anti-slavery campaigner, and Steve Biko active in the fight against the apartheid state. The chapter will proceed in two sections. The first discusses how race has been perceived in racial justice movements as an institution of international order prescribing a transcendent value and, consequently, how the reaction against it has often been justified in terms of human freedom. The second section develops this point by arguing that the concrete incidents of people exercising their freedom employed in support of racial justice have conformed to Beauvoir's and Camus's normative principles: to will one's own freedom requires willing the freedom of all, and that an uncompromising end must adopt moderation in its means. The result is that the racial justice movement promotes a close approximation to Beauvoir's conception of an international order as a plurality of entirely separate individuals whose desire for freedom is mutually supportive rather than threatening.

Racial Justice and Freedom

Kaepernick's act of taking a knee constitutes one contemporary expression of that concrete act of rebellion, occurring within the broader BLM movement. BLM claims to be "an ideological and political intervention in a world where black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression."[2] And despite its US origins, BLM seeks radical change in international order. It aims to "eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on black communities by the state and vigilantes," in part by "mov[ing] beyond the narrow nationalism that is all too prevalent in black communities" and which facilitates institutional oppression.[3] Kaepernick's act, within the wider context of BLM, therefore contributes to the international normative discourse on race. But it also demonstrates the

[2] Black Lives Matter, 'Herstory', https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/, last accessed on: 24/03/2021
[3] Black Lives Matter, 'About', https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/, last accessed: 23/03/2021

core of black existentialist thinking: that rebellion must be rooted in individuals and it must aim towards normative change in international order. Firstly, it is rooted in individuals insofar as it rejects the institutionalised objectification of humans based on essentialised characteristics. Secondly, it promotes normative change insofar as it recognises the interaction of institutions as facilitating racial oppression. In this regard, black existentialists are sceptical not only of the specific institution of race, but of all universalising concepts.

The aim of BLM is to assert the freedom of all humans. This is an outcome of its intellectual roots which identify racism as the product of the institutionalisation of race. The response to this situation is to undermine the objectifying process of institutionalisation by asserting an individual's subjectivity. And this requires that the movement normatively prioritise individuals, their recognition of themselves as the source of values, and their ability to demonstrate their freedom through choice. Indeed, Césaire noted how the existence of colonial oppression specifically was the result of capitalism being "incapable of establishing a system of individual ethics."[4] Regardless of whether this is an accurate representation of capitalism, the point is that because it is premised on a universal logic, capitalism for Césaire was unable to reflect the human experience of being trapped between both the soul *and* the body. That is, it treated humans as being-in-itself in the form of *homo economicus*, and so its ethics was an absolute, logical one rather than a true reflection of the ambiguity of acting in an intersubjective world of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. BLM *does* rest upon an individual ethics because it rejects the essentialisation of race as a definitive human characteristic and redefines blackness in existentialist terms which emphasise individual freedom.

Race has already been referenced in this thesis as an example of an institution in the existentialist sense. Its effect is to undermine freedom by emphasising a human's ethnicity as a defining characteristic which dictates a limited range of future possible actions which they must follow. The imposition of those social expectations – which, at the individual level, occurs through Sartre's *le regard* – is one example of the conflictual nature of intersubjective interactions which bind individuals to the world with others. As Kierkegaard noted in his call for a balance between the body and soul, and as was later backed up by Merleau-Ponty's understanding, there is some use to institutions. Specifically, they facilitate the perpetuation of a shared ethical language which make humans intelligible to one another and so cohere them into communities, a necessary outcome of existing alongside other humans. But institutions, because they represent the universalising logic of the soul, carry the inherent potential for oppression. The degree to which they are oppressive depends on how individuals utilise them: when they pre-reflectively (that is, uncritically) deploy institutions as tools to stratify humans according to essentialised characteristics, they establish an imbalance by which the body and the human freedom it represents is annihilated in favour of the soul and transcendent values. This is manifest in the establishment of a normative hierarchy, at the top of which stand those humans whose essential characteristics are deemed to represent full subjectivity and

[4] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p.15

at the bottom of which lie those who are objectified. In other words, the further down the institutionalised hierarchy one lies, the more their freedom is compromised. (This is also why the exercise of freedom can be viewed, unlike Kierkegaard, as lying on a spectrum, allowing Camus to argue for the moderation of means towards the gradual end of freedom for all.)

Take race, which is based on the characteristic of ethnicity. What separates race from ethnicity is that it essentialises the former, treating it as a definitive aspect of an individual's being and conflating it with expected behaviour and normative value. At the top of the racial hierarchy is the concept of whiteness, which is treated as the exemplar of how an individual ought to act – specifically, being based on an overreliance on the infinite, eternal and possible, it equates whiteness with universal reason and detached, objective thought. Subsequent levels of the racial hierarchy are then defined not by their freedom, but by any supposed 'defects' from the ideal of whiteness. The implication is that if whiteness represents the ideal human, then non-white people are to some degree less human than white people.[5] Existentially, because humans contain elements of both freedom and transcendence, the transcendent social expectations placed on non-white people limit their freedom insofar as they deprive them of the opportunity to chart their own futures according to values they themselves establish. Instead, values of whiteness are imposed upon them as the only goal of their actions, whilst simultaneously not being made accessible to them due to essentialised 'defects' reflected in social structures. All hierarchies follow a similar logic, the end result of which is the denial of subjectivity to some humans and the elevating of others to the privileged status of full subjectivity.[6] Robert Birt argues that the historical language used to describe black people reflects the prior act of dehumanisation. They are described as "beasts" who do not act according to free choice so much as causal inputs of pleasure and pain. Hence even today the stereotypes of "bestial physical force, inclinations to violence, simian athletic prowess, and a primitive and rapacious sexuality" are deployed to distance black people from the norms of whiteness and the supposedly universal reason which whiteness represents.[7]

If a human being is defined existentially by their paradoxical tension between body and soul, then black existentialist thought asserts that the institution of race has deprived black people of their freedom precisely because it refuses to treat them as humans. Furthermore, institutions such as race are doubly oppressive insofar as the privileged oppress victims and the victims oppress themselves. The oppression of victims by the privileged is the outcome of the latter's perception of absolute subjectivity, which allows them to perceive victims as being-in-itself and so impose narrow expectations of future behaviour upon them: in other words, the process of objectification as outlined above. But the self-oppression which institutions are capable of inculcating stems from this too. Born into a world in which they are treated as objects, black

[5] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 2008), pp.86-7
[6] Gordon, 'Phenomenology and Race', p.295
[7] Robert Birt, 'Existence, Identity and Liberation' in Gordon (ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.209

people are immediately cast into a practical identity which limits the time between their present and future selves. This limits their ability to critically assess the institutions in which they live and so enhances the normative force of given values, such as those espoused by race. And because these given values emphasise the 'negative' aspect of blackness relative to the norm of whiteness, black people are further led to believe that they cannot rebel, that they cannot refuse, that they cannot say "no" to the institution of race and project themselves differently into the future.[8] In short, part of the oppressive universalising logic of institutions such as race is a self-perpetuating trend towards conformity. By claiming a universal reason and defining it as whiteness, race denies black people their freedom and instead imposes the status of a static and unchanging being-in-itself upon them. It deprives them of any agency over the world.[9]

The notion that black people are born into the institution of race (and, indeed, that all humans are born into any institution) is a subtle development of Sartre's phenomenology. Sartre's analysis suggests that subjectivity exists prior to and separate from intersubjective interactions and can therefore be more easily exerted when the creeping oppression of institutions is identified. The above discussion, however, suggests that in a world of others, one is thrust into intersubjective interactions at the moment of birth and so is immediately conditioned by institutional forces. The latter argument aligns more with Beauvoir's focus on intersubjectivity as "communication and communion", but is certainly more pessimistic and is perhaps expected given that Fanon, one of its proponents, was a black Martinican living under French colonial rule whereas Sartre and Beauvoir were white metropolitan French citizens who were not born into the oppression against which they railed – the Nazi occupation of France.[10] Indeed, Gail Weiss considers Fanon to have developed his form of *critical* phenomenology contemporaneously to Sartre.[11] Fanon's view of international order is therefore more conflictual than both Sartre's and Beauvoir's, something which he saw in colonialism and its social and material legacies. The institutionalisation of race, for Fanon, while occurring at the level of individual interactions was manifest in the international. International order was an example of "white civilisation and European culture hav[ing] forced an existential deviation" on black people.[12] Specifically, the racial hierarchy which deprived black people of their normative value as humans translated into a political stratification through which they were deprived also of their material rights. Hence, when discussing the European acquisition of colonies, Fanon argued that "looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to."[13] It is interesting that he conflates the words "species" and "race," for the point of the

[8] Robert Birt, 'Identity and Liberation', p.206
[9] William Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.3
[10] Of course, removed from the context of racial justice, Beauvoir was born into oppression based on her gender, perhaps one reason she still saw the conflictual and oppressive potential in intersubjective relations even as she offered a more reciprocal alternative.
[11] Gail Weiss, 'Phenomenology and Race (Or Racialising Phenomenology)' in Taylor, Alcoff & Anderson (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p.233; Fanon, *Black Skin*, p.170
[12] Fanon, *Black Skin*, p.6
[13] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), p.5

institution of race is indeed to portray non-white people as members of a different species than that of the existentially free human. It is also why Césaire could succinctly claim that "colonisation = thingification."[14]

Beyond the specific socio-historical situation of colonialism which Fanon critiqued, black existentialist thinkers have consistently used such themes of dehumanisation and oppression to reject the institution of race. A key part of this approach has been to redefine blackness in order to deprive it of its essentialising characteristics and so separate it from a universal reason based on whiteness. In short, they have attempted to redress the balance between human freedom and transcendent value. Du Bois, for example, expanded his analysis of racial hierarchy in the US to one which addressed international order more broadly. He argued that black people exist within an international order which deprives them of the human aspect of being-for-itself, that is, self-consciousness. Consequently, the institution of race as manifest internationally only allows black people to see themselves "through the revelation of the other world" – in other words, international order as based on norms of whiteness compels black people to conform to such given values.[15] Biko, too, addressed the global socio-economic disadvantages faced by black people which, he argued, stemmed from their ontological disadvantage of being defined as black. His response was to develop a different definition of blackness as a political identity, not essential, but consciously adopted by those who suffer institutionalised oppression and make the subjective choice to reject that oppression. The practical results of such a redefinition are evident in the man who influenced Biko, Solomon Plaatje, who offered a similar reconceptualisation of blackness based on the inclusion of multiple diverse African ethnicities within the black race. Plaatje actioned his definition through the creation of the precursor to the African National Congress, which would go on to assert the freedom of an essentialised group against the oppressive institutions underpinning apartheid South Africa.[16] Where Biko went beyond Plaatje was his conscious attempt to separate a definition of blackness from any negative comparison to whiteness; he did not idealise whiteness as the 'neutral' norm of universal reason, but as a group of people equally oppressed by their uncritical acceptance of transcendent values, albeit values from which they derived privilege.[17]

Such a conceptualisation of blackness as based around a rebellion against oppression maintains normative force today, not least as demonstrated by Rozena Maart's use of it outside any formal example of racial hierarchy like apartheid or colonialism.[18] And it is actioned by BLM which, is cognizant of a "world where black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" and aims to reject it in favour of one "where black people feel empowered to determine [their] destinies in [their] communities."[19] By rejecting an essentialised and universalistic definition of blackness, BLM is rooting itself in human freedom and

[14] Césaire, *Colonialism*, p.21
[15] Du Bois, *Black Folk*, p.3
[16] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1987), pp.48-9; Lewis Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.193
[17] Biko, *I Write*, pp.48-9
[18] Gordon, *Africana Philosophy*, p.193
[19] Black Lives Matter, 'About'

asserting that freedom at the same time. The normative force of institutions lies in their givenness, the fact that they are not exposed to critique. So, by identifying an institution like race and arguing that it is not definitive of any one person, BLM is inverting the objectifying gaze. It is claiming that the institution itself is a form of being-in-itself and that the individuals who act through it possess the subjectivity to act differently to its strictures. This has two effects: firstly, it breaks the false metaphysical chains which oppress those at the bottom of the institutional hierarchy such that they do not perceive themselves as negative variants of the idealised human. And secondly, it frees the privileged too. Insofar as the privileged are defining themselves by the universal reason inherent in whiteness, they are also oppressed, limiting themselves to the objective truth of teleological progress. By being exposed to the lack of normative foundation underpinning those values, they can also dispute their givenness and make the free choice to act differently. BLM achieves this by highlighting the hypocrisy of certain institutions: for example, claiming that humans are free because they are granted universal human rights ignores how those rights have perpetuated the idealisation of whiteness.[20] And the demonstration of freedom in itself opens possibilities for a future international order not based on those supposedly universal values.[21] This echoes Kierkegaard's synthesis insofar as individuals must respect the worth of a shared universal language while stepping beyond the universal when it undermines their higher subjectivity. It ensures that individuals remain the foundation of normativity.

In perceiving race as an institution, BLM roots its normative force in human freedom instead. And in so doing, it necessarily undermines the power of institutions and the transcendent values which empower them. This rebalances the paradox between human freedom and transcendent value such that both factors can be treated on equal terms and through a commensurate understanding. Most notably, its rejection of the idealised human being as white reflects O'Neill's criticisms of Kantian cosmopolitanism (and, indeed, concerns about the *telos* of Habermas's and Linklater's communicative cosmopolitanism). Unlike O'Neill, however, the existential reconceptualisation of blackness based on concrete oppression offers an alternative individually-grounded approach to combatting oppression. Moreover, this approach does not require the individual to subsume themselves into an alternative institution such as the state – as in instrumental communitarianism – and it views rebellion not as the unfolding of a Hegelian universal logic – as in constitutive theory – but as the free choice of individuals in a contingent world. The black existentialist heritage in BLM is fundamentally concerned with the power of individuals to exercise their freedom to change the prevailing international order, and in that regard it departs from the moral scepticism, pessimism and conservatism of the ES, as well as the 'ethics of silence and hearing' of poststructuralism which lacks a normative foundation to justify assertive action.

[20] Biko, *I Write*, pp.20-1
[21] Christopher Lebron, *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.135-40

Racial Justice and International Order

In reasserting freedom relative to transcendent value, black existentialism does two things, both of which ensure that it avoids the conservatism of which the ES could be criticised, and that it adopts the impetus for change in Camus's normative approach rather than the potential for maintaining the *status quo*. Firstly, it highlights the interaction of multiple institutions in perpetuating oppression. Racial oppression is facilitated by the state, for example, which allows those critiquing specific government policies to be branded as 'unpatriotic', as threats to the existence of a universal international order through which people define themselves as citizens. Hence, Kaepernick's protest sparked calls from the NFL and civil society that he was somehow anti-American.[22] Racial oppression is also compounded by other institutions. Cooper highlighted the double oppression faced by black women, objectified as black by society-at-large and as women by the male-dominated civil rights movement. And Baldwin's work contained layers of oppression against him as both a black man and a gay man. By questioning all such institutions, BLM ensures that the *status quo* can never be assumed as static, that the fluidity of existence is recognised. Secondly, black existentialism ensures radical change by refusing to replace one oppressive institution with another. It is not a revolutionary movement which seeks to replace the current international order with one based on a different set of essentialised characteristics; it is a form of rebellion against all forms of totalising universalism, as demonstrated by its own structure and its specific projects. As such, it embraces the fluidity of an ethically-justified pluralist order, taking seriously Camus's claim that "authentic acts of rebellion will only consent to take up arms for institutions which limit violence, not for those which codify it."[23]

On the first point, Kaepernick and BLM promote normative change in that they see the complicity of a panoply of other institutions in the oppression of race. Take the state, the structures of which can facilitate the objectification of black people by compounding it with the objectification of citizenship. As Beauvoir noted, the state contains totalising tendencies insofar as those who define themselves by it treat any threat to the state as a threat to their own identity as citizens. This makes it harder for black people to rebel against the institution of race, for doing so may necessitate rejecting concrete government policies and thus being labelled as unpatriotic. Building on the previous section, insofar as whiteness constitutes a set of universalised values, the state is normatively justified by those values too. Jackson's account of the state as a means of defending freedom refers to a specific account of freedom which defines the individual according to those universal values, veering towards O'Neill's critique of idealisation. And yet those values don't reflect the reality of the human experience for many individuals within the international order. So, for example, the international human rights discourse guarantees freedom defined as, amongst others, the rights to opinion, expression and association, as enforced by state authorities within their boundaries. But actions to ensure those rights do not account for the unique socio-historical context of black people who have traditionally been oppressed within those states and who today (at least in certain countries) are faced with

[22] Boren, 'Kaepernick's Protests'
[23] Camus, *Rebel*, p.233

over-policing, over-surveillance and threats of violence against them, all of which are manifestations of their objectification.[24] At the international level, we might also point to those universal human rights being used to justify armed interventions into primarily non-Western states under, for example, the banner of the Responsibility to Protect. For this reason, BLM treats its goals as global, rejecting "the narrow nationalism" which constrains individuals' ability to assert their own freedom and questioning state structures which are implicit in racial oppression. For example, BLM's call to defund the police stems from the origins of the US police force in slave patrols "built on white supremacy."[25] The point is not so much to destroy the state in a revolutionary move and replace it with an alternative absolutist conception of universal reason, but to reduce its normative force in order to curtail the potential for oppression through that institution's interaction with others. In other words, to redefine human freedom and transcendent values such that the two can be synthesised to support one another rather than accentuate each other's oppressive potential.

On the second point, BLM refrains from replacing the institutions it rejects with alternatives based on a different universalist set of values. This is evident in the reconceptualisation of blackness stemming from Plaatje and Biko, which defines the term with regards to freedom, existentially conceived. It is reflected in the contemporary structure and culture of BLM, too. BLM is, as was discussed, based on the individual and to that end its method of achieving its goals is through "self-transformation" rather than "faction discipline." Moreover, its collective action is based upon "energised friendship circles above obedient membership lists," and is derived from Baldwin's claim that any individual can contribute to the freedom of others by demonstrating their own freedom to say "no" to essentialised characteristics – for him, his dual rebellion was against the negative connotations of his blackness and his homosexuality.[26] BLM, then, doesn't seek to foment change only in order to then freeze the resultant order in place within the scaffolding of alternative universal values. Consequently, it is not reactionary in that it does not seek to objectify white people as a form of revenge, as Beauvoir's more contested arguments might lead to. Rather, the point of BLM is that in objectifying the institution of race, they can reveal to white people that they, too, have been oppressed by the category of whiteness, albeit less so than black people. And, if rejecting some of the worrying elements of Beauvoir's ethics, BLM demonstrates her core point: that the freedom of one necessitates the freedom of all. Because, as discussed above, institutions are interconnected, the freedom of a black person is aided by achieving the freedom of any other human. So BLM fights against the institutions of the state, of gender and of sexuality as well. As Cooper – considered the first black feminist – wrote: "only the black woman can say: when and where I enter, in the quiet undisputed dignity of my personhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me."[27] Her sentiment would remain the same if that were altered to read that "every free

[24] Lebron, *Making of BLM*, p.133; United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), Art.19
[25] Black Lives Matter, 'BLM Demands', https://blacklivesmatter.com/blm-demands/, last accessed on: 25/03/2021
[26] William Maxwell, 'Born-Again, Seen-Again James Baldwin: Post-Postracial Criticism and the Literary History of Black Lives Matter', *American Literary History* 28:4 (2016), p.817
[27] Anna Julia Cooper, 'A Voice from the South' in Lemert and Bahan (eds.) *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), p.62

individual enters with me." In short, uncompromising in their ends, these particular individuals fighting for racial justice have moderated their means.

Precisely because of the connection made between the freedom of one and the freedom of all, BLM does not fall back to nihilism as Beauvoir's ethics can come close to doing. For Beauvoir, the potential for nihilistic violence is justified insofar as counter-objectification through violence is believed to be a necessary means to redressing the imbalance between those who believe only themselves to possess subjectivity and those who have been totally objectified; in other words, victims 'teach' their oppressors about the existence of free individuals by objectifying them, making the oppressors realise that they are not the only individuals to possess subjectivity. But black existentialist thought has consistently noted how the oppressors of black people are themselves oppressed, forced to define themselves by their whiteness as much as black people are forced to define themselves by their blackness. Whiteness does bring socio-political privileges compared to blackness, certainly, but by asserting the freedom of black people, BLM advocates white people escaping from the institutional cage of race and asserting their own individual freedom. And because the freedom of one necessitates the freedom of all, this act alone would further undermine the oppression of race. The same is true of Kaepernick, whose protest was motivated because "I love people. That's why I'm doing this." (Indeed, the act of taking a knee was deemed preferable to sitting on the sidelines during the national anthem because it is a sign of respect, representing the way in which soldiers honour their fallen comrades and resembling a flag at half-mast.)[28] Black existentialist thinkers are not united on this approach. Fanon's advocacy of violence, for example, demonstrated that there is debate over its use in the specific historical context of black liberation. BLM, on the other hand, adopts a non-violent approach. Key to the question of violence remains, though, that it be taken up not with the intent of objectifying others, as Beauvoir advocates, but to liberate all from institutionalised oppression, as Camus argues. In terms of racial justice, this means that – violent or non-violent – individuals aim to reconceptualise race away from an essentialised characteristic and towards a descriptor of one's freedom.

Much of the reconceptualisation of blackness around individual freedom has already been discussed throughout this chapter. The point is that it captures Kant's dictum that individuals must be treated as ends in their own right, not as means. And it is manifest in the Beauvoirian realisation that the freedom of one necessitates the freedom of all. BLM does not, therefore, espouse an alternative universal reason to entirely replace the *status quo* order. Nor does it objectify those who have historically been privileged by the institution of race and other institutions with which it has interacted. Rather, all humans are objectified by their existence in a world of institutions, and by exposing that reality – by identifying institutions and highlighting the concrete outcomes of objectification – BLM is not seeking to destroy that world and the individuals which comprise it, as nihilists would do. Instead, it recognises that no value can be truly given, that whenever the affective outcome of objectification is felt – that is, shame – it must be questioned. In

[28] Boren, 'Kaepernick's Protests'

so doing, individuals are granted subjectivity and recognised as the foundations of their own values. They gain the normative force to impose their own order on the world by freely choosing their future. That is why Douglass and Wells felt it so important to expose the hypocrisy of the idealised values of America which nonetheless permitted slavery and lynching; they were attempting to make white people feel shame and so realise their position as objects in an institutionalised world.[29] It is why, in more recent times, Baldwin said that liberation struggles succeed only "if you will *not* be ashamed, if you will *not* play it safe."[30] And it is why Fanon, in response to an international order oppressed by universalised values, proposed saying "no to scorn of man. No to degradation of man. No to exploitation of man. No to the butchery of what is most human in man: freedom."[31]

For a movement like BLM, advocacy of a pluralist society rooted in human freedom necessitates change. For Kaepernick, the shame of being objectified as a black man could no longer be borne in silence. For both, a belief in change implies hope that a normatively desirable future is possible, thereby obviating the need for nihilistic destruction. The alternative to change is stultifying loyalty to a *status quo* comprised of institutions which carry within them the seeds of oppression. Only by constantly balancing these institutions with demonstrations of freedom can that oppression be curtailed. That is the role and obligation of an individual who has synthesised the body and soul and, therefore can synthesise human freedom and transcendent value.

Conclusion

A Kierkegaardian synthesis is difficult to achieve. And an approach which espouses a synthesis between two paradoxical factors whilst arguing that the world is forever in flux must accept that deviation from that synthesis is inevitable. Manifestations of black existentialism – like Kaepernick's protest or BLM – will not perfectly encapsulate an existentialist ontology or ethics. But their roots in black existentialist thought and their stated aims and methods suggest that they represent one way in which the Kierkegaardian framework can be concretised in the international order. They are means of rebellion against the institutions of international order which risk becoming too oppressive of human freedom. In so doing, these manifestations recognise the contingency of that order, its plural character and the need to rely ultimately on individuals in providing its normative foundation. Black existentialism rejects the idealisation of Kantian and communicative cosmopolitanism and the discourse ethics of philosophical hermeneutics as relying too much on a form of universal reason which has historically been denied to black people in their specific situations. It treats the state as another institution with oppressive potential and so rejects it as an alternative universal *telos* as in communitarian theories. And it promotes normative change which denies the state-centric scepticism encapsulated in traditional approaches to the ES. While sharing many similarities with

[29] Lebron, *Making of BLM*, pp.131-5
[30] James Baldwin, 'Giovanni's Room' in Morrison (ed.) *James Baldwin: Early Novels and Stories* (New York: Library of America, 1998), p.267
[31] Fanon, *Black Skin*, p.173

poststructuralism, it sees the potential for a normative foundation which justifies freedom, stemming from an ambiguity which resides in the human condition itself rather than in some moment of ethico-political choice. In the balance it displays between the human freedom and transcendent value, black existentialism may instead represent the more optimistic elements of Bain's approach to an imposed and pluralist international order. But, as this thesis has argued, the moral scepticism which Bain inherits from Bull and his ES-inspired focus on statespeople means that his political theology is less suited to engaging with Kaepernick's protests or BLM.

Instead, existentialism offers a novel approach to international order which can synthesise human freedom and transcendent value within the free individual. This is rooted in a Kierkegaardian framework based around the paradox of human existence as torn between the body and soul, and which is secularised, applied to international order and given ethical impetus by the French existentialists Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir and Camus. Their work demonstrated how such a perspective – essentially a first-image analysis of international order – can be applied to traditional areas of focus in IR, such as the role and normative value of the state, and the historical development of international order. But existentialism, especially through the thought and action of black existentialists and campaigners for racial justice, also highlights emerging areas of normative concern in IR. This chapter discussed race, not as a compartmentalised issue within international politics, but as an institution constitutive of the contemporary international order. It touched, also, on other such institutions which lie outside the mainstream of IR thought, such as Baldwin's rebellion against the institution of homosexuality or the intersectionality between race and gender. In that regard, an existentialist perspective broadens what is relevant to discussions of international order and the normative discourse around it, though this thesis does not have the space to explore those other areas of research.

Fundamentally, though, this chapter has attempted to concretise the central claim of this thesis: that if human freedom and transcendent value are reconceptualised existentially, they can be treated as commensurate such that the paradox between them can be resolved and offer a normative foundation for international order in which individuals are both free and hold obligations to one another. Institutions, such as race, are necessary counterweights to this process. But by perceiving international order from this individualist perspective, the tensions between human freedom and transcendent value are reduced by making each of the terms commensurable within the Kierkegaardian act of synthesis. The example given in this chapter – racial justice – is highly relevant to the contemporary international order. But existentialism can offer a framework for general normative theorising in IR. As Frederick Douglass said:

> "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. This struggle may be a moral one, or it

may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will."[32]

[32] Frederick Douglass, quoted in Lewis Gordon, 'Introduction' in Gordon (ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.2

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to answer the question of how the paradoxical normative relationship between human freedom and transcendent values can be reconciled in the context of the plural international order. It has argued that a resolution to that paradox requires beginning with a concept of the person that recognises the paradoxical nature of humans and offers a means to synthesising that paradox. Therefore, it adopted a Kierkegaardian concept of the person, based on Dreyfus's interpretation, which defines the individual as a paradoxical relationship between an infinite, eternal and possible soul and a finite, temporal and necessary body. These two factors map neatly onto human freedom and transcendent values in international order insofar as human freedom is rooted in the individual's finite, temporal and necessary choices and actions within the world, while transcendent values identify a person as part of an infinite, eternal and possible future of universal absolutes. Therefore, when Kierkegaard redefines the factors of the paradox between body and soul through his concept of the unconditional commitment, he provides a way of redefining human freedom and transcendent value such that they are commensurable and mutually supportive. This can happen because a *finite* entity gives meaning to an individual's *infinite* possible worlds, the *eternal* is given meaning within the *temporal*, and an individual's unconditional commitment is *necessary* to their identity but they retain the *possibility* to relate to it how they wish, including abandoning it.

This means, in terms of human freedom and transcendent value, that human freedom becomes defined not as the freedom to do what one wills, but the freedom to choose to commit to an unconditional commitment which totally defines oneself but which, through synthesising the infinite, finite, temporal, eternal, necessary and possible, also allows one to create a value which transcends their particular situation. By contrast, a transcendent value is no longer one which applies to all humans at all times and in all places, but one which allows a single individual to recognise the arbitrariness of the given values around them and transcend them towards values rooted in the foundation of their own freedom. Given values – all of which imply a degree of universality – are not transcendent but are still beneficial due to the intersubjective nature of human being-in-the-world. But, recognising their potential for oppression, they are in fact *not* transcendent and remain essentially foundationless and therefore contingent, unlike the transcendent value derived from an individual's free choice to pursue their unconditional commitment. Importantly, freedom requires that for an individual to be free they must will the freedom of others too, for recognition by a free other is the only way for an individual's transcendence to be affirmed in an intersubjective world. It also requires that while the end of freedom must be absolute, the means of achieving it must be moderated in order to avoid objectifying others and therefore depriving both them and the free individual of their freedom.

The implications of this synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value for international order can be seen when compared to poststructuralism and political theology. For poststructuralists, in a foundationless world, transcendent values are arbitrary impositions which legitimise the privilege of the strong over the weak and, in extreme cases, follow a totalising logic that leads to the open subjugation of marginalised

groups. Human freedom, which allows the recognition of the arbitrariness of transcendent values, is a way of asserting new beliefs against the existing value system. But the act of asserting new beliefs means that alternatives must be denied and one's own values must be imposed on others and legitimised through an exemplary or performative act of force. In a world in which the oppression of both transcendent value and human freedom are emphasised and in which no normative foundation guides human action, the poststructuralist international order is oppressive and fragile. Poststructuralists main contribution is to call out this oppression and identify it in its diverse forms, but their normative suggestions either contain a latent universalism due to their pessimistic interpretation of human freedom and subjectivity, or else do not offer a positive criterion for action.

Bain's political theology recognises the tension and fragility of an imposed order which relies on the rhetoric of immanent order to justify restraints on the exercise of freedom. In this reading, transcendent values act as a moderating force on unrestrained human freedom which could otherwise impose itself (potentially violently) on others. Transcendent values provide a theory of obligation specifically designed to circumscribe freedom, albeit a fragile one which is most effectively exercised at the level of statespeople. But this theory of obligation is required precisely because the language of immanent order with its transcendent values can be deployed to justify the untampered imposition of human will on others. Against that possibility, human freedom remains an important bulwark. Both human freedom and transcendent values therefore provide value and danger to an imposed order which retains the rhetoric of immanence. The tensions between them and their incommensurability require careful management and toleration to avoid the twin pitfalls of ideological despotism and nihilistic violence. This understanding of international order shares many similarities with ES accounts – notably the moral scepticism of certain pluralist scholars – as would be expected given Bain's engagement with the School. However, it also reflects the worries of the church-state alliance against which Kierkegaard established his concept of the person and attendant synthesis of human freedom and transcendent value.

Consequently, the existentialist conception of international order derived from the Kierkegaardian framework suggests that when human freedom is synthesised with transcendent value within the individual, that individual becomes a normative foundation through their unconditional commitment to a finite, temporal and necessary entity which simultaneously takes on infinite and eternal meaning and possibility. Through a reclaimed foundationalism which imbues human freedom with an obligation to will the freedom of others and moderate means, transcendent values retain their role of normatively governing the social order while losing their defining power over free individuals. International order can therefore be perceived as normatively more stable, based on plural foundations and supportive of human freedom. This conceptualisation is best thought of as an ideal type towards which an existentialist normative theory would tend. In reality, the difficulty of achieving a Kierkegaardian synthesis of body and soul within the individual means that few people can achieve it, and therefore a full synthesis of human freedom and transcendent

value in international order would be almost impossible to achieve and likely fleeting. However, the outsized normative influence of the free individual to eschatologically shape international order means that even approximating to a Kierkegaardian synthesis would strengthen the freedom of one and all without undermining transcendent value.

The example given in this thesis is the history of racial justice movements, inspired by and influential on black existentialism. The black existentialist involvement in and reaction to these movements – from anti-slavery to anti-colonialism, and anti-apartheid to BLM – has been to resist the institution of race in international order, that is, to rebel against the definitional power of race over a person's identity and actions. Importantly, they have recognised the need to not replace this definitional power with an alternative category of identity. Campaigns for racial justice therefore consistently claim to liberate both the oppressed *and* the oppressor, reflecting the Beauvoirian dictum that the freedom of one is intrinsically linked to the freedom of all. Black existentialists also moderate their means in accordance with the social values of their day, even while they retain the absolute goal of freedom as their end. They thus inhere that element of Camus's normative theory. For that reason, historical campaigns for racial justice provide an important and concrete example of the broader normative IR approach that this thesis has tried to cohere.

None of this is to say that the argument of this thesis is limited to race in international order. Indeed, throughout the thesis, other examples of relevance have been given, including nationality, gender and class. Given Beauvoir's role in feminist theory, the thesis could just have easily dedicated a chapter to feminist international theory, feminist existentialism and its implications for the argument. The fact that it did not is a somewhat arbitrary choice based on space constraints. But feminism remains a topic of interest and relevance for this thesis's argument which should be pursued in further research. Similarly, each of the theories discussed could warrant a full thesis of their own in relation to the argument made here. And, as noted previously, existentialism is a very broad category of thought. Even single thinkers changed their views throughout their lives. What is discussed here is a tiny part of a rich literature that could be broadened in relation to the thesis's argument. The use of Heidegger by poststructuralist scholars to focus on a different project than what this thesis has grappled with is an example of the myriad ways in which existentialist thought can be read and used to fruitfully engage with puzzles in IR. This thesis has attempted to limit itself to a narrow research question (which, it turned out, isn't all that narrow), and in order to follow the path to answering the question, it has had to leave other paths of inquiry unanswered. Nevertheless, it has raised further questions which ought to be the subject of further research.

Bibliography

Adler, E. (2013) 'Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions and Debates' in Carlsnaes, Risse & Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*, 2nd ed., London: Sage, pp.112-44

Adorno, T. (1989) *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Hullot-Kentor, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Albert, M. & Lang Jr, A. (2019) *The Politics of International Political Theory: Reflections on the Work of Chris Brown*, Cham: Springer

Alderson, K. & Hurrell, A. (2000) *Hedley Bull on International Society*, Basingstoke: Macmillan

Allen, A. (2014) 'Reason, Power and History: Re-reading the Dialectic of Enlightenment', *Thesis Eleven* 120:1, pp.10-25

Anderson, E. (2019) 'From Existential Alterity to Ethical Reciprocity: Beauvoir's Alternative to Levinas', *Continental Philosophy Review* 52:2, pp.171-89

Armitage, D. (2004) 'The Fifty Years' Rift: Intellectual History and International Relations', *Modern Intellectual History* 1:1, pp.97-109

Aron, R. (1969) *Marxism and the Existentialists*, trans. Weaver, Addis & Weightman, New York: Harper & Row

Aroosi, J. (2016) 'The Causes of Bourgeois Culture: Kierkegaard's Relation to Marx Considered', *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42:1, pp.71-92

——— (2019) *The Dialectical Self: Kierkegaard, Marx and the Making of the Modern Subject*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Arp, K. (1999) 'Conceptions of Freedom in Beauvoir's "The Ethics of Ambiguity"', *International Studies in Philosophy* 31:2, pp.25-34

——— (2001) *The Bond of Freedom: Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Ethics*, Chicago: Open Court

——— (2012) 'Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialism: Freedom and Ambiguity in the Human World' in Crowell (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.252-73

Avant, D., Finnemore, M. & Sell, S. (eds.) (2010) *Who Governs the Globe?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bain, W. (2007) 'One Order, Two Laws: Recovering the Normative in English School Theory', *Review of International Studies* 33:4, pp.557-75

——— (2014) 'Rival Traditions of Natural Law: Martin Wight and the Theory of International Society', *The International History Review* 36:5, pp.943-60

——— (2014) 'The Pluralist-Solidarist Debate in the English School' in Navari & Green (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp.159-70

——— (2015) 'Thomas Hobbes as a Theorist of Anarchy: A Theological Interpretation', *History of European Ideas* 41:1, pp.13-28

——— (2020) *Political Theology of International Order*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

——— (2021) 'Political Theology and Historical International Relations' in Carvalho, Costa Lopez & Leira (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp.201-9

Baldwin, J. (1998) 'Giovanni's Room' in Morrison (ed.) *James Baldwin: Early Novels and Stories*, New York: Library of America

Barnes, H. (1992) 'Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being' in Howells (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.13-38

Barnett, M. & Finnemore, M. (2004) *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Beabout, G. (1996) *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press

Beauvoir, S. (1985) *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre*, trans. O'Brian, London: Penguin

——— (2004) 'Pyrrhus & Cineas', trans. Timmermann & Keltner, in Simons (ed.) *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp.89-150

——— (2004) 'An Eye for an Eye', trans. Arp, in Simons (ed.) *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp.245-60

——— (2011) *The Second Sex*, trans. Borde & Malovany-Chevallier, London: Vintage

——— (2018) *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Frechtman, New York: Open Road

Beitz, C. (1999) *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

Bell, D. (2009) 'Writing the World: Disciplinary History and Beyond' in *International Affairs* 89:1, pp.3-22

Bellamy, A. (2002) 'Pragmatic Solidarism and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention', *Millennium* 31:3, pp.473-97

Bergoffen, D. (2004) 'Introduction to Pyrrhus and Cineas' in Simons (ed.) *Simone de Beauvoir: Philosophical Writings*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp.77-88

Bernasconi, R. (1995) 'You Don't Know What I'm Talking About: Alterity and the Hermeneutical Ideal' in Schmidt (ed.) *The Specter of Relativism: Truth, Dialogue and Phronesis in Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press

Biko, S. (1987) *I Write What I Like*, ed. Stubbs, Oxford: Heinemann

Birt, R. (1997) 'Existence, Identity and Liberation' in Gordon (ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, New York: Routledge

Blattner, W. (2012) 'Heidegger: The Existential Analytic of Dasein' in Crowell (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.158-77

Boren, C. (2020) 'A Timeline of Colin Kaepernick's Protests Against Police Brutality, Four Years After They Began', *The Washington Post*, 26 August 2020

Brown, C. (1992) *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches*, New York: Columbia University Press

——— (2002) *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity Press

——— (2010) *Practical Judgement in International Political Theory: Selected Essays*, London: Routledge

——— (2012) 'The Practice Turn, Phronesis and Classical Realism: Towards a Phronetic International Political Theory?', *Millennium* 40:3, pp.439-56

——— (2013) '"Human Nature", Science and International Political Theory', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 16, pp.435-54

——— (2017) 'Political Thought, International Relations Theory and International Political Theory: An Interpretation', *International Relations* 31:3, pp.227-40

——— (2018) 'International Relations and International Political Theory' in Brown and Eckersley (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.48-59

Brown, C. & Eckersley, R. (2018) 'International Political Theory and the Real World' in Brown & Eckersley (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.3-18

Brown, C., Nardin, T. & Rengger, N. (eds.) (2002) *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bull, H. (1966) 'The Grotian Conception of International Society' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.51-73

——— (2002) *The Anarchical Society*, 3rd ed., Basingstoke: Palgrave

Burns, M. (2010) 'The Self and Society in Kierkegaard's Anti-Climacus Writings', *The Haythrop Journal* 51:4 pp.625-35

Butt, D. (2008), *Rectifying International Injustice: Principles of Constitution and Restitution Between Nations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Butterfield, H. (1966) 'The Balance of Power' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.132-48

Camus, A. (2013) *The Rebel*, trans. Bower, London: Penguin

——— (2013) *The Outsider*, trans. Smith, London: Penguin

Caney, S. (2005) 'Cosmopolitanism, Democracy and Distributive Justice', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 31, pp.29-63

Cerbone, D. (2017) 'Phenomenological Method and the Achievement of Recognition' in D'Oro & Overgaard (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.295-316

Césaire, A. (1972) *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Pinkham, New York: Monthly Review Press

Chakrabarty, D. (2000) *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

Cochran, M. (1995) 'Postmodernism, Ethics and International Political Theory', *Review of International Studies* 21, pp.237-50

——— (1999) *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2002) 'Deweyan Pragmatism and Post-Positivist Social Science in IR', *Millennium* 31:3, pp.525-48

——— (2009) 'Charting the Ethics of the English School: What "Good" is There in a Middle-Ground Ethics?', *International Studies Quarterly* 53:1, pp.203-25

——— (2010) 'Dewey as an International Thinker' in Cochran (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Dewey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.309-36

——— (2013) 'Hedley Bull and John Dewey: Two Middle Grounders in a Pragmatic Approach to the Nuclear Dilemma' in Navari (ed.) *Ethical Reasoning in International Affairs: Arguments from the Middle Ground*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.158-181

Connolly, W. (1991) *Identity/Difference*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Cooper, A.J. (1998) 'A Voice from the South' in Lemert & Bahan (eds.) *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield

Cooper, D. (2012) 'Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement' in Crowell (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.27-49

Cox, R. (1986) 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory' in Keohane (ed.) *Neorealism and Its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press

Crowell, S. (2012) 'Sartre's Existentialism and the Nature of Consciousness' in Crowell (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.199-226

Cupitt, D. (2003) *The Sea of Faith*, London: SCM

Daigle, C. (2006) 'The Ambiguous Ethics of Beauvoir' in Daigle (ed.) *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, pp.120-41

——— (2017) 'Unweaving the Threads of Influence: Beauvoir and Sartre' in Bauer & Hengehold (eds.) *A Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp.260-70

Das, S.B. (2020) *The Political Theology of Kierkegaard*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Delahunty, R. & Yoo, J. (2010) 'Kant, Habermas and Democratic Peace', *Chicago Journal of International Law* 10:2

Dooley, M. (2001) *The Politics of Exodus: Søren Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility*, New York: Fordham University Press

Dostoyevsky, F. (2004) *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Peaver & Volokhonsky, London: Vintage

Dreyfus, H. (2003) 'Christianity Without Onto-Theology: Kierkegaard's Account of the Self's Movement from Despair to Bliss' in Wrathall (ed.) *Religion After Metaphysics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.104-122

——— (2006) *Existentialism in Literature and Film*, Lecture Series, University of California Berkeley, Spring 2006

——— (2006) 'The Roots of Existentialism' in Dreyfus & Wrathall (eds.) *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism*, Malden: Blackwell, pp.135-61

——— (2012) '"What a Monster Then is Man": Pascal and Kierkegaard on Being a Contradictory Self and What to Do About It' in Crowell (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.96-110

Dryzek, J., Honig, B. & Philips, A. (eds.) (2008) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Du Bois, W. (2007) *The Souls of Black Folk*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Edkins, J. (1999) *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner

Epp, R. (2014) 'The British Committee on the Theory of International Politics and Its Central Figures' in Navari & Green (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp.25-36

Erskine, T. (2007) 'Qualifying Cosmopolitanism? Solidarity, Criticism and Michael Walzer's "View From the Cave"', *International Politics* 44, pp.125-49

Evans, C. (2009) *Kierkegaard: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Evans, J. (2020) 'The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as Parody of Anti-Enlightenment Thought', *Constellations* 27, pp.482-95

Fagan, M. (2013) *Ethics and Politics After Poststructuralism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Fanon, F. (2004) *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Philcox, New York: Grove Press

——— (2008) *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Philcox, London: Pluto

Finnemore, M. & Sikkink, K. (1998) 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization* 52:4, pp.887-917

Foley, J. (2022) 'Camus and Rousseau: Freedom, Justice, and the "Despotism of the General Will"', *History of European Ideas* 48:5, pp.614-33

Fox-Muraton, M. (2020) 'Kierkegaard and Beauvoir: Existential Ethics as a Humanism', *Kierkegaard Studies* 25:1, pp.241-64

Fromm, E. (1994) *Escape from Freedom*, New York: Henry Holt

Frost, M. (1996) *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2003) 'Constitutive Theory and Moral Accountability: Individuals, Institutions and Dispersed Practices' in Erskine (ed.) *Can Institutions Have Responsibilities?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.84-99

——— (2012) 'Tragedy, Ethics and International Relations' in Erskine & Lebow (eds.) *Tragedy and International Relations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.21-43

George, J. (1994) *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)Introduction to International Relations*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner

Gillespie, M. (2008) *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago: Chicago University Press

Gordon, L. (1997) 'Introduction' in Gordon (ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, New York: Routledge

——— (2008) *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2017) 'Phenomenology and Race' in Zack (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.294-304

Grimshaw, M. (2021) 'The Exception of Transcendence: The Political Theology of Kierkegaard and Das', *Comparative and Continental Philosophy* 13:2, pp.188-96

Guilhot, N. (2010) 'American Katechon: When Political Theology Became International Relations Theory', *Constellations* 17:2, pp.224-53

Habermas, J. (1995) *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. McCarthy, Cambridge: Polity Press

——— (2007) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Lawrence, Cambridge: Polity Press

Hall, I. (2006) *The International Thought of Martin Wight*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Hannay, A. (1985) 'Introduction' in Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, London: penguin

——— (1999) *Kierkegaard*, London: Routledge

——— (2008) 'Kierkegaard on Commitment, Personality and Identity' in Mooney (ed.) *Ethics, Love and Faith in Kierkegaard: Philosophical Engagements*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp.48-56

Hegel, G.F.W. (2007) *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. Wallace, Miller & Inkwood, Oxford: Clarendon Press

——— (2015) *Philosophy of Right*, trans. Knox, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time*, trans. MacQuarrie & Robinson, London: SCM Press

Henry, P. (1997) 'African and Afro-Caribbean Existential Philosophies' in Gordon (ed.) *Existence in Black: An Anthology of Black Existential Philosophy*, New York: Routledge

Hobbes, T. (1996) *Leviathan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hoffmann, M. (2009) 'Is Constructivist Ethics an Oxymoron', *International Studies Review* 11:2, pp.231-52

Hoffmann, S. (1986) 'Hedley Bull and His Contribution to International Relations', *International Affairs* 62:2, pp.179-95

Hurrell, A. (2007) *On Global Order: Power, Values and the Constitution of International Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hutchings, K. (2011) 'Dialogue Between Whom? The Role of the West/Non-West Distinction in Promoting Global Dialogue in IR', *Millennium* 39:3, pp.639-47

——— (2019) 'The Politics of Judgement in International Political Theory' in Albert & Lang (eds.) *The Politics of International Political Theory: Reflections on the Works of Chris Brown*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.39-53

Jackson, R. (1990) 'Martin Wight, International Theory and the Good Life', *Millennium* 19:2, pp.261-72

——— (2000) *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Kant, I. (1996) 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals', trans. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.37-108

——— (1996) 'Metaphysics of Morals', trans. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.353-604

——— (1996) 'Critique of Practical Reason', trans. Gregor, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.133-272

——— (1998) *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Guyer & Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2006) 'Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', trans. Colclasure, in Kleingeld (ed.) *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp.67-109

——— (2012) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Gregor & Timmermann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2018) 'Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason', trans. Wood & Giovanni, in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.37-246

Keck, M. & Sikkink, K. (1998) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Keene, E. (2002) *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2014) 'Three Traditions of International Theory' in Navari & Greene (eds.) *Guide to the English School in International Studies*, Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, pp.171-84

Kershaw, I. (2004) 'Hitler and the Uniqueness of Nazism', *Journal of Contemporary History* 39:2, pp.239-54

Khawaja, N. (2017) 'Father Kierkegaard' in Grøn & Rosfort (eds.) *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach*, Boston: De Gruyter, pp.153-70

Kierkegaard, S. (1985) *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Hannay, London: Penguin

——— (1987) *Either/Or: Part I*, trans. Hong & Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press

——— (1987) *Either/Or: Part II*, trans. Hong & Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press

——— (1998) 'The Single Individual: Two Notes Concerning My Work as an Author' in Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, trans. Hong & Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.101-126

——— (2008) *The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Hannay, London: Penguin

——— (2009) *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Hannay, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2009) *Works of Love*, trans. Hong & Hong, New York: Harper Perennial

——— (2009) 'The Moment' in Hong & Hong (eds.) *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Hong & Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.87-326

——— (2009) 'What Must Be Done' in Hong & Hong (eds.) *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Hong & Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.33-4

——— (2009) 'A Challenge to Me' in Hong & Hong (eds.) *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Hong & Hong, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.16-8

——— (2014) *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Hannay, New York: W.W. Norton & Co

Kim, A. (2014) 'The Vicissitudes of Critique: The Decline and Re-emergence of the Problem of Capitalism', *Constellations* 21:3, pp.366-81

King, C. (2019) 'Gadamer, Levinas and the Hermeneutic Ontology of Ethics', *Philosophies* 4:3, pp.48-56

Kohl, M. (2015) 'Kant on Determinism and the Categorical Imperative' *Ethics* 125, pp.331-56

Korsgaard, C. (1996) *The Sources of Normativity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kuby, E. (2020) 'Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre: French Intellectuals "Embedded in the World"', *Modern Intellectual History* 17:4, pp.1225-39

Law, D. (2007) 'Kierkegaard's Anti-Ecclesiology: The Attack on Christendom, 1854-5', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7:2, pp.86-108

Lebron, C. (2017) *The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Linklater, A. (1981) 'Men and Citizens in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 7:1, pp.23-37

——— (1990) *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations,* 2nd ed., London: Macmillan

——— (2004) *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era*, Cambridge, Polity Press

——— (2007) 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals With an "Emancipatory Intent"', *Review of International Studies* 33, pp.135-50

——— (2011) *The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Theoretical Investigations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Linklater, A. & Suganami, H. (2006) *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Lyotard, J-F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press

Mackie, P. (2006) *How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds and Essential Properties*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

MacKinnon, D. (1966) 'Natural Law' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.74-88

MacQuarrie, J. (1973) *Existentialism*, London: Penguin

Mapel, D. (1992) 'The Contractarian Tradition in International Ethics' in Mapel & Nardin (eds.) *Traditions of International Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.180-200

Marso, L.J. (2017) *Politics with Beauvoir: Freedom in the Encounter*, Durham: Duke University Press

Maxwell, W. (2016) 'Born-Again, Seen-Again James Baldwin: Post-Postracial Criticism and the Literary History of Black Lives Matter', *American Literary History* 28:4, pp.812-27

Mayall, J. (2000) *World Politics: Progress and Its Limits*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2010) *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France (1954-55)*, trans. Lawlor & Massey, Evanston: Northwestern University Press

——— (2014) *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Landes, Abingdon: Routledge

Morris, D. & Maclaren, K. (2015) *Time, Memory, Institutions: Merleau-Ponty's New Ontology of Self*, Athens: Ohio University Press

Nardin, T. (1992) *Traditions of International Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2001) *The Philosophy of Michael Oakeshott*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press

——— (2008) 'International Ethics' in Reus-Smit & Snidal (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.594-611

Nietzsche, F. (1966) *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Kaufmann, New York: Random House

——— (1974) *The Gay Science*, trans. Kaufmann, New York: Random House

Novak, D. (2019) *Athens and Jerusalem: God, Humans and Nature*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Odysseos, L. (2007) *The Subject of Coexistence: Otherness in International Relations*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

——— (2009) 'Martin Heidegger' in Edkins & Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, London: Routledge, pp.205-16

O'Neill, O. (2016) *Justice Across Boundaries*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Ortega y Gasset, J. (1961) 'History as a System' in *History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophical History*, trans. Weyl, New York: Norton

O'Shiel, D. (2013) 'Drives as Original Facticity', *Sartre Studies International* 19:1, pp.1-15

——— (2019) *Sartre and Magic: Being, Emotion and Philosophy*, London: Bloomsbury

Pascal, B. (2001) *Pensées*, trans. Trotter, Blacksburg: Virginia Tech

Pettersen, T. (2015) 'Existentialism and Moral Freedom in Simone de Beauvoir's Ethics' in Pettersen & Bjørsnøs (eds.) *Simone de Beauvoir: A Humanist Thinker*, Leiden: Brill, pp.67-91

Pin-Fat, V. (2009) *Universality, Ethics, and International Relations: A Grammatical Reading*, Abingdon: Routledge

Price, R. (2008) 'The Ethics of Constructivism' in Reus-Smit & Snidal (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.317-26

Recchia, S. (2007) 'Restraining Imperial Hubris: The Ethical Bases of Realist International Relations Theory', *Constellations* 14:4, pp.531-56

Rengger, N. (2012) 'Tragedy or Skepticism? Defending the Anti-Pelagian Mind in World Politics' in Erskine & Lebow (eds.) *Tragedy and International Relations*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.53-62

——— (2013) 'On Theology and International Relations: World Politics Beyond the Empty Sky', *International Relations* 27:2, pp.141-57

——— (2019) 'Practical Judgement: Inconsistent – Or Incoherent?' in Albert & Lang (eds.) *The Politics of International Political Theory: Reflections on the Works of Chris Brown*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.55-68

Reus-Smit, C. (2009) 'Constructivism and the English School' in Navari (ed.) *Theorising International Society: English School Methods*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.58-77

Risse, T. (2000) 'Let's Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization* 54:1, pp.1-39

Risse, T., Ropp, S. & Sikkink, K. (eds.) (1999) *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rose, N. (1999) *Powers of Freedom: Reforming Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Rosenboim, O. & Hartnett, L. (2021) 'International Political Thought and Historical International Relations' in Carvalho, Costa Lopez & Leira (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp.99-110

Sartre, J-P. (1946) *The Flies and In Camera*, trans. Gilbert, London: Hamilton

——— (1964) *Nausea*, trans. Alexander, New York: New Directions

——— (2007) *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Macomber, New Haven: Yale University Press

——— (2018) *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Richmond, Abingdon: Routledge

Schmid, D. (2018) 'The Poverty of Critical Theory in International Relations: Habermas, Linklater and the Failings of Cosmopolitan Critique', *European Journal of International Relations* 24:1, pp.198-220

Schmitt, C. (1985) *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Schweizer, B. (2010) *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Shakespeare, S. (2013) 'Kierkegaard and Postmodernism' in Lippitt & Pattison (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.464-83

Shapcott, R. (2001) *Justice, Community and Dialogue in International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Smith, S. (1989) *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context*, Chicago: Chicago University Press

——— (1991) 'Leo Strauss: Between Athens and Jerusalem', *The Review of Politics* 53:1, pp.75-99

Solzhenitsyn, A. (2018) *The Gulag Archipelago*, trans. Whitney & Willetts, London: Vintage

Spinoza, B. (2007) *Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. Silverthorne, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Strauss, L. (1953) *Natural Right and History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

——— (1959) *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies*, Glencoe: Free Press

——— (1981) 'Progress or Return? The Contemporary Crisis in Western Civilisation', *Modern Judaism* 1:1, pp.17-45

Sutch, P. (2000) 'Global Civil Society and International Ethics: Mervyn Frost's Restatement of Constitutive Theory', *Review of International Studies* 26, pp.485-89

Tasker, J. (2020) 'Trudeau Takes a Knee at Anti-Racism Protest on Parliament Hill', *CBC News*, 5 June 2020

Thonhauser, G. (2017) '"Thinker Without Category": Kierkegaard in Heidegger's Thinking of the 1930s' in Grøn, Rosfort & Söderquist (eds.) *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach*, Berlin: De Gruyter, pp.27-48

United Nations (1948) *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, New York: UN

Van Der Poel, I. (2007) 'Camus: A Life Lived in Critical Times' in Hughes (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Camus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.13-25

Wahl, J. (2017) 'Heidegger and Kierkegaard: An Investigation Into the Original Elements of Heidegger's Philosophy' in Schrift & Moore (eds.) *Transcendence and the Concrete*, New York: Fordham University Press, pp.107-31

Walzer, M. (1983) *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*, Oxford: Blackwell

——— (1994) *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*, Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press

——— (2015) *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 5th ed., New York: Basic Books

Warnke, G. (2002) 'Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics' in Dostal (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 1st ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.79-101

Weiss, G. (2017) 'Phenomenology and Race (Or Racialising Phenomenology)' in Taylor, Alcoff and Anderson (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Race*, New York: Routledge, pp.233-44

Wellmer, A. (1983) 'The Critique of Critical Theory: Reason, Utopia and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', *Praxis International* 2, pp.83-107

Wendt, A. (1992) 'Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* 46:2, pp.391-425

Westphal, M. (1980) 'Kierkegaard's Politics', *Thought* 55:3, pp.320-32

Wight, M. (1966) 'Western Values in International Relations' in Butterfield & Wight (eds.) *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays on the Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.89-131

——— (1995) *Power Politics*, New York: Leicester University Press

——— (2002) *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, London: Continuum

——— (2004) *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant, and Mazzini*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Williams, J. (2005) 'Pluralism, Solidarism and the Emergence of World Society in English School Theory', *International Relations* 19:1, pp.19-38

——— (2015) *Ethics, Diversity and World Politics: Saving Pluralism from Itself?* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Wrathall, M. (2003) 'Introduction' in Wrathall (ed.) *Religion After Metaphysics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-6

Zahavi, D. (2019) *Phenomenology: The Basics*, Abingdon: Routledge

Zehfuss, M. (2002) *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

——— (2009) 'Jacques Derrida' in Edkins & Vaughan-Williams (eds.) *Critical Theorists and International Relations*, London: Routledge, pp.137-49

——— (2010) 'Poststructuralism' in Hayden (ed.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Ethics and International Relations*, London: Routledge, pp.97-111