

THE FORUM

Are Dialogue and Synthesis Possible in International Relations?

EDITED BY GUNTHER HELLMANN

*Institut für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft und Internationale Beziehungen,
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main*

Editor's Note: *Descriptions of the state of the art in international relations usually oscillate between the diagnosis of an impoverished present and visions of a better future based on dialogue, pluralism, and synthesis. It may be difficult to come up with any precise measure of the "growing frustration with this rather 'anarchic' field." Yet "the lack of dialogue among subfields and specializations" is felt by many (Hermann 1998:606). Where parochialisms of different sorts (geographical, linguistic, methodological, and political) undermine the goal of achieving "a synthetic and genuinely global interdiscipline of international studies" (Biersteker 1999:4-5), dialogue is widely considered a key to finding a way out. Scholars with opposing views on ontology, epistemology, and methodology subscribe to it. Positivist and postpositivist proponents of dialogue—to take one of the most prominent dichotomies structuring the field—may differ as to the meaning of the concept, but all subscribe to the view that dialogue is better than monologue.*

Synthesis is more contentious due to the positivist connotation that it involves unifying what are possibly incompatible theories or bodies of knowledge. Yet, only a minority of scholars would disagree with the view that academic work evaluating and integrating literature is ever more necessary to cope with the explosion of information now facing us—irrespective of whether scholarship is defined subjectivistically as offering sets of different perspectives and interpretations or is defined objectivistically as knowledge in terms of truth claims.

If dialogue is so highly appreciated, why is there so much monologue? If synthesis is both commonplace and in increasing demand, why is supply lagging behind? And if we agree that both dialogue and synthesis are worth pursuing more systematically, how should we go about it and what kind of results should we be seeking? Obviously, questions such as these have been raised time and again. Many scholars are tired of engaging in what they perceive as useless diversions from substantive research. To be sure, a metaperspective on intradisciplinary dialogue and synthesis is no substitute for scholarly work on concrete problems. But periodic stock-taking, reflection, and reorientation are as necessary in academic as in personal life.

This forum originated in response to the "Millennium Reflection Panels" at the International Studies Association's annual meeting in Los Angeles in 2000, which were self-consciously arranged along paradigmatic or "intra-epistemic" lines. Even though the organizers recognized "the virtue of 'dialogue' across epistemic and paradigmatic communities," they argued that "such inter-epistemic dialogue would remain premature if there is insufficient intra-epistemic consensus within communities to justify the conversation in the first place" (Harvey and Brecher 2000:2). In contrast, the starting assumption for this forum was that it could prove worthwhile to discount paradigmatic or epistemic borderlines. As a result, a diverse group of scholars from North America and Europe was invited to address three issues: (1) the pros and cons of cross-paradigmatic dialogue and synthesis; (2) the most likely approaches for cross-paradigmatic dialogue and synthesis, and (3) possible research agendas for such an enterprise.

The Monologue of “Science”

FRIEDRICH KRATOCHWIL

F. K. Ludwig-Maximilians Universität, Munich

The task of this forum is to further dialogue and synthesis regarding international relations theory. Although in agreement with the general idea behind this forum and grateful for the emphasis on concrete research driven by actual political problems, this author, nevertheless, believes that the questions providing the rationale for this forum are too narrowly focused on these ongoing debates and their concomitant pathologies. The thrust of the questions is that dialogue and synthesis are all of one cloth, that everything can be debated out, and that some integral new whole is likely to emerge to command our assent if we all do our homework. But considering how seldom debates establish such a consensus, it might be useful to take this experiential datum as a starting point and to inquire into the reasons why communication across, and often even within, different theoretical perspective is so difficult. To that extent, the remarks here will deal mainly with the first question of the convener, namely, the pros and cons of cross-paradigmatic dialogue and synthesis.

Communication is made difficult by the traditional claims of “science,” particularly as understood by the mainstream in our field. After all, different from the arguments in a common-sense world, “scientific” assertions make more “fundamental” claims based on some form of “empiricism” (looking harder at the facts), on the stringency of deductive entailment (at the moment, again in fashion), or on the optimistic belief in science as a nearly automatic process of self correction (see Popper 1965). They all involve the conviction that there is a certain necessity and indubitability that distinguishes scientific statements from both idiosyncratic indications and commonly accepted lore concerning “reality.” To that extent, “science” serves as a trump because the assertions made under this heading are supposed to marshal universal assent.

If the epistemological debate during the last few decades has shown anything, it is that this position is hardly tenable anymore (see Diesing 1991). First, we encounter great difficulties in discovering “the” scientific method as numerous procedures exist; it is the community of practitioners in a given field, not some philosopher of science, that decides a priori what counts as knowledge. The hope of finding the scientific method existing independently from a given field through a rational reconstruction of the history of science (see, for example, Kuhn 1962) has led to the recognition that not only scientists do not behave as these reconstructions suggest (see, for example, Agassi 1975) but historical development has refuted all epistemological theories. Thus, holding on to them is not the most rational reaction to the disconfirming evidence the history of science has unearthed.

Second, different from empiricism, which assumes that “things” show themselves in an unadulterated fashion because experiments are conceptualized as pointed questions posed to nature to which the latter has to respond, we have to realize that “nature” cannot answer because it needs a language to communicate. “Truth” can, then, no longer be a property of the “world out there” but has to be one of “statements about the world.” Such knowledge means that we cannot test our ideas against reality as all our questions to nature are already phrased in a theory (or language); we test only theories against other theories. The notion that we can come closer and closer to reality by making truth-claims loses much of its persuasiveness under these circumstances (Kratochwil 2000). Coming closer can

only be ascertained if we know *ex ante* where the limits are that we are approaching. If we have learned anything about science, it is that the questions we ask today were not even possible a few decades back.

Third, given the above problem, we cannot marshal the bivalence principle of logic, as logical positivism has tried to do, to find incontrovertible answers to what is the case. Different from logic where the law of the excluded middle (that is, either something is so or is not so, *tertium non datur*) helps us decide these types of controversies unequivocally, the problem with scientific statements is that many apparently belong to a class that is ruled out by this principle, that is, that of “undecidable,” as the scientist and philosopher John Ziemann (1991) has suggested. Rather than giving us clear answers, nature poses puzzles; consequently, we have to figure out whether something is a “refutation” (is not so) or is an “anomaly” that will have to await further testing but does not fundamentally challenge our theories or our research practices. Obviously auxiliary criteria have to be invoked to justify this type of decision, irrespective of whether we opt for a rejection of the theoretical apparatus or for a continuation along a given theoretical path. In such a decision, the seriousness or weight of the refuting evidence has to be addressed, which can no longer be done in terms of the two-valued logic mentioned above.

These initial remarks suggest important modifications need to be made in our traditional understanding of science. Different from the idea that scientific knowledge obtains its warrants by demonstration or by the virtually self-sustaining process of weeding out errors as it progresses, we have to realize that the scientific enterprise is more complicated. Not only honesty is required and plays a decisive role when a scientist has to decide whether or not to abandon his tenaciously held beliefs and theoretical presuppositions, but debates among scientists themselves have to be informed by procedural standards of fairness so that the weight of controversial evidence can be ascertained. The appropriate metaphor is no longer that of demonstration, not even that of debate, but of a structured procedure for which a courtroom proceeding—rather than a discussion among arguing participants placed in an ideal speech situation—provides the proper analogy. The fact that foundations, universities, and research agencies increasingly use quasi-judicial procedures is certainly no accident (see Gaskins 1992). It seems strange, indeed, that at a time when science as a shared enterprise of producing warranted knowledge has become much more political and legal (see Fuller 1991), the ideal of science that mainstream political scientists espouse is virtually out of touch with ongoing practices.

The above remarks lead to a second point concerning the preconditions for dialogue and discussion that reinforces the need for fairness and for standards derived more from ethics than from logic or cognition. We all like discussion and hope to persuade others but we also know from experience that public discussion does not often produce consensus. The desire to win, to stand one’s ground, perhaps not surprisingly, is most of the time stronger than the genuine search for an acceptable solution to a problem. Persuasion presupposes the individual ego-strength to let go of announced positions—here John Stuart Mill’s gentleman is the necessary precondition for the functioning of the market of ideas. Moreover, systems of negotiations need particular institutional backups if they are to produce results. It might prove useful to examine some of these requirements in greater detail.

Requirements for Dialogue

The first and perhaps most important, though probably least liked, requirement for successful dialogue is a change in the “regulative idea” of science along the lines suggested above. Not only has the standard account of science become phantasmagorical, it also leads to dogmatism and premature closure. Indeed,

pluralism is not the second best alternative but actually the most promising strategy for furthering research and the production of knowledge (see Lapid 1989). Of course, pluralism cannot be of the type that argues “anything goes.” As a matter of fact, this kind of indiscriminate tolerance is the precise flip side of the dogmatic point of view. It suggests that because something is not white, it has to be black, that is, in the absence of true foundational standards no standards are possible; such a conclusion follows neither logically nor empirically. After all, something has to be ruled out; truth and falsehood are not meaningless categories, even if they function quite differently from the naive conception of reality that tries to play the role of the philosopher’s stone. Thus, despite the plurality of approaches we use and despite our particular disagreements, we are usually quite able to talk to each other and discuss matters. “Incommensurability” is a red herring; surprisingly we can often agree that a particular piece of research is or is not “up to snuff,” even though we do not “do this kind of thing.” Similar to lawyers who might have entirely different ideas concerning which theory of law is appropriate or which norms and principles govern a particular case but who easily recognize a well-argued brief from one that is not, we often disagree while still being able to see the merit in an argument.

Furthermore, it is not difficult to show that pluralism does not rule out the possibility of a happy coincidence among theoretical perspectives. Pluralism includes the traditional conception of “science,” even though, for the reasons mentioned above, this state of affairs is not considered normal. Dogmatism, that is, drawing the lines according to the bivalence principle of logic, however, cannot include pluralism as a possibility! Thus, we have a lot to lose and little to gain when we opt so blindly for the classical conception of science. An attitude similar to Pascal’s wager seems much more justifiable. Besides, as the example of communication among different perspectives suggests, the ensuing pluralism is one of engagement characterized by neither tolerant indifference nor dogmatic silencing. On the contrary, we are forced to become aware of the fact that all knowledge is tied to certain theoretical perspectives and that we do not possess an Archimedian point from which we can view things as they really are. Instead, we have to come to terms with, and reflect critically upon, the limitations and potential distortions that our own perspectives imply. Just as in the case where we do not understand one another by trying to go beyond any particular language to some universal or abstract form but rather by engaging in the learning of other languages and translating from one into another, so we have to also see scientific communication as a process of engagement with other perspectives and their results. As a matter of fact, the dogmatic point of view fundamentally misunderstands communication because it suggests that underlying all verbal and conceptual exchanges is some deictic procedure that dispenses with the need to communicate and simply points out things in the outer world. As discussions concerning “basic observational statements” have shown, no such fundamental statements exist; the project of construing them had to be abandoned.

This last thought puts into perspective the cherished gambit of many practitioners in our field who charge the exponent of an unorthodox view with the burden of proof. All too often we encounter the argument, for example, that constructivism is not a viable approach, because both liberal interest-based arguments as well as power (the old warhorse of realism) can explain the phenomenon. There are several objections to this proposal. One—continuing to use our constructivism example—is that constructivism is, if anything, not an approach to international relations but rather a “metatheoretical stance” (see Guzzini 2000). It is not on the same level (nor does it pretend to be) as the other approaches to, or theories of, international relations. Two, from the constructivist perspective that espouses “engaged pluralism” as a stance, we should not be

surprised that concrete phenomena are susceptible to competing explanations. Indeed, the power of a concrete approach—whether or not it is indebted to constructivism—should be evaluated by the work it does, not by automatically assigning a privileged position to one of the approaches and simply shifting the burden of proof by arguing that only further variance-reduction will justify theory-choice outside of the ruling paradigm.

In the same vein, then, what appears at first sight to be well-meaning advice to perplexed graduate students in one of the leading primers of political science could, at second glance, not be that well meaning or even innocent. For choosing a dissertation topic, the young hopefuls are advised to go to the theories of their established peers and pick a proposition from their work in order to subject it to tests (see King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). Even though this process might prevent the many grandiose schemes that graduate students are wont to tackle, which are often practically as well as theoretically unfeasible, the consequence might also be preventing them from ever standing on their own feet! Should we not start with a problem and then cast around for a way of studying it, instead of starting with some (frequently questionable) wisdom of the leading figures in the profession? The latter procedure could well prove useful for propagating schools and reproducing them. One could also argue, however, that it is scholasticism at its worst. Whatever we may be inclined to believe, such a strategy is not likely to stimulate innovation. As teachers, it is our duty to educate students by encouraging self-reliance, stimulating imagination (even if it has to be disciplined), and instilling in them a critical attitude toward orthodoxies instead of simply training the aspiring young people like Pavlovian dogs to salivate at the master's voice.

This discussion leads us inevitably to the topic of “professionalism.” The need to develop professional standards is the result of the unavailability of demonstrative proofs or unequivocal unique solutions to the problems we encounter. In the absence of such certainties, we have to regulate the practices within a certain field. Thus, precisely because medicine, for example, is not an exact science but its decisions affect the welfare of others and are often made in the absence of conclusive proofs, professional standards define the nature of medical good practice, hopefully preventing foreseeable harm. As such, professionalization is a rational response to mastering complex situations whenever compelling proofs are unavailable and criteria have to be used to prioritize conflicting values or contradictory evidence. As the old Latin expression in law goes: that which is held to be the truth is the result of the legal process (*pro veritate habetur*).

Professionalization creates, of course, its own pathologies and blind spots as the organizational literature has amply demonstrated (see Meyer and Rowan 1977). Management by oversight, substitution of proxy measures, getting along with one's colleagues instead of calling attention to obvious abuses or problems are the standard examples that come to mind. To the extent that we as political scientists aspire to professionalization—not only because we have understood our predicament but also because we want to have a recognized status in both the academic world and the society at large—we would do well to take the problem of professional ethics a bit more seriously. It is here that practices of exclusion are truly worrisome. Thus, the recent decision of some US universities to automatically discount publications when the articles in question appeared in foreign journals is all the more insidious and parochial because, like their US counterparts, these journals adhere to the common standards of blind peer review, and so on. Similarly, the practice of one or the other leading figure in the field writing unsolicited letters in tenure decisions or using his or her position as an evaluator of departments to prevent unorthodox scholars from being appointed or advanced smacks more of corruption than of sound professional practice. The result of this abuse of position

is certainly not a more scientific or vibrant discipline; it leads to the type of deadly uniformity we have begun to encounter in the flood of publications whose function is to provide an outlet for various citation cartels that have emerged but whose value added is questionable.

This type of professionalism has taken its toll in the field; a reorientation of the discipline is sorely needed. Such a reorientation will not only require a more open and fairer consideration of just what the applicable professional standards should be; it will entail a reorientation in our interests. We have to address again issues of common concern, that is, politics pure and simple, instead of hiding behind those that are concerned primarily with techniques or methodology. Considerations of methods and metatheoretical issues, as important they are, are not substitutes for substantive discussions of the political problems we all face. A lot could be gained if we were to begin our research with a problem or question instead of looking for the perfect hammer and searching for nails to pound. Addressing political issues first has the potential of helping us establish a more fruitful research agenda as well as saving us from at least some of the errors and temptations of a misguided professionalism. Whether these hunches will be born out by actual practice remains to be seen. But as in Pascal's wager, mentioned above, it might be a strategy worth pursuing. Having something to say about political problems will probably be greeted with a sigh of relief by many, if not most, people inside and outside academia.

Through Dialogue to Engaged Pluralism: The Unfinished Business of the Third Debate

YOSEF LAPID

Department of Government, New Mexico State University

In what has frequently been referred to as the “third debate,” postmodern, postpositivist, critical, feminist, and constructivist scholars who have alternative assumptions about social inquiry and knowledge construction have vigorously challenged conventional scholarship in international studies. Issues of theoretical pluralism, cross-paradigmatic communication, incommensurability, reflexivity, and theory choice have been raised in this discussion but until recently dialogue, as such, has received only indirect and sporadic attention. Presently, however, the rising tide of interest in dialogue concerning social theory seems to have reached the shores of the international relations discipline. Therefore, the present is as good a moment as any to ask the inevitable question: Is this new preoccupation with dialogue yet another metatheoretical diversion (see Moravcsik in this forum)—whereby international relations scholars divert precious and scarce scholarly resources from productive “first order” (for example, empirical) investigations to sterile “second order” navel gazing—or are we witnessing here a potentially important development that may eventually help us leave the isolated intellectual realms into which we have drifted over time?

In what follows, this author will argue that the latter is clearly the case. Borrowing from Richard Bernstein (1992), if “flabby” (anything goes) and “fortress-like” (incommensurable) forms of pluralism are the dubious legacies of the third debate and “engaged pluralism” rather than “inevitable synthesis” (Moravcsik, this forum) or even “dialogical synthesis” (Hellmann, this forum) is the most feasible and deserving destination for the international relations theory enterprise in the foreseeable future, then dialogue must figure prominently on our agenda at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The successful harnessing of dialogue as a potential remedy to our long-enduring knowledge problems, however, will necessitate a well-targeted metatheoretical prelude (for example, a reflexive disciplinary dialogue about dialogue) to ensure that this putative “dialogical turn” will itself be genuinely dialogic. Such appears to be the rationale for this forum. Given this need and this rationale, the present contribution will be limited to four orientational comments addressing the metatheoretical challenge.

(1) To begin with, booming popularity across the disciplines has transformed “dialogue” into a weasel word, one that inevitably ends up meaning different things to different people. “Dialogue,” says Nicholas Burbules (2000:252), “represents, to one view or another, a way of reconciling differences; a means of promoting empathy and understanding for others; a mode of collaborative inquiry; a method of critically comparing and testing alternative hypotheses; a form of constructivist teaching and learning; a forum for deliberation and negotiation about public policy differences; a therapeutic engagement of self-and-other exploration; and a basis for shaping uncoerced social and political consensus.” In light of this plurality of meanings, a serious attempt to place dialogue at the heart of the international relations theory enterprise must involve an enhanced ability to differentiate between dialogue and other forms of human communication (for example, debate, discussion, deliberation, and so on) as well as among different forms of dialogue. In other words, a prime objective of this proposed metatheoretical prelude would be to promote a more nuanced understanding of both the epistemological and non-epistemological functions of dialogue in scholarly communication. Iver Neumann’s insightful introduction to the philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) in this forum is a first step in this direction. Even so, additional steps are needed to effectively counter, for instance, the implied association of dialogue with synthesis in the title of this forum. As Friedrich Kratochwil and other contributors aptly point out, the notion that “dialogue and synthesis are all of one cloth,” indeed, deserves serious metatheoretical scrutiny.

(2) Moreover, it is important to highlight the distinction between theory, paradigm, and discipline as alternative targets for dialogic enrichment in international relations. The guidelines for this forum explicitly focus on the “theory-paradigm level.” Although an appropriate focus and much can be gained through reflection on the merits and demerits of establishing sustained dialogues between contending approaches such as critical theory, constructivism, and the English School, for instance, the envisioned metatheoretical prelude would prioritize the *disciplinary level*. At this level, dialogue calls attention to the way we communicate (or fail to communicate) as a scholarly field. Dialogue resonates well with the definition of a discipline as “a conversational community” and leaves open the possibility that a discipline’s communicative ability to impart or share knowledge may be as important as its epistemological ability to produce certified (that is, true) knowledge. Such an approach, in turn, suggests interesting shifts in the metaphors that inform received ways of thinking about scholarly disciplines. “The construct of voice,” says Linda Putnam (2001:42) in her presidential address

to the International Communication Association, “reframes the notion of paradigms, theories, and perspectives rooted in ocular metaphors and reified boundaries. By casting the field as multiple voices, rather than incommensurate or fragmented perspectives, we can pursue complimentary understandings through blurring boundaries and engaging in collaborative activities.” Similar ideas are found in Trevor Barnes’s (2001) distinction between “epistemological” and “hermeneutic” modes of theorizing. Epistemological theorizing seeks accurate representation and is, therefore, dominated by ocular metaphors. By contrast, hermeneutic “theorizing shuns disembodied vision as a metaphoric blueprint. Rather . . . it is based on conversation” (Barnes 2001:551).

Such ideas also seem well worth pursuing in an effort to overcome (via dialogue) the current field’s communicative stasis. David Bohm’s (1996:2) depiction of dialogue as “a process of collaborative meaning making” seems particularly promising in this context. The word dialogue, explained the late physicist, comes from the Greek term *dia-logos* (“meaning-through”) and is best understood as an effort by two or more people to make something new together. In this sense, dialogue is indispensable in any disciplinary effort to transform flabby or fortress-like pluralism into engaged pluralism. For, as Jeffrey Bineham (2000:221) points out, at the level of disciplinary identity, “the central question for a participant in dialogue is this: Can I identify with the whole of the conversation, rather than my piece of it? Can I stand in a commitment to a larger possibility than my own position?”

The relevance of these brief observations should be obvious. Andrew Moravcsik complains, for instance, that his critical co-contributors to this forum fail to show openness to theory synthesis. This charge is only partially fair given that all other participants refer explicitly to both dialogue and synthesis, and most leave the door open for synthesis as one type of potentially rewarding, and occasionally possible, intellectual operation. In contrast, in his extended contribution, Moravcsik fails to make even a single reference to dialogue. Instead, he reframes the debate as dealing with “whether pluralism . . . ought to be preserved for its own sake,” a position espoused by none of the participants in this exchange. The pattern recurs in Moravcsik’s wholesale repudiation of metatheory-driven (as opposed to problem-driven and theory-driven) scholarship as well as in his spirited effort to sharply differentiate scientific and nonscientific discourses despite the miserable failure of all such demarcation efforts—including science’s empirical basis, superior rationality, capacity for cumulative progress, objective truth, unique method or ethos, and so on (see, for example, Fuchs 2001:84–86).

(3) This brings us to current interest in *via media* solutions to knowledge problems in international relations. Despite some skeptical and hostile responses elicited by *via media*-middle ground ideas (see, for example, Adler 1997; Wendt 2000), a more serious discussion of the promise of a “median communicative space” (that is, the notion of a “third way in the third debate”) deserves to be included in the metatheoretical prelude envisioned in these comments. Note, for instance, that the *dia* prefix recurs in both (dia)logue and *via me*(dia). Is there an intellectually viable middle ground that carries the promise of dialogue and deliberation (but not necessarily consensus or synthesis) across deeply divisive ontological, epistemological, and axiological lines? The possibility of transcending sterile paradigmatic fragmentation with a carefully fine-tuned third-way heuristic is suggested, for instance, in Erik Doxtader’s (2000) insightful elucidation of the enhanced “communicative qualities” of the “middle” in public life. He (Doxtader 2000:362) extends an open invitation to scholars to “find other middles and investigate their communicative qualities.”

The international relations scholarly community would be well advised to accept this invitation and proceed with a serious investigation of the middle of the third debate. Frank Harvey and Joel Cobb's skepticism in this forum regarding the merits of this invitation derives, in part, from insufficient attention to this author's explicit focus on the communicative—as opposed to epistemological—qualities of the *via media*. From a communicative point of view, and with respect to both intra- and inter-paradigmatic differences, the *via media* should discourage both facile ignoring and dogmatic rejection of other theories and perspectives (see Lapid 2002). Furthermore, the anticipated result of more engaged pluralism should be consistent with both Harvey and Cobb's vision of "multiple middle-grounds across multiple debates" and with Kratochwil's preference for "problem-driven as opposed to approach-driven" analysis.

(4) For some time now, there has been dissatisfaction with the "third debate" characterization of the current state of our intellectual transition. Are we still in the third debate or have we moved to a fourth or, perhaps even, a fifth debate? Were we to engage in a successful implementation of a dialogical turn toward engaged pluralism, it would justify fresh proclamations of a new stage in theorizing. Indeed, the scholarly community is well-situated today to take advantage of new intellectual and communicative opportunities offered by a rehabilitated, enlarged, and more frequently visited median space. "Would it not be refreshing," asks Donald Puchala (2000:142), "if such continuing conversation, and not periodic great debates, became the intellectual mode of International Relations?" Hopefully, the metatheoretical prelude sketched in these comments will help turn Puchala's vision into a reachable goal.

Theory Synthesis in International Relations: Real Not Metaphysical

ANDREW MORAVCSIK

Department of Government, Harvard University

Theory synthesis is not only possible and desirable but is constitutive of any coherent understanding of international relations as a progressive and empirical social science. Numerous interesting proposals exist for formulating and empirically testing multitheoretical propositions about concrete problems in world politics. Below the reader will find a set of basic principles that should underlie testable theory syntheses. Yet other contributors to this forum—Friedrich Kratochwil, Yosef Lapid, Iver Neumann, and Steve Smith—do not share this openness to theory synthesis; their views range from deep skepticism to outright rejection. The real issue between us is whether pluralism among existing theories ought to be preserved for its own sake, as these colleagues believe, or whether theories ought to be treated as instruments to be subjected to empirical testing and theory synthesis, as this author maintains.

A Practical Program for Theory Synthesis

Theory synthesis is occurring. Many of the most salient contributions to international relations theory in the past two decades rest on it. Robert Keohane (1984) synthesizes realist (hegemonic stability) and regime theories to explain postwar cooperation. Nearly every member of the recent generation of security theorists, led by Stephen Walt (1987), Jack Snyder (1991), Stephen Van Evera (1990/1991), and Barry Buzan and his colleagues (1993), combine power and intentions to explain alliance formation, imperialism, war, and the global structure. Bruce Russett and John O'Neal (2001) link liberal and institutionalist factors to explain the peace among liberal states. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) summarize much recent work, including many European contributions, combining rationalist and constructivist elements to explain the evolution of international human rights norms. Theory synthesis is particularly important for those who believe, with Kratochwil and this author, that international relations scholarship ought to be problem as well as theory-driven. The complexity of most large events in world politics precludes plausible uncausal explanations. The outbreak of World Wars I and II, the emergence of international human rights norms, and the evolution of the European Union, for example, are surely important enough events to merit comprehensive explanation even at the expense of theoretical parsimony.

Theory synthesis is easier than one might think. There are few limits on its scope. Most syntheses comprise a set of discrete theories, linked by a set of overarching assumptions. The overarching assumptions take various forms, each embedding subtly different formal and substantive assumptions: multivariate regression equations, game theoretical models, explicit models of interactions, decision trees, lexicographical orderings, narrative accounts, multistage sequences (exemplified below), and so on. The major task facing general discussions of theory synthesis—unfortunately one that goes beyond the scope of this short essay—is to clearly elaborate the advantages and disadvantages of these options.

Thus, in contrast to what other contributors to this forum seem to assume, the elements of a synthesis, though necessarily coherent at some fundamental level, need not share a full range of basic ontological assumptions. Although the overarching assumptions embedded in a given model must be minimally coherent and justify the relative position of the elements within a multitheoretical synthesis, there is no need for each subtheory of the synthesis to make identical assumptions about fundamental ontological matters (for example, the identity of the basic actors, the nature of individual motivations, the level of rationality of the actors, the dominant form of social interaction). A multivariate regression, for example, might synthesize socialization and rational choice effects without doing any violence to the statistical assumptions.

If syntheses can be theoretically diverse, what limits their scope? The answer is: Data. Proposed syntheses, like individual theories, can and should be subjected to empirical testing. Testing along with exploring the challenges to internal consistency of the constituent parts are the primary means of imposing intersubjectively valid constraints on theoretical conjectures. In this regard, the epistemological status of a theoretical synthesis is no different than that of a single theory; in both cases, our confidence is a function of plausibly objective empirical support.

As a practical matter, however, the testing of broad and complex syntheses may raise greater methodological difficulties than the testing of simple conjectures. Problems stem both from the difficulty of finding relevant comparative cases and the increasingly chaotic aspects of complex interactive processes (see Fearon 1996).

One way to work around these issues is to break down the elements of the synthesis and separately test each one as well as the joining assumptions. Such disaggregation is often the key to reliable theory testing—particularly using qualitative means. For an illustration of this process, see Moravcsik (1998:Ch. 1).

The Reflectivist Rejection of Theory Synthesis

This account of the nature and virtues of theory synthesis differs from the skeptical and critical accounts of the other contributors to this forum. Why is this so? Underlying our disagreement lays a divergence in philosophy of science. Unlike the others, this author believes that social science can only be justified as a tool to generate empirical knowledge about cause-and-effect relationships. The health of international relations as a social scientific endeavor is best assessed in terms of its ability to encourage a deeper and broader understanding of the existing empirical support for competing causal conjectures about world politics. (This statement is not intended to imply that a single orthodoxy will emerge, only that there will be greater consensus concerning the range of viable arguments and the nature and weight of the evidence supporting each.) The broader the range of plausible conjectures tested, the wider the sources of data employed, and the more precise, rigorous, and reliable our understanding of the relationship between these two, the more satisfying the state of international relations. We cannot, of course, rule out of social scientific debates discussions of intellectual history, fundamental social theory, ontology and epistemology, the motivations or constraints on individual researchers, policy purposes, and normative values. Thus, Smith is correct in his contribution to this forum when he observes “any discussion of the possibilities of dialogue and synthesis must reflect underlying, and usually implicit, metatheoretical commitments.” But considerations of the latter cannot supplant the former. In other words, such digressions must be justified, ultimately, as efficient means to promote a wider and deeper understanding of the relationship between causal theory and the empirical record of world politics. Any social scientific debate that is permanently sidetracked into such metatheoretical discussions should be treated with suspicion.

The position underlying this view is essentially Weberian. In the modern world of plural discourses, specific modes of inquiry must be justified in terms of their distinct form and purpose. As regards form, social scientific discourse is distinguished from other prominent modes of discussing politics (for example, symbolic art, philosophy, rhetoric, journalism, and historical description) by its explicit emphases on theory, method, and empirical explanation. Unlike political art and symbolism, social scientific discourse is not beautiful. Unlike normative philosophy, social science does not directly interrogate our deepest moral intuitions and ideals about politics. Unlike positive philosophy, it does not explore the basic epistemological or metaphysical bases of our apprehension of reality. Unlike the political rhetoric employed by leaders and entrepreneurs, social scientific language is not an optimal discourse for inspiring and mobilizing broad support for social change. Unlike journalism and certain sorts of historical analysis, social science does not focus on compiling a precise chronicle of the immediate flux or subjective experience of political life. The primacy accorded by social scientific discourse to theory, method, and empirics makes sense only if we assume that its distinctive purpose is to illuminate patterns of cause-and-effect relations in the concrete empirical world of politics. Theory and method are, therefore, means not ends; they exist to promote our understanding of empirical causes by encouraging theoretical breadth, logical coherence, and empirical objectivity.

The standard rules of social scientific discourse require that any debate should address a broad range of plausible alternative conjectures about empirical cause and effect, that competing conjectures be rendered in as coherent and general a form as appropriate, and that empirical claims be constrained by objective methodological procedures specifying what constitutes confirming and (more importantly) disconfirming evidence. In other words, social scientific discourse is useful not because it assumes certainty, but because it imposes skepticism. Standardized theoretical and methodological constraints of this kind are designed to render all claims provisional and to structure the intersubjective evaluation of such claims. Theory and method make it easier for any trained person—sometimes even those without a great deal of knowledge or investment in a debate—to challenge the empirical validity, both internal and external, of any claim. Accordingly, the greater theoretical and methodological constraints social scientists impose on themselves—that is, the greater the range of alternative explanations, the more logically coherent the favored account, and the more difficult the methodological hurdles—the greater the resulting confidence skeptics should have in any positive result. Even Smith, the contributor to this forum who is highly critical of any form of positivism, concedes that such standards have a plausible claim to “perform the function of disciplining the discipline.” The standards promote pluralist debate while also, as is often forgotten, providing intersubjectively valid reasons for focusing intellectual energy and limiting debate. These discursive constraints distinguish social scientists from artists, philosophers, journalists, historians, and political activists, who, no doubt for good reason, greatly outnumber them in the modern world.

Because the other contributors to this forum take a less optimistic view about the prospects for progressive social science, their discussion is sidetracked into abstract philosophizing, where it remains. To be sure, Smith concedes the potential advantages of a positivist approach, notably its ability to offer a means for structuring a skeptical and pluralistic debate among diverse participants. Kratochwil’s model of legal advocacy, too, is very close to the soft social scientific position to which this author adheres. Even Neumann, starting from seemingly radical premises, circles around to a defense of empirical problem-oriented research. Yet each ultimately recommends that we forego these positivist virtues in favor of theoretical pluralism. It is hardly coincidental, therefore, that they offer no detailed, empirically grounded proposals for theory synthesis of use to concrete researchers. Indeed, their essays barely mention empirical theory or examples drawn from the real world of international politics. For them, the central issue is not theory synthesis per se but whether we should encourage serious empirical testing at all. The mere hint that a concern about synthesis might expose reflectivist hypotheses to external challenges—and, dare we say it, disconfirmation—seems enough to provoke outright rejection. Indeed, the other contributors make little effort to discuss theory synthesis, treating this activity instead as just the latest disguise of the positivist threat even though, as noted above, it is quite unclear whether synthesis imposes much constraint on the scope of actual theorizing.

The tendency for the abstract and philosophical to push aside the concrete and empirical is not a coincidental characteristic of this particular forum. It is a near universal tendency among postpositivist writing. As we have moved through the first, second, and third debates—and now seem fated for a fourth—the terms grow ever more abstract. Perhaps the underlying premise is that deeper philosophical understanding or, as Neumann proposes, more attention to the intellectual history of international relations will eventually facilitate a richer empirical understanding of world politics. But the payoff always remains just one more debate away. This

discouraging trend signals that we should be somewhat suspicious of the opposition of critical theorists to theory synthesis.

Underlying Sources of Philosophical Disagreement

Still, it is worth noting precisely why we differ on abstract issues. Smith's essay, which concedes the ideal benefits of positivist discourse yet ultimately discounts them, illustrates the reasons most clearly. The primary implication of what he is saying is that nothing, in particular neither empirical disconfirmation nor the need to combine theories to explain complex real-world events, should be permitted to dampen theoretical pluralism. Smith's belief appears to rest on his view that a positivist philosophy of science biases the debate in favor of certain rationalist theory, a tendency that is most evident in the narrowness of US debate. Thus, we should encourage theoretical pluralism. But there is no necessary link between positivism and rationalism. In part for this very reason, the US debate regarding international relations is exceptionally broad. Indeed, Smith's alternative of greater theoretical pluralism is arbitrary and, ironically, a conservative plea for disciplinary stasis. Let us consider each of these ideas in turn.

First, Smith incorrectly assumes a necessary connection between positivist epistemology and rationalist theory. Positivists, he and others in this forum imply, cannot presume nonrational behavior. Yet there is no reason why the sort of theoretical and empirical claims constructivists and reflectivists advance—in particular, that the interests and values of powerful countries reflexively evolved from prior practice influence world politics more than raw power or material interests—cannot be subjected to positivist evaluation. There are many examples of such investigations in contemporary international relations; indeed, postmodernists and reflectivists have recently been placed on the defensive by the increasing number of constructivists who share their ontology and theory but accept a positivist philosophy of science. Their defense appears to be that positivist debates cannot function well if a full range of theories are not considered.

Second, Smith's view of North American international relations theory as narrowly realist, rationalist, and hegemonic is a caricature; it ignores the diversity of real empirical research occurring on the continent. Consider as an example international monetary cooperation and conflict, an area, given Smith's own worldview, that ought to be as dominated by rational materialists (not to mention US unilateralists and apologists for modern global capitalism!) as any. An examination of prominent monographs published in the past fifteen years by North American political economists on this topic—all positivists, some quantitative, and many engaging in theory synthesis—reveals an exceptional diversity. This research stresses such factors as concentrated economic interests (Jeffrey Frieden and Lawrence Broz), particular economic beliefs stemming from past economic experience and partisan conflict, capital mobility (Barry Eichengreen), geopolitical ideology (Martin Feldstein), path-dependent institutional and ideational legacies of past decisions (Wayne Sandholtz), partisan and institutional characteristics (Beth Simmons), capital mobility (Michael Webb), capital mobility and economic ideology (Kathleen McNamara, Richard Cooper, and Paul Krugman), domestic bureaucratic politics and informational manipulation by transgovernmental financial elites (David Cameron and Amy Verdun), the hegemonic role of the United States (Robert Gilpin, Dorothee Heisenberg, and Joseph Grieco), hegemony and path-dependent international institutions (Robert Keohane), prior macroeconomic convergence and use of exchange-rate pegs as commitment devices (Thomas Oatley and Geoffrey Garrett), general public opinion support (Matthew Gabel), institutionalized capital-labor bargaining systems

(Peter Hall and Robert Franseze), the role of interstate side payments (Peter Lange), the shift to a service-sector economy (Torben Iversen), market constraints on state intervention (Michael Loriaux), policy competition in the financial services industry (Andrew Sobel), structural conflict between strong and weak currency countries (Matthias Kaelberer and Benjamin Cohen), specific national modes of institutionalizing monetary policy (James Walsh and John Goodman), security externalities of monetary power (Jonathan Kirschner), and international monetary instability (Randall Henning). To claim that the US debate is theoretically narrow, let alone demonstrates the limits imposed by a positivist philosophy of science, cannot be substantiated.

Third, even if his criticisms were correct, Smith's position suffers from a third weakness. It proposes no workable alternative except freezing the academic status quo. He offers no nonpositivist criterion for adjudicating competing claims within his own preferred (that is, nonrationalist, nonpositivist) paradigm and epistemology, let alone across paradigms and epistemologies. Instead, he treats diversity as always superior to non-diversity—a sort of theoretical “affirmative action” in which anything goes.

Such a position will not do. We need look no further than Kratochwil's brilliant and devastating critique of “pluralism for its own sake” in this forum to see why. Enforcing theoretical pluralism by fiat is no less arbitrary than enforcing theoretical homogeneity by fiat. The contributors to this forum are quite explicit about the result they seek, namely to protect certain theories from any sustained, let alone fatal, empirical or theoretical challenge. This state of affairs evades the central issue of social scientific methodology: How do we know when, and what do we do if, a theoretical conjecture proves weak or wrong? The discussion does not acknowledge in any systematic way the possibility that a nonrationalist theory might be incorrect, let alone offer intersubjectively neutral guidance about how to address such a situation. Smith advances his proposal in the name of “pluralism,” but its consequence is to privilege the perpetuation of the status quo among (or, indeed, to expand the reach of) both establishment and critical theorists.

This response to Smith may seem abstract. Why not, the reader may ask, just let thousand flowers bloom? What's wrong with pluralism? The reason is that letting flowers bloom can be misleading, because it gives the impression that there is equal empirical support for all conjectures and encourages us to believe that any plausible one is as valid and accurate as any other. In this regard, we need to remember that recent constructivist writings are, in fact, replete with claims that could be subjected to straightforward empirical analysis with no violence to the underlying theories. Few constructivists or postpositivists actually dispense with evidence; they tend, however, to use it more loosely. Indeed, it is sometimes rather easy to disconfirm the resulting claims (see, for example, Diez 1999; Moravcsik 1999). Yet, as long as the claims are insulated from empirical challenge and synthesis, the status quo rules. In the end, then, it is not the mythical American establishment, but critical theorists, who have chosen to play the academic conservatives suspicious of genuine dialogue and the revision of orthodox authorities.

The broader implication is clear. Scholars of international relations should dwell less on the metatheoretical, ontological, and philosophical status of social science, thereby postponing the day when the specific problem of theory synthesis itself is addressed concretely. We should think more about the ways in which theoretical syntheses might help us understand concrete events in world politics. The opportunities and incentives for doing so are increasingly visible among midrange theories of concrete phenomena in the study of world affairs. Let's get on with the empirical research!

International Relations as Emergent Bakhtinian Dialogue

IVER B. NEUMANN

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Among the many points of reference that the field of international relations shares with political science is a focus on the point of decision. The process of airing different points of view is seen as a prelude to decision. What happens after the decision is taken is treated as implementation of, or protest against, that decision, or as a prelude to a new decision. Given such a framing, dialogue tends to be treated teleologically as an instrument for reaching decision. The terms that are supposed to incite the scholarly exchange in this forum, dialogue and synthesis, point in the same direction. Dialogue is supposed to lead to synthesis and is validated by dint of this causal chain.

The philosopher of dialogue, Mikhail Bakhtin, is very much against such a reading. From his earliest writings in prerevolutionary Russia through his last unfinished manuscript in the mid-1970s, he evolved a view of dialogue as a human condition, as an ethical imperative, and even as a prerequisite for thinking. Consider what Bakhtin (1984:87–88) says when he writes:

the idea *lives* not in one person's *isolated* individual consciousness; if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of *others*. Human thought becomes genuine thought, that is, an idea, only under conditions of living contact with another and alien thought, a thought embodied in someone else's voice, that is, in someone else's consciousness expressed in discourse.

Such a view of dialogue—or, to proceed from the two to the many, heterologue—points to a rather different conceptualization of politics and the social than the decision-focused one described above. First, it stresses the crucial importance of language for politics; it privileges language as a creative force rather than as an empty vehicle for consensus-building. Second, it insists that cognition and meaning formation as such are intersubjective and perpetual. Third, it stresses that everybody—every member of the polity—has a voice, not only the decision makers and those who have their ear. Let us explore some ways in which these three points about the nature of dialogue are relevant to our intradisciplinary dialogue as well.

Language

It is often argued that, beginning in the 1960s, a linguistic turn took place in the social sciences. Bakhtin's work is a reminder that, where philosophy is concerned, this shift began a half-century earlier. Interestingly, both the turns happened in reaction to the same phenomenon, namely structuralism. In both cases, the starting point was Saussure's (1986) relational view of language and his distinction between language's structural matrix (*langue*) on the one hand, and the spoken word (*parole*) on the other. Whereas De Saussure saw *langue* as the proper field for scientific theorizing, both turns led away from this view toward the realm

of *parole*. The object of inquiry became actual (linguistic) practice rather than postulated patterns.

The social sciences have reacted very differently, indeed, to the linguistic turn. In social anthropology, there has been an overwhelming shift away from structural concerns such as evolution, diffusion, kinship, and so on, toward specific studies in which practices are explored as constitutive of society. In sociology, there has been a bifurcation. International relations and political science seem to be at the opposite end, with constitutivity coming to the fore in our dialogue only in the late 1990s. It is no coincidence that, whereas Bakhtin dialogism has been a major source of inspiration in anthropology for twenty years now, in international relations it has received only late and cursory attention (see Der Derian 1993; Neumann 1997; Guillaume 2002). A plausible hypothesis is that this result is due to our infatuation with the moment of decision.

To catch up with the other social sciences, we need to direct our dialogue in two specific directions. First, we should follow Michael Shapiro's (1988:xii) exhortations to focus more on the practices of representation as such:

because the real is never wholly present to us. How it is real for us is always mediated through some representational practice. We lose something when we think of representation as mimetic. What we lose, in general, is insight into the institutions, actions, and episodes through which the real has been fashioned, a fashioning that has not been so much a matter of immediate acts of consciousness by persons in everyday life as it has been a historically developing kind of imposition, now largely institutionalized in the prevailing kinds of meanings deeply inscribed on things, persons, and structures. Therefore, to read the "real" as a text that has been produced (written) is to disclose an aspect of human conduct that is fugitive in approaches that collapse the process of inscription into a static reality.

A number of signs show that Shapiro's exhortations are finally being followed. For example, the annual special issue of *Millennium* for 2001 was devoted to representations and images in international relations. What is at stake here primarily is the need to investigate how the social world is constituted in a number of different settings and only secondarily to address the question of what form to choose when the results of such investigations are to be conveyed. Andrew Moravcsik in his contribution to this forum makes the point that social scientific discourse is distinguished from other prominent forms of discussing politics. Yes, it is, but that should not free us from the obligation to experiment with other forms of expression, for example in teaching. After all, the historic variation in what has been considered scientific modes of presentation has been quite wide. Furthermore, its difference should not impede us from reaching out to other scientific disciplines and other political discourses in such a way that we can make ourselves understood. A text is a piece of writing that does some kind of work in a specific social context. As Friedrich Kratochwil has observed in this forum, the power of a concrete approach "should be evaluated by the work it does." Bakhtin stresses that every text has some degree of addressivity. Part of being a social scientist concerns being explicit about who is being addressed and addressing them in a manner as transparent as the material to be conveyed entails.

We operate in many contexts, each one calling for different stylistic modes to enhance communication. An article in *Newsweek* has a different addressivity than a response to an edited volume of scientific articles or a piece in *International Security*, and so it should be. Texts may be written from the same subject position, that of a social scientist, but they will vary in style due to their different addressivities. An

insistence on there being one legitimate mode of scientific expression overlooks the fact that scientists write in more than one social context.

Second, we need to discuss how to work the constitutive role of language into the view of constitutivity put forward by Alexander Wendt and other constructivists. Bakhtin's conceptualization of intertextuality seems to be particularly apposite in this respect. According to Bakhtin (1981:293), "language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents . . . Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life." Although we discuss the socializing role of the state system and of international organizations at great length, the number of studies that focus on what it means for a policy to be socialized are markedly few. One particularly promising remedy for this state of affairs is to employ the work of Bakhtin and, perhaps even more appropriately, German conceptual historians (for example, Koselleck 1988) to see what happens to concepts such as state, sovereignty, and so on, once they migrate to other social contexts. The dialogue between Benedict Anderson (1983), Partha Chatterjee (1986), and others about the spread of the concept of nation and the practices that surround it need to be matched with dialogues on other concepts. International relations scholars should rise to the challenge.

The working of language, including the isomorphic patterns that form with the invariable use of metaphors and entail speaking about one phenomenon in terms of another, is a key site of social inquiry; here is where meaning is created. Frank Harvey and Joel Cobb in this forum take issue with postpositivists for allegedly rejecting logic. If they mean that arguments should be internally consistent, this author would concur. If, however, they mean that the analysis of social worlds should devote itself to exposing what, from a scientific stance, looks illogical, this author would be much more diffident. As Kratochwil has observed here, in our societies, science serves as a trump because the assertions made under this heading are supposed to marshal universal assent. In effect, in our role as international relations scholars, we participate in a movement toward universalizing this situation. At the very least, such mobilization calls for self-reflection. Our brief as social scientists is not primarily to spread the scientific ethos to ever new sites but to understand those sites in their specificity.

Intersubjectivity

Bakhtin's (1984:26; see also Derrida 1978) view of dialogue also points up the hazards of dialectics and synthesis. As he put it, "the unified, dialectically evolving spirit, understood in Hegelian terms, can give rise to nothing but a philosophical monologue. And the soil of monistic idealism is the least likely place for a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses to blossom."

But if dialogue is not bounded by a teleological thrust toward consensus, then what keeps it together? Surely, dialogue occurs in institutionalized clusters. Not a social scientist himself, Bakhtin is not terribly interested in institutions. He does, however, offer an answer that has to do with the linguistic ordering of dialogue, namely the idea of "genre." To Bakhtin, genre, for example the novel, carries its own memory so that each new work exists in a dialogical relation to its predecessors. Inasmuch as each new work also speaks to its predecessors and inasmuch as meaning is created in dialogue, each new work also transforms earlier works. Such a view implies that even minor works live on as more or less acknowledged parts of the genre. This fact may serve as a consolation when cites do not add up and sales are down.

Less frivolously, the argument indicates why we should take our dialogue about the history of the discipline seriously and should concentrate on *works and authorships*, not on so-called great debates. In the final pages of *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, E. H. Carr (1981) stresses how international relations plays itself out as a tension between what he calls utopian and realist sentiments. Although there is a thrust toward synthesis in his effortless use of these two terms, the acknowledgment of a dialogical relation between the two tendencies is to be celebrated. In other social disciplines such as social anthropology and sociology, classical works are required reading even for undergraduates and reflection on the history of one's discipline suffices the dialogue at all levels. In Europe, members of the English School have taken it upon themselves to maintain a dialogue on the authorships in between, be they seventeenth-century international lawyers, eighteenth-century philosophers, nineteenth-century politicians, or twentieth-century academics. In American international relations, there is little to fill the period between Machiavelli and Hobbes on the one hand and the still living practitioners of our trade on the other. No journal follows the lead of the *Review of International Studies* in setting aside space for dialogue between the dead and the living.

A prerequisite for dialogue is that a lot of common ground already exists. In light of this fact, maybe the push toward synthesis is misplaced. Perhaps we should be emphasizing another, and at least equally worthy, goal of scientific dialogue, namely what Hannah Arendt (1961:151) called freedom, that is, to "call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not even as an object of cognition or imagination." Scientific inquiry is not only about ordering a set of already existing signs but is also about creating new ones.

Politics as Heterologue?

The appeal of dialogue as a mode for being-in-the-world is particularly strong when one considers the alternatives, for the Bakhtinian Tzvetan Todorov (1989:15) is surely right in maintaining that "choosing dialogue also implies avoiding the two extremes of monologue and war." The question is, however, to what degree this choice exists. Bakhtin's conceptualization of discourse is an ethically pleasing and stimulating one, but it has nothing to say on the role of power for politics and for the social. Like Habermas (1987), who goes in for what he refers to as an ideal speech situation in the full knowledge that such a thing is an impossibility, or like Levinas (1989), who urges us to care about the other, Bakhtin has little or nothing to say about the implications of multiple forms for dialogue. It is a poor social scientist who neglects the empirical study of how dialogues actually proceed, how they interact with other practices, and how they are suffused with power relations. The celebration of dialogue has an important role to play in conceptualizing the good intellectual and social life and, as such, can lend perspective to our analyses of the political. It would, however, be downright detrimental to take what Bakhtin has to say about dialogue as a description of the human condition. That cognition and meaning formation are intersubjective phenomena does not and cannot mean that the alternative modes of monologue and war are not ever-present possibilities. But exactly for this reason, it will always be important to ask if we can contribute to more voices being heard. Surely it is part of the scientific ethos to prolong the moment of dialogue for as long as possible in order to postpone the moment of war. Bakhtin, himself was able to maintain that vision while toiling in obscurity in a Russian province for a third of a century. Compared to him, it should be relatively easy for us to do our bit.

Dialogue and the Reinforcement of Orthodoxy in International Relations

STEVE SMITH

University of Exeter, England

We were asked to comment on three questions that make an underlying liberal assumption that dialogue and then synthesis are possible between competing theories and worldviews. Such an assumption is contestable given that a discussion of the possibilities of dialogue and synthesis reflects the metatheoretical commitment that there are enough commonalities between competing theories to constitute points of contact and common reference. The implication is that competing theories refer to a common, and external, world, with each theory having applicability to some parts of that world. But what if one fundamentally disagrees with this assumption and, instead, sees a sharp distinction between the possibilities for dialogue and those for synthesis? Dialogue is possible between competing theories, albeit within certain constraints and with considerable attention paid to the rules governing the dialogue. As for synthesis, the very notion reflects a contested “view from somewhere” about both the nature of international politics and of the social world and our theories’ connection with that world. With these caveats, let us turn to answering the three questions raised by the convener.

What Are the Pros and Cons of Dialogue and Synthesis?

There are at least five pros and five cons relevant to answering this question. First the pros: (1) The most obvious advantage is that dialogue and synthesis encourage a sharpening of ideas. Dialogue helps ideas advance and become more refined rather than merely remaining static when confined to discussions between true-believers. Without dialogue, ideas become fossilized in a kind of extreme Kuhnian normal science with theories made immune to criticism by the introduction of Lakatosian “protective belts.”

(2) Dialogue and synthesis help prevent any one orthodoxy from dominating the discipline. A commitment to dialogue implies an openness to viewpoints other than one’s own, even though a commitment to synthesis may imply that other approaches should be subsumed under one’s own. Even then, however, the dominance of one approach is made more problematic if there is an underlying notion of the importance of dialogue between different positions.

(3) Dialogue and synthesis protect against complacency, although, again, synthesis could well lead to more complacency because the belief may be that in time competing views will shake down into a liberal synthesis. In contrast, dialogue certainly implies a willingness to concede that a particular theory might only be of limited or partial relevance and that other viewpoints are worthy of consideration.

(4) Exposure to dialogue also opens up space for alternative viewpoints, thereby making a variety of approaches legitimate. The very fact of having a dialogue requires accepting a set of assumptions about the legitimacy of the participating views and the possibilities of arriving at rules for governing the process.

(5) Finally, the idea of dialogue and synthesis reflects a deeply embedded principle of scholarship, namely that no one theory or approach should dominate by fiat. Dialogue is the essential procedure used in assessing the utility of theories and approaches; it is logically implied by the very notion of scholarship.

However, there are also problems. (1) The first is that the notions of dialogue and synthesis assume a level academic playing field, which is decidedly not the case in the field of international relations, in which one theoretical position dominates (see Smith 2000, 2001). Although there are many different approaches, all major surveys indicate that the discipline is dominated by a historically and culturally specific orthodoxy (see, for example, Alker and Biersteker 1984; Holsti 1985; Waever 1998). This orthodoxy determines the rules for dialogue and synthesis.

(2) The core assumption involved in a commitment to dialogue and synthesis is the belief that they lead to better knowledge, even that they lead to the truth about the one world out there. In contrast, much reflectivist work assumes that theories represent different views of different social worlds rather than different views of the same social world, meaning that there can be no neutral ground on which to judge rival accounts.

(3) The call for dialogue and synthesis also assumes either a common set of methodological and epistemological assumptions or assumptions that are, at the very least, not mutually exclusive. Yet, the US discipline of international relations is committed to the assumption that there exists a common underlying epistemological bedrock. In this light, ontological differences between rationalist and reflectivist accounts of international relations are less significant than the vast differences between their epistemologies.

(4) Following from the above, the obvious questions are: Who gets to define the rules of dialogue, and what counts as dialogue and synthesis. The current rationalist orthodoxy decides on these rules, thus making genuine dialogue impossible. Its attack on the non-social science nature of reflectivist work illustrates this problem. For Peter Katzenstein, Robert Keohane, and Stephen Krasner (1998), reflectivism simply lies outside the social science enterprise and, thus, cannot be a partner to any dialogue. The dominant orthodoxy promotes dialogue and synthesis as long as these processes are based on its own epistemological and methodological assumptions. This point of view was famously expressed in Keohane's (1989) ISA Presidential Address, when he asked reflectivists to state their claims in the form of testable hypotheses lest they remain on the periphery of the discipline.

(5) Finally, calls for dialogue and synthesis assume a very specific relationship between theory and practice in that they imply analysis free from normative commitments. In other words, academic work reports on the world and does not of necessity have to take normative positions about it.

What Are the Most Likely Approaches for Dialogue and Synthesis?

There is reason to be somewhat skeptical about dialogue between rival paradigmatic positions and to be completely skeptical about the possibilities for synthesis. Consider three examples of when it is most unlikely: (1) The advocates of one or more approaches believe that there is one model of how to study the social world and that only work fitting their definition of the social science enterprise can be part of the dialogue. By definition such a belief rules out most reflectivist work in the name of scholarship and scholarly standards, thereby putting these approaches on the defensive. (2) One party announces that approaches have to be policy relevant, usually defined as relevant for activities of the state. Dismissing work as being irrelevant to policy choices is a powerful disciplining device. (3) Those advocating approaches refuse to have any possible engagement in the world outside the academy and, instead, retreat to a metatheoretical hideaway. Examples of this type of behavior are rampant throughout the discipline of international relations from rational choice theory through the furthest shores of poststructuralism. From these three points can be deduced an answer to the question posed

above: dialogue is most likely when approaches accept that there are a variety of ways of studying the social world with none of them able to veto the others as illegitimate on scholarly grounds.

What Would Possible Research Agendas for Dialogue and Synthesis Look Like?

No research agenda can lead to synthesis, simply because different approaches see different worlds. With regard to dialogue, it is important to make four points: (1) Any research agenda should be empirically (or problem) driven and not determined a priori by the kinds of empirical questions deemed relevant. (2) Such an agenda needs to be open to all interpretations of events and not preclude *ex cathedra* any particular approach. (3) Such an agenda should also be interdisciplinary because the study of international relations cannot be restricted to any one discipline. Being interdisciplinary permits us to open up epistemological and methodological space while, lessening claims for the exceptionalism of international relations as a field. (4) Such an agenda would not use methodology and epistemology to police the boundaries of what can and cannot be talked about and studied.

Several other contributors to this forum, namely, Frank Harvey, Joel Cobb, and Andrew Moravcsik, criticize this author's answers to the questions posed to us. Harvey and Cobb's basic complaint is that these responses fail to provide the criteria by which to assess work in each approach. The argument here, however, is decidedly not that there are no standards but that the standards for assessing work within any one approach must be the standards of *that* research tradition. Appealing to any neutral ground for judging work merely reintroduces the epistemological orthodoxy of the mainstream in the disguise of neutral scholarly standards. In this regard, this author sides with Friedrich Kratochwil's comment that there is no philosopher's stone on which to build foundational truth claims. This statement does not imply, however, that there are no standards for assessing work. Far from wishing to protect any theory from fatal criticism, the point is to ensure that no one theory gets protected by epistemological gatekeeping.

Moravcsik's disagreement with the argument presented here is more substantial. He sees the view of North American international relations theory described above as a caricature and cites work to support his claim that there is exceptional diversity in this literature. The dilemma is that the diversity Moravcsik indicates does not include those who have different epistemologies to that of the mainstream. His impressive list of work on international monetary cooperation and conflict may demonstrate the range of factors discussed, but the list does not include any work that does not fit in with the rationalist mainstream. The point is not so much that the mainstream is narrow as that work not sharing the same epistemological assumptions is excluded. In effect, Moravcsik's list makes this point well.

In conclusion, the call for synthesis is mistaken because it assumes that we can find out the truth about the world out there by combining theories and approaches. Dialogue is possible, although concerns remain about the possibilities of a level playing field for all approaches. What seems on the surface to be a liberal move, that of encouraging debate and pluralism in the discipline, may end up reinforcing orthodoxy by relying on often-implicit epistemological and methodological assumptions that perform the function of disciplining the discipline in the name of scholarship and the social science enterprise. Dialogue is not going to be easy, or even possible, in international relations until the discipline becomes less dominated by a narrow orthodoxy reflecting historically and culturally specific interests. Such a change will take time, but until it is achieved the discipline will continue to reflect one limited, partial view about the structures and processes of the one world of international politics.

Multiple Dialogues, Layered Syntheses, and the Limits of Expansive Cumulation

FRANK HARVEY AND JOEL COBB

Department of Political Science, Dalhousie University

Our contribution to this forum will focus on four observations about dialogue and synthesis in international relations. (1) Meaningful discussion of these and related issues will remain elusive if we continue to focus exclusively on the broadest level of analysis. There are multiple layers to orientations in the study of world politics that when combined produce irresolvable debates within epistemic and theoretical communities, making synthesis virtually impossible to realize, notwithstanding the examples to the contrary offered in this forum by Andrew Moravcsik. (2) Even though pluralism has its virtues, an uncritical application of this principle leads to logical contradictions that are generally ignored by postpositivists and other proponents of diversity and expansive cumulation. (3) If we follow Yosef Lapid's recommendation to focus on the middle ground running through these debates, we would generate more, not less, division. (4) We argue that focusing more explicitly on the logical link between theory and empirical evidence is the only available interpretative tool that can help mediate many of these debates, cut through the morass of alternative theoretical interpretations, and provide insights into and guidance for selective cumulation.

We begin by emphasizing the multilevel and multilayered nature of theoretical and methodological divisions in international relations—simply put, the synthesis puzzle is far more complex and nuanced than many contributors to this forum acknowledge. Moravcsik's call for theoretical synthesis, for example, represents only one small component of a much larger and more challenging project. There is a tendency on the part of those involved in debates over synthesis and cumulation to focus exclusively on inter-epistemic divisions at the broadest level of aggregation (for example, between mainstream and critical theoretic perspectives), but there are other, perhaps even more divisive, intra-epistemic (or intra-paradigmatic) debates that remain unresolved and continue to proliferate. Indeed, fragmentation and division are just as apparent, extensive, and irreconcilable among positivists as among postpositivists and critical theorists. Our point here is that truly "synthesis-impeding" debates often take place at a fundamental level between proponents of the same social scientific methodology.

Despite his thorough analysis of theory synthesis in this forum, and our support of this project (and associated standards of verification) more generally, Moravcsik seems to have missed our point. Even among those who accept every methodological standard he defends, there has been very little progress in theoretical synthesis. In fact, the research he lists as illustrative of cumulation and theoretical synthesis does not even come close to establishing the kind of empirical evidence one would need to defend the case for progress and cumulation. There are serious limitations in our ability as a community of scholars to accumulate theoretical knowledge. Ongoing debates over the foundations of inference in quantitative and qualitative research (both mainstream debates), for instance, show no signs of abating. And regardless of the potential for theoretical synthesis, for example, between constructivism and rational choice in terms of common conjectures and equilibrium selection, these debates in no way represent evidence of cumulation in the larger sense.

This point is even clearer when we consider the complexity of social events in their compound form. An event may occur, for example, through multiple causation (X_1 and X_2 and X_3 produce Y), through substitutability (X_1 or X_2 produces Y), through multiple conjunctural causation [$(X_1$ and $X_2)$ or $(X_3$ and $X_4)$], or through some combination of these complex causal paths (see Most and Starr 1989; Cioffi-Revilla 1999; Ragin 2000). Events such as wars that may be produced via multiple causal paths, then, will take different theoretical forms. We may find that power transition wars, scapegoat wars, and wars of rivalry represent unique and valid causal paths to a similar event: war. These processes will tend to confound cumulation to the extent that there may be several independent theories of war that should not be pitted one against the other. Thus, Moravcsik's synthesis of theories at one level (along a particular path) does not address the difficulties facing the larger project of cumulation.

Our second observation relates to the uncritical acceptance of theoretical pluralism advocated by other contributors to this forum. Even though a degree of pluralism is important, uncritical or "flabby" pluralism (as Lapid describes it) will likely lead to more divisiveness and debate rather than synthesis and dialogue. Uncritical pluralism is understood here to mean advocating pluralism as an end in itself without providing criteria for making judgments about the "plausibility" of particular approaches. Ever increasing numbers of epistemic communities, paradigms, perspectives, and ideas are considered signs of a healthy and growing discipline. When, and under what conditions, does this expansive (pluralist) cumulation slow down? At what point does pluralism for the sake of pluralism become counterproductive? When and how do we begin to compare, evaluate, and select those approaches, theories, and methods that deserve a stronger voice?

Both Lapid and Smith, contributors to this forum, provide answers. Smith (2002:36) claims "that the acid test for the success of alternative and critical approaches is the extent to which they have led to empirically grounded work that explores the range and variety of world politics." Lapid (1996:93) argues that we need "alternative, 'rational' criteria of evaluative appraisal which acknowledge and confront rather than deny or ignore the non-empirical nature of at least one integral component of all scientific knowledge." It is clear that both disapprove of focusing exclusively on the positivist approach to social research and the standards of verification and falsification that it implies. Smith (2002:37), for example, has appealed for standards that "revolve around the categories of coherence, tight argumentation, knowledge of the relevant literature, the use of empirical evidence, persuasiveness of the major analytical moves, innovative scholarship, and the standard of writing and expression." At issue is how exactly are any of these objectives distinct from those in the mainstream?

Unfortunately, Smith (2002:38) provides no guidance with respect to requisite criteria for making judgments such as those outlined above; instead he states, "I think the way forward is to insist only on research being carried out to the highest standards possible as defined within the research area." This proposal begs the following questions: Which realist, neorealist, feminist, postmodernist, institutionalist, or constructivist work is the best in that tradition? How does one go about making these judgments amidst internal disagreement? Which positivist, formal, statistical, qualitative, or postpositivist methodologies and techniques are best suited to generate empirically grounded research, and how do we know? We wish to emphasize (in response to Smith's comments) that we are not accusing him of lacking standards; instead, we are arguing that the standards he explicitly defends (outlined above) are virtually identical to those that are widely accepted by us and others in the mainstream literature.

There are further contradictions embedded in Smith's line of postpositivist thinking. For example, the claim that positivism fails due to its conception of a single external reality against which to make empirical assessments is itself a truth claim denied. If, in fact, there are no foundations for establishing truth or truth claims, then rejecting positivism with the claim that it lacks the foundations for its own epistemological program implicitly accepts the notion that there are clear standards on which to base claims about the foundations of reality. What are those standards? If there are no agreeable standards, what privileges the anti-foundationalism of postpositivist discourse over the foundationalism associated with positivism? In sum, despite the calls for pluralism emanating from the postpositivist camp, attacks on the possibility of generalization and cumulation suggest that the "assertion of difference" is much narrower and less accepting of alternative approaches than the critical discourse itself would suggest.

Our third observation addresses Lapid's assertion in this forum that "the international relations scholarly community would be well advised to proceed with a serious and reflective investigation of the 'middle' of the third debate." Although his appeal is laudable, middle-ground recommendations assume that there is sufficient agreement within perspectives, subfields, paradigms, and epistemic communities to facilitate meaningful and constructive dialogue in the first place. To the extent that these competing epistemic communities (mainstream and critical) continue to expand rather than contract, the prospects for meaningful inter-epistemic dialogue are not encouraging. Moreover, proponents of both mainstream and critical approaches are guilty of mishandling the nuances within alternative camps; thus, middle ground positions are immensely difficult to identify because the level of aggregation and synthesis required to facilitate discussion across epistemic communities necessarily homogenizes incompatible perspectives at a higher level of abstraction.

Without sufficient agreement within these communities, where exactly does one begin the search for the "middle"? Even if we assume sufficient consensus within the communities, there is no guarantee that reflective engagement of the so-called middle will move us in the right direction; logically, concessions by proponents of any two perspectives will, by definition, produce more distance between them and a third perspective. Concessions between realists and neoliberals on the structural determinants of state versus institutional power will create more distance between this middle perspective and, say, constructivist or feminist views. The question is not how to identify a "middle," but how to facilitate simultaneous movement toward multiple "middle-grounds" across multiple debates at multiple levels of the epistemological ladder. In this endeavor, we face a daunting challenge that will become increasingly difficult as the field continues to expand for the sake of expansion.

Our final observation pertains to the postpositivist rejection of logic. We conclude that logical methods represent the only interpretative tool available to examine theoretical claims within any epistemic or paradigmatic community, mainstream or critical. Consider in this regard Pauline Rosenau's (1992:176) argument that even deconstruction is a "highly logical, reasoned, and analytical process." Logical methods serve as arbiters of interpretation by establishing whether patterns of behavior identified through empirical evidence (in whatever form and for whatever purpose) are logically consistent with expectations derived from any truth claim. A logical approach is essentially neutral in that it accepts as valid (at least temporarily) any theory (and its associated assumptions), body of evidence, or interpretive prism that a scholar puts forward to defend his or her position. Logic can often reduce the number of possible interpretations derived from whatever evidence the researcher claims is essential. Demonstrating that a researcher's evidence does not logically

support the theory being defended is often far more persuasive (and constructive) than dismissing the evidence or becoming entangled in mutually exclusive interpretations of single cases, which has become the conventional approach in the field. Although logic will not necessarily enhance our capacity to find “truth,” it does force all of us to refine, clarify, and defend what we believe to be true.

In Conclusion: Dialogue and Synthesis in Individual Scholarship and Collective Inquiry

GUNTHER HELLMANN

*Institut für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft und Internationale Beziehungen,
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main*

We cannot regard truth as a goal of inquiry. The purpose of inquiry is to achieve agreement among human beings about what to do, to bring about consensus on the ends to be achieved and the means to be used to achieve those ends. Inquiry that does not achieve coordination of behavior is not inquiry, but simply wordplay. (Rorty 1996:40)

Historically, international relations as a discipline has come to view dialogue and synthesis as incompatible objectives. The contributors to this forum seem to confirm this impression by emphasizing either some form of dialogue (Kratochwil, Lapid, Neumann, Smith) or some form of synthesis (Harvey and Cobb, Moravcsik). In this conclusion to the forum, the argument is made that we will be more successful, both as individual scholars and as a scientific community, if we conceive of dialogue and synthesis not only as compatible practices but as mutually reinforcing. Given the connotations many of us associate with the term “synthesis” in particular, this statement is not meant to imply that the incompatibilities seen by the other contributors cannot be construed as creating an unbridgeable tension between dialogue and synthesis. Rather the argument here is simply that these incompatibilities need not necessarily be construed in this manner.

Based on classical ideals, science has always been an impossible undertaking. Serious scholarship has had to constantly aim for truth while being stuck with a fallibilistic attitude emphasizing doubt and transitoriness. “Scientific ‘fulfilment’” was meant to imply that science “*wants* to be ‘surpassed’ and become obsolete” (Weber 1973:316; emphasis in original). Yet, everyday life in the modern academy shows that few careers are built on the merits of a record of falsification, irrespective of whether the falsification occurred with regard to the theories of others or our own. Instead, modern recruitment practices place a premium on originality and biographical coherence, marks of quality that, in turn, are granted via citation within sufficiently large segments of the scientific community. As a result, personal stakes are high. Debate, rather than dialogue, has become the formula of communicative action in scholarly exchanges. Individually we benefit more from arguing against each other than from learning with each other. The “glass-half-full” perspective depicts this situation as one of pluralism, whereas the “glass-half-empty” view pictures it as “communicative stasis” (see Lapid, this forum). Yet, whatever perspective we take, there is little in our collective experience that

supports the idealized Peircean notion of a “scientific community” that, as a result of debate, is somehow “fated” to “ultimately” arrive at “one certain solution to every question,” which we may call “truth” (Peirce 1997:44-45). Truth, in this sense, is meant to be the equivalent of synthesis; it will result eventually from our collective scientific endeavors. However, our collective experience also shows that truth can merely serve as a regulative idea. “The ‘absolutely’ true,” as Peirce’s pragmatist disciple William James (1995:86) puts it, is nothing but an “ideal vanishing point toward which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge Meanwhile we have to live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood.”

The disillusioning conclusion, thus, seems to be that there is little room for hope today that we may counter the growing frustration in our field with a renewed emphasis on cross-paradigmatic dialogue *and* synthesis. The former seems to be rendered almost impossible because both the incentive structure of everyday science as well as the ingrained culture of science as a profession are set against it. The latter sounds merely illusionary. Yet, if we rephrase the rhetoric and suprahuman ideals of science in a more practical and humane manner, dialogue and synthesis may still continue to serve as useful guides. Even though this view is not shared by many contributors to this forum, a fusion of dialogue and synthesis can be rendered coherent.

Looking back at the historical record of international relations as a discipline, nothing suggests a privileged way of describing or explaining the phenomena of the day. To the contrary, a large part of our intellectual heritage indicates that competing theoretical traditions (paradigms or research programs) survive because all of them are sufficiently adaptable to serve the three functions of scholarly progression that the German term *Aufheben* tries to integrate: (1) to preserve what is valuable in our pool of knowledge; (2) to abandon what no longer seems appropriate, and thereby (3) to elevate the tradition to a new, and presumably more appropriate, level of sophistication. To be sure, merging dialogue and synthesis along these lines is a rhetorical tool aimed at persuading skeptics or opponents to think of scholarship in a different way. As such, it is neither better nor worse than any other regulative idea for practicing science—either in the form of “seizing” a “middle ground” (Adler 1997) or in “finding other middles” (Lapid, this forum).

Whether we are drawn to science as a truth-seeking enterprise along positivist lines or attracted by a version of science that advertises it as mere conversation along postpositivist lines (just to use the most prominent epistemological dichotomies), eventually the argument boils down to the question of how useful we find looking at the world from the perspective we choose. Indeed, as most of us know from teaching the canon of international relations theory, students have to get used to viewing the world through rationalist and constructivist or, for that matter, through positivist or postpositivist lenses. Positivism and postpositivism are no more in their genes than the language games learned by children. To paraphrase Wittgenstein (1984:239), teaching international relations paradigms (as teaching a language) is done in the mode of “drill” (*abrichten*) not in the mode of “explanation.” But, then, there is no reason why we should conceive of an amalgamation of dialogue and synthesis as any more difficult than a fusion of neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism under the new heading of “rationalism” (see Katzenstein, Keohane, and Krasner 1998). We simply supply arguments concerning why it may be useful to look at how we do science through this perspective. The debate between neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism has not been solved via sophisticated falsification or dialogical learning (or any other scientific method). Rather it has been *aufgehoben*, both abandoned and elevated simultaneously, preserving under the new heading of rationalism what seemed to

be useful for restarting scholarly exchanges along a redrawn rationalist–constructivist axis. Remember the underlying theme here is not that by engaging in this process we have passed another stepping stone along the road to scientific progress and truth. In its most daring form, such an understanding of synthesis once envisioned a day when scientists would discover the one and only formula to explain the world as a whole. Even in its less ambitious versions, this conception of synthesis presupposes what Hilary Putnam (1981:49) has called a “God’s eye view” of things. Such a perspective, most of us agree, has always been a nonstarter—even for the well-placed specialists in global affairs. In this forum, Steve Smith has correctly criticized this understanding of “synthesis via subsumption” (Lapid calls it “theoretical monism”) in the name of truth. Yet, the kind of synthesis that most (if not all) of the contributors reject has been a *fata morgana* of the scientific enterprise all along. Even Moravcsik, who is both the most adamant and optimistic about syntheses based on testable theory, anticipates many hurdles along the way.

A more humanized version of synthesis is not only possible, but unavoidable. In the ordinary (and original Greek) sense of the word, synthesis simply means to form a whole by putting parts together. Synthesis need not entail (anti-pluralistic) consensus nor imply some teleological notion of scientific progress. Rather, in the pragmatic fusion of synthesis and dialogue advocated here, it should be taken as another word for an endless journey through time and space that, given the unpredictable circumstances we encounter along the way, forces us to adapt on the spot over and over again. Irrespective of whether we work on scientific or ordinary problems, we do so holistically by combining experience and intelligence in creative ways to come up with solutions to the puzzles at hand. Indeed, international relations as a scientific discipline has always been practiced as “dialogue-cum-synthesis.” Even though the rhetoric of science may have been exalted at some points (positivism) and depressed at others (postpositivism), most scholars in international relations have been going about their business solving problems (as Kratochwil correctly advises them to continue doing) while de-dramatizing the scientific recipes of either side of the epistemological divide.

If many of us have been doing all along what we should be doing, what is the problem? At issue is the antagonistic paradigmatic manner (see also Hellmann 2000) in which we have framed many of the field’s debates, stigmatizing as eclectic whatever approach to current problems in international politics does not fit along the established axes of scholarly enlightenment. The process has forced reputable and highly original scholars who have dared to deviate from the mainstream (or its opposite) by crossing the rationalist–constructivist boundaries (for example, Katzenstein and Okawara 2001/2002) or even the neorealist and postpositivist borderlines (for example, Waever 2000) to justify why they have gone astray. Paradigmatism—the view that says we can and should adhere to rigorously defined sets of coherent and distinct core assumptions associated with particular paradigms (see Legro and Moravcsik 1999)—is more of a hindrance than a help. Because there are no independent standards for measuring the commensurability (or incommensurability) of inter-paradigmatic (or intra-paradigmatic) vocabularies, we will never know how to properly draw paradigmatic lines.

Breaking up communicative stasis, therefore, begins by drawing such lines more finely. This procedure will enable us either to ignore the lines—if they ought to be invisible, given a particular problem we want to tackle—or to erase and redraw them more easily, if we think we can gain mileage by conceiving of paradigmatic traditions more broadly defined. In any case, solving concrete problems would bring us and our knowledge, including the wisdom born in paradigmatic traditions, into dialogue. Such dialogue need not be organized as an exchange among

scholars. As a matter of fact, the history of international relations shows that often the most productive dialogues (and possibly also the only genuine ones) have been conducted within individual scholars. For this reason, the history of the field is generally written as a succession of path-breaking works around the discipline's great debates (see also Puchala 1990; Neumann and Waever 1997). These works stand out not because they stuck within the confines of some disciplinary paradigmatic borders but, rather, because their authors drew on a variety of different sources in novel ways, *synthesizing* what many of their predecessors had separated analytically as (more or less) incoherently distinct. It is this kind of dialogue that Bakhtin (see Neumann's contribution) probably had in mind when he referred to the "living contact with another and alien thought" as the defining quality of "genuine thought." Yet, irrespective of whether we speak of synthesis or selective cumulation (Harvey and Cobb, this forum), eclecticism or syncretism (see also Rorty 1998) in describing such efforts, these are merely synonyms for a particular mode of practicing scholarship that excels by presenting novel ways of looking at things.

In this sense, dialogical synthesis is but another concept for translation—which need not be as difficult as Frank Harvey and Joel Cobb seem to suggest. We always have (and always will have) to create new vocabularies; we incessantly describe and redescribe the world in different ways. We just cannot stop proposing theories. Even if we do not reach agreement on what is the truth-value of these vocabularies, descriptions, or theories, few would deny that many of them enable us to cope better. To be sure, selecting those candidates that are better (either because they are true or because they are handy in a practical sense) is no easy task. Indeed, Kratochwil's courtroom analogy may be acceptable to all parties concerned. As long as the proceedings are organized in such a way that the spectrum of well articulated arguments gets a fair hearing, truth will take care of itself.

To sum up, the dialogical syntheses advertized here do not carry a special truth value. They are fed into the normal course of scholarly debate as any other input. At one extreme, they will be ignored even though at the other they will be hotly debated until they are replaced yet again by subsequent dialogical syntheses. In this respect, synthesis is synonymous (and not in contradiction) with the kind of engaged pluralism that Yosef Lapid has described in this forum. In as much as these dialogical syntheses contribute "to achieving agreement among human beings about what to do" (Rorty 1996:40), they will have served their purpose. According to our collective experience, such syntheses are the best we can reasonably hope for given the cognitive and sociopsychological constraints on achieving the kind of dialogue *or* synthesis associated with traditional notions of the scientific enterprise. As individual scholars, we are compelled cognitively to render our beliefs coherent in one way or another. In effect, the best "intra-scholarly dialogues" drawing on seemingly incoherent, even "cross-paradigmatic" traditions, often turn out to yield ostensibly coherent new wholes. Many a time these original syntheses come to be recognized as major advances marking the stepping stones in the history of the discipline. As a community of scholars, however, we are equally compelled to compete—an important reason why we prefer debate over dialogue and pluralism over synthesis. The point, though, is that we do not have to choose among these alternatives. Instead, the pragmatist and antidualist perspective on science advocated in this contribution implies that there are many good reasons to believe that we can, and, indeed, actually have, to have it both ways. To the extent that we find this conclusion sufficiently convincing, we will take some heat out of our debates, investing energy instead in dialogue *and* synthesis.

References

- ADLER, EMANUEL. (1997) Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics. *European Journal of International Relations* 3:319–363.
- AGASSI, JOSEPH. (1975) *Science in Flux*. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, No. 28. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Reidel.
- ALKER, HAYWARD, AND THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER. (1984) The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International *Savoir Faire*. *International Studies Quarterly* 28:121–143.
- ANDERSON, BENEDICT. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- ARENDET, HANNAH. (1961) *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought*. London: Faber & Faber.
- BAKHTIN, MIKHAIL. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. Translated by Michael Holmquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- BAKHTIN, MIKHAIL. (1984) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- BARNES, TREVOR J. (2001) Rethorizing Economic Geography: From the Quantitative Revolution to the “Cultural Turn.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91:546–565.
- BERNSTEIN, RICHARD. (1992) *The New Constellation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- BIERSTEKER, THOMAS J. (1999) Eroding Boundaries, Contested Terrain. *International Studies Review* 1:3–9.
- BINEHAM, JEFFERY L. (2000) From Debate to Dialogue: Toward a Pedagogy of Nonpolarized Public Discourse. *Southern Communication Journal* 65:221.
- BOHM, DAVID. (1996) *On Dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- BURBULES, NICHOLAS. (2000) The Limits of Dialogue as a Critical Pedagogy. In *Revolutionary Pedagogies*, edited by Peter Trifonas. New York: Routledge Flamer.
- BUZAN, BARRY, CHARLES JONES, AND RICHARD LITTLE. (1993) *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- CARR, E. H. (1981) *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd edition. London: Macmillan.
- CHATTERJEE, PARTHA. (1986) *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* London: Zed.
- CIOFFI-REVILLA, CLAUDIO. (1999) *Politics and Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DER DERLAN, JAMES. (1993) Fathers (and Sons), Mother Courage (and Her Children), and the Dog, the Cave, and the Beef. In *Global Voices: Dialogues in International Relations*, edited by James N. Rosenau. Boulder: Westview Press.
- DERRIDA, JACQUES. (1978) *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge.
- DE SAUSSURE, FERDINAND. (1986) *Course in General Linguistics*. La Salle, IL: Open Court.
- DIESING, PAUL. (1991) *How Social Science Works*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- DIEZ, THOMAS. (1999) Riding the AM-Track through Europe: or, the Pitfalls of a Rationalist Journey through European Integration. *Millennium* 28:355–369.
- DOXTADER, ERIK. (2000) Characters in the Middle of Public Life: Consensus, Dissent, and Ethos. *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33:336–369.
- FEARON, JAMES D. (1996) Causes and Counterfactuals in Social Science: Exploring an Analogy between Cellular Automata and Historical Processes. In *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- FINNEMORE, MARTHA, AND KATHRYN SIKKINK. (1998) International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization* 52:887–917.
- FUCHS, STEPHAN. (2001) *Against Essentialism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- FULLER, STEVE. (1991) *Social Epistemology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- GASKINS, RICHARD. (1992) *Burdens of Proof in Modern Discourse*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- GUILLAUME, XAVIER. (2002) Foreign Policy and the Politics of Alterity: A Dialogical Understanding of International Relations. *Millennium* 31:1–26.
- GUZZINI, STEFANO. (2000) A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations. *European Journal of International Relations* 147–182.
- HABERMAS, JURGEN. (1987) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge: Polity.

- HARVEY, FRANK P. AND MICHAEL BRECHER. (2000) *Millennial Reflections on International Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- HELLMANN, GUNTHER. (2000) Brother, Can You Spare a Paradigm? (Or: Was Anybody Ever a Realist?) *International Security* 25(1):169–174.
- HERMANN, MARGARET G. (1998) One Field, Many Perspectives: Building the Foundations for Dialogue. *International Studies Quarterly* 42:605–624.
- HOLSTI, K. J. (1985) *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- JAMES, WILLIAM. (1995) *Pragmatism*. New York: Dover.
- KATZENSTEIN, PETER J., AND NOBUO OKAWARA. (2001/2002) Japan, Asian-Pacific Security, and the Case for Analytical Eclecticism. *International Security* 26(3):153–185.
- KATZENSTEIN, PETER J., ROBERT O. KEOHANE, AND STEPHEN KRASNER. (1998) International Organization and the Study of World Politics. *International Organization* 52:645–685.
- KEOHANE, ROBERT O. (1984) *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- KEOHANE, ROBERT O. (1989) *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- KING, GARY, ROBERT O. KEOHANE, AND SIDNEY VERBA. (1994) *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference and Qualitative Research*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- KOSSELLECK, REINHART. (1988) *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Oxford: Berg.
- KRATOCHWIL, FRIEDRICH. (2000) Constructing a New Orthodoxy? Wendt's Social Theory of International Politics and the Constructivist Challenge. *Millennium* 29:73–101.
- KUHN, THOMAS. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LAPID, YOSEF. (1989) The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in the Post-Positivist Era. *International Studies Quarterly* 33:235–255.
- LAPID, YOSEF. (1996) The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in the Post-Positivist Era. In *Classics of International Relations*, edited by John A. Vasquez. 3rd edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- LAPID, YOSEF. (2002) Sculpting the Academic Identity: Disciplinary Reflections at the Dawn of a New Millennium. In *Visions of International Relations: Assessing an Academic Field*, edited by Donald J. Puchala. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- LEGRO, JEFFREY W., AND ANDREW MORAVCSIK. (1999) Is Anybody Still a Realist? *International Security* 24(2):5–55.
- LEVINAS, EMMANUEL. (1989) *The Levinas Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- MEYER, JOHN, AND BRIAN ROWAN. (1977) Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology* 82:340–365.
- MORAVCSIK, ANDREW. (1998) *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- MORAVCSIK, ANDREW. (1999) The Future of European Integration Studies: Social Science or Social Theory. *Millennium* 28:371–391.
- MOST, BENJAMIN, AND HARVEY STARR. (1989) *Inquiry, Logic, and International Politics*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- NEUMANN, IVER B. (1997) Conclusion. In *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making*, edited by Iver B. Neumann and Ole Waever. London: Routledge.
- NEUMANN, IVER B., AND OLE WAEVER. (1997) *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making*. London: Routledge.
- PEIRCE, CHARLES SANDERS. (1997) How to Make Our Ideas Clear. In *Pragmatism: A Reader*, edited by Louis Menand. New York: Vintage Books.
- POPPER, KARL. (1965) *Conjectures and Refutations*. New York: Harper.
- PUCHALA, DONALD J. (1990) Woe to the Orphans of the Scientific Revolution. *Journal of International Affairs* 44:59–80.
- PUCHALA, DONALD J. (2000) Marking a Weberian Moment: Our Discipline Looks Ahead. *International Studies Perspectives* 1:142.
- PUTNAM, HILARY. (1981) *Reason, Truth, and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- PUTNAM, LINDA. (2001) Shifting Voices, Oppositional Discourses, and New Visions for Communication Studies. *Journal of Communication* 51:38–51.

- RAGIN, CHARLES. (2000) *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- RORTY, RICHARD. (1996) Relativism: Finding and Making. In *Debating the State of Philosophy: Habermas, Rorty, and Kolarowski*, edited by Josef Niznik and John T. Sanders. London: Praeger.
- RORTY, RICHARD. (1998) *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ROSENAU, PAULINE. (1992) *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- RUSSETT, BRUCE M., AND JOHN R. O'NEAL. (2001) *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organization*. New York: Norton.
- SHAPIRO, MICHAEL J. (1988) *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography, and Policy Analysis*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- SMITH, STEVE. (2000) Wendt's World. *Review of International Studies* 26:151–163.
- SMITH, STEVE. (2001) Foreign Policy Is What States Make of It: Social Constructivism and International Relations Theory. In *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, edited by Vendulka Kubalkova. New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- SMITH, STEVE. (2002) Alternative and Critical Perspectives. In *Millennial Reflections on International Studies*, edited by Frank P. Harvey and Michael Brecher. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- SNYDER, JACK. (1991) *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- TODOROV, TZVETAN. (1989) *Nous et les autres: La reflexion francaise sur la diversite humaine*. Paris: Seuil.
- VAN EVERA, STEPHEN. (1990/1991) Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War. *International Security* 61(3):7–57.
- WAEVER, OLE. (1998) The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations. *International Organization* 52:687–727.
- WAEVER, OLE. (2000) The EU as a Security Actor: Reflections from a Pessimistic Constructivist on Post-Sovereign Security Orders. In *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, Security, and Community*, edited by Morton Kelstrup and Michael C. Williams. London: Sage.
- WALT, STEPHEN. (1987) *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- WEBER, MAS. (1973) Vom inneren Beruf zur Wissenschaft. In *Max Weber: Soziologie, universalgeschichtliche Analysen, Politik*, edited by Johannes Winkelmann. Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner.
- WENDT, ALEXANDER. (2000) On the Via Media: A Response to the Critics. *Review of International Studies* 26:165–180.
- WITTGENSTEIN, LUDWIG. (1984) *Philosophical Investigations*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- ZIEMAN, JOHN. (1991) *Reliable Knowledge*. Cambridge: Canto.