

# A CULTURAL THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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## Fear, interest and honor

And the nature of the case first compelled us to advance our empire to its present height; fear being our principal motive, though honor and interest afterwards came in.

Athenian speakers to the Spartan assembly<sup>1</sup>

Political scientists have rightly been accused of “physics envy.” I do not want to open myself up to the charge of “polis envy.” I do, however, want to go back to the Greeks and their thoughts about politics for the conceptual foundations of my theory. I recognize that the Greeks of the classical period lived in a very different world, where the city state (polis) was the principal unit and source of identity, and where politics, and all important relationships, were conducted face to face among people long acquainted with one another. Democracy, where it existed, was direct, with most or all important issues being debated and voted on in public assemblies. Politics was entirely the preserve of adult male citizens, and the criteria for citizenship, even in Athens, were extremely restrictive. Women, children, slaves and resident aliens performed, at most, ceremonial roles.

Despite these striking differences, the great playwrights and political thinkers of classical Greece still speak to us and their writings remain the starting point of our reflections on a wide range of ethical and political issues. Thucydides (460–c. 390 BCE), Plato (427–347 BCE) and Aristotle (384–322 BCE) provide the foundations for theories of politics and international relations. Their insights are timeless, but only in part due to their indisputable genius. Their writings reflect a collective Greek wisdom about human motives and behavior and the purpose of life. Greek playwrights, historians and philosophers wrote before symmetry was broken. In physics, this refers to that period after the Big Bang when the universe began to cool, but before it had cooled enough for the four forces that

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 1.75.2–5.

govern all interactions to emerge. In fifth-century Greece, inquiry into the social and physical world was well developed but separate disciplines had not yet developed. What we know today as physics, philosophy, poetry and history were all intertwined, and influenced one another in form and substance. The philosopher Democritus of Abdera (early fifth century BCE) wrote numerous texts, including one on farming. Hippias of Elis, a contemporary of Socrates, specialized in astronomy and mathematics, but also made contributions to language, poetry, music, archeology and history. Antiphon, another contemporary, worked primarily in the physical sciences but also composed poetry and speeches. The Hippocratic physicians described Scythian customs, Herodotus wrote about medicine, and Aristotle wrote about almost everything.<sup>2</sup>

The Greeks were not only polymaths, but sought to integrate knowledge across what for us are separate disciplines. The tragic poets addressed politics and its relationship to order and justice. Thucydides borrowed concepts from medicine and his plot line from tragedy, and used both to impart a deeper meaning to the events he described. He applied tragedy's spare plot line to history to craft an abstract, stylized narrative that directs our attention to the deeper meanings of events. Plato trashed Homer and the tragic poets in his *Republic*, but devised dialogue as an art form and used it to convey wisdom that could not be captured by concepts. These Greeks are the last thinkers to approach knowledge holistically, as must any general theory involving human behavior.

In the pages that follow, I elaborate some of the epistemological and substantive conceptions that shape the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides and the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. As my purpose is to build the *Grundbegriffe* for my own theory, I do not go into detail about the many differences among these figures, highlighting only those relevant to my arguments. The principal themes I treat are human motives and their implications for order and justice. I will contrast the Greek approach to these questions with their modern counterparts to demonstrate the utility of the former. The body of the chapter builds on this introduction to elaborate a framework for the study of politics. I conclude with a discussion of what I consider to be some of its principal conceptual problems and how they can be addressed.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *On Airs, Waters, Places*, ch. 22; Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.105.

## Foundational assumptions

### *Motives*

The Enlightenment constituted a sharp break with past thinking and practice. Its rejection of Aristotelian telos (the end something is intended to achieve, and how that end drives its development) helped pave the way for modernity.<sup>3</sup> Rejection of telos required a corresponding reconceptualization of reason. It was reduced from an end in itself to a mere instrumentality – “the slave of the passions,” in the words of David Hume.<sup>4</sup> Max Weber would later coin the term “instrumental reason” to describe this transformation, which he recognized had come to dominate the modern world and our approach to it. Freud incorporated it in his model of the mind; the ego embodies reason and mediates between the impulses of the id and the external environment. Rational choice employs a similar understanding of reason; it assumes that actors rank-order their preferences and engage in the kind of strategic behavior best calculated to obtain them.

The modern conceptualization of reason as instrumentality was part and parcel of the shift in focus away from the ends we should seek to the means of best satisfying our appetites. Strategic action models take preferences as given, or assume they will be revealed in the course of interaction with other actors and the environment. They acknowledge the critical importance of preferences, but cannot tell us how they form or when and why they change. Their epistemology is unsuitable to this task. Rational choice and other theories of strategic action often derive preferences from substantive assumptions, as neorealists do when they stipulate that relative power must be the principal goal of states in an anarchic international environment. Deduction of this kind, whether in economics or politics, almost invariably leads to a single motive like wealth or power, or at least to its prioritization. By making human, institutional or state preferences unidimensional, theorists homogenize and oversimplify human motivation while divorcing it from contexts that give it meaning. To introduce additional motives, any hierarchy among them would require additional theories to stipulate which motive, or combination of them, will

<sup>3</sup> For Aristotle, this is one of four kinds of causality: efficient, material (by virtue of an object's composition), formal (the way the structure of an object gives it form) and final causality (telos).

<sup>4</sup> Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3.4, *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, appendix I, p. 163.

dominate under what set of conditions. Such theories would have to be rooted in relatively sophisticated understandings of human psychology and culture.<sup>5</sup>

Freud, to his credit, grappled with this problem and valiantly attempted to formulate a theory of human desire. In the Freudian model, people are driven by impulses associated with the libido. They seek to satisfy these impulses, or channel them into other expressions, when their primary outlets are unavailable or prohibited. In contrast to Freud, social science privileges structure over agency, and most of its theories and models assume that people and other actors respond primarily to external stimuli.<sup>6</sup> The most casual observation of the social world indicates that people and states are moved by a combination of internal and external stimuli. It is often difficult to distinguish between them, let alone assess their relative weight, or how they interact, without detailed knowledge of the actors and their setting. Economists assume that people seek wealth, but have devoted surprisingly little thought to the origins and nature of this most fundamental proposition of economic theory. At least as far back as King Midas, wealth has been sought as an end in itself. It is also a means to such ends as security, material possessions, leisure and good health care, to mention that just some of the things that money can buy. To the extent that people want wealth for what it can provide, their desire is to a large degree socially determined. Rousseau and Adam Smith both grasped this truth when they observed that one of the distinguishing features of the modern world is the extent to which material goods and luxuries are sought for the standing and prestige they confer.<sup>7</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith wryly observes that this is why advertising campaigns regularly succeed in generating demand for useless and cost-ineffective products.<sup>8</sup>

Assume for the moment that people have a preference for wealth when making economic choices. To have a workable theory, we would need to know the range of choices people frame as economic (as opposed to political, social, religious, etc.). We also need to know something about why they seek wealth, because only then could we begin to estimate (for individuals and other actors) how they frame and make tradeoffs between

<sup>5</sup> Brennan and Pettit, *Economy of Esteem*, to their credit, recognize that people are often motivated by esteem as opposed to wealth. They do not theorize about the circumstances in which this might occur or the tradeoffs that are involved.

<sup>6</sup> Lebow, "Reason, Emotion and Cooperation," for a fuller critique.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality*; Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.2.1 and 3.1.

<sup>8</sup> Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*.

wealth and other values (e.g. security, status, leisure, job satisfaction), and how much risk they will assume in its pursuit. We cannot analyze means without knowing something about the ends they are intended to achieve.<sup>9</sup>

This truth was obvious to the ancient Greeks, who framed the problem of choice differently. Their principal concern was human goals, and from an early date they distinguished between two kinds of human motives: appetite and spirit. The former pertained to bodily needs, like food, shelter and sex, and the latter to the competitive quest for recognition as a means of building self-esteem. Plato and Aristotle maintained that reason also generates desires of its own, and was a third, independent motive. Reason had the potential to lead people to understand the nature of happiness and to constrain and educate appetite and spirit to collaborate with it toward this end.

The ancients differ from the moderns in apportioning desires among three separate motives, each distinct in its character and consequences for human behavior and happiness. This three-fold characterization of motives provides the foundation for an analytical framework for a theory of preferences. It also generates a typology of political orders applicable to individuals, societies and regional and international systems. Plato and Aristotle use variants of this typology to probe the causes of order and disorder within individuals and societies. I will do the same for political orders, and use it as the starting point for a theory of history.

### *Balance and imbalance*

Modern conceptions of balance and imbalance are rooted in our physical understanding of the world. They derive from the scale, which, along with the clock – initially based on the pendulum – is central to the Newtonian conception of the universe.<sup>10</sup> Enlightenment philosophers extended this conception to the social world, where it became an organizing principle for programs of reform. The separation of powers built into the American constitution represents one of the most successful political applications of this concept; it is intended to preserve a balance among the three branches of government, and between the federal and state governments. Critical analyses of American institutions and politics often assume that

<sup>9</sup> Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*, postscript, pp. 202–3, is one of the few social scientists who address this problem. He posits a plurality of motives, each of which can be an end in itself or a means toward achieving other ends.

<sup>10</sup> Butterfield, *The Origins of Modern Science*, pp. 19, 105, 130–2.

problems are the result of imbalance among these branches or levels of government.<sup>11</sup>

There is a concept of justice implicit in the scale analogy. The scale was intended to provide a fair measure of the product being offered for sale. Balance became associated with fairness more generally, a connection graphically represented by the many statues of a goddess holding a balanced scale that grace entrances to American courthouses. This association may date back to the ancient Egyptians, who thought the gods employed a scale to weigh the souls of the dead to see if they were worthy of an afterlife.

Social science modeled itself on nineteenth-century physics and adopted many of its key metaphors, including that of balance. Equilibrium has been a foundational concept for many theories or approaches to psychology, economics, political science and sociology, game theory among them. The balance of power has been central to the theory and practice of international relations since the eighteenth century, and is central to most realist theories. Imbalance, in the form of a dialectic, is foundational to Marxism, where it drives history until order and equilibrium are reached under communism. More recently, sociologist Niklas Luhmann, influenced by work in chaos and complexity, has developed conceptions of dynamic interactions between balance and imbalance.<sup>12</sup>

Greek philosophers were fascinated with mathematics, especially geometry. They used mathematical concepts as metaphors in epistemology (Plato's forms) and metaphysics (*meden agan*, or the golden mean). Like post-Enlightenment philosophy and literature, Greek writings are also rich in organic analogies, and conceive of balance in a biological sense. The life cycle of birth, growth, decline and death is routinely applied not only to people but to social entities, including the polis and its constitutions. It also provides the basis for *telos*, which for Aristotle is the kind of growth and maturation that enables living things to express their respective natures. *Phuein*, the verb "to grow," may have given rise to the noun *phusis*, meaning "nature." For Greeks, the two concepts were inseparable almost from the beginning. Proportion (*to analogon*) comes into play because growth is an expression of one's nature, and healthy growth is by definition proportional.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> A prominent example is Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*.

<sup>12</sup> According to Luhmann, *Social Systems*, p. 282, "Unstructured complexity is entropic complexity, which can at any time disintegrate into incoherence. The formation of structure uses this disintegration and constructs order out of it."

<sup>13</sup> Although Aristotle is careful not to confuse conceptual considerations with those of a natural scientist, his interest in the physiology of emotional response is very important.

For Greeks, power could not easily be understood apart from its purpose, and this was usually considered to be expansion and growth. Such an understanding couples power to proportionality and, indirectly, to fairness and justice, because proportionality is a measure and expression of fairness and justice. It follows that the several parts of the individual psyche, and the constituent parts of the city, should also be in balance. Each must perform its particular function and cooperate with the others in a harmonious manner. Fairness, justice and balance are so closely related that it is not too much of a stretch to understand them as different expressions of the same thing. Aristotle associates nobility and the good life with order, symmetry and decisiveness in action. These are all expressions of the doctrine of the mean. For every virtue, he describes two associated vices: an excess and a deficiency of that virtue. This holds true for cities as well as for people.<sup>14</sup>

The relationship among balance, the psyche and human fulfillment is an underlying theme of Plato's *Republic*. His Socrates acknowledges that appetites and spirit are frequently in conflict not only with each other, but also with reason. He calls these conflicts "afflictions and diseases," and associates them with different pathologies. Timocratic man is ruled by his spirit, and has a correspondingly exaggerated concern for his honor. Honor is a limited good because it is relational, and timocratic man is often disappointed. Repeated setbacks provide the incentive for him to accede to the incessant demands of appetite.<sup>15</sup> Oligarchic man is ruled by his appetite. His spirit finds narrow expression in a desire for wealth and the esteem it brings. Lacking judgmental criteria based on reason, he finds it

Having *pathē* is never merely having certain thoughts – although those provide the efficient causes of the emotion – but also feeling certain sensations of pain or pleasure, which provide the material causes of the emotion. According to Aristotle, those causes have to do primarily with changes in body temperature. Fear, for example, involves a drop in temperature. Cowards, who are deficient in courage, are constantly "chilled"; they suffer from a bodily disturbance (*tarache*) as well as a moral failing. There is every reason to think that Aristotle considers the moral mean of action and reaction to have a psycho-physiological corollary in bodily homeostasis. In his teleological system, the parts of the soul are arranged such that it may adjust successfully to the various social situations in which individuals will find themselves (inter alia, by adopting medial states of character); similarly, the body is arranged such that it may achieve success in adjusting to its environment. The task of modifying emotions, to bring them into harmony with the mean in each case and for each individual, is thus at the same time a task of altering individual physiology. It follows that each specific emotional trait is part of a general emotional trait that admits of a physiological medial state: a homeostasis. Specific anomalous emotional traits are not simply to be gotten rid of – any more than your hand is to be considered expendable and cut off if it feels too cold – but rather brought into line by adjusting the "body temperature".

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1273a3–b17.

<sup>15</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 403c9–404e1, 537c9–540c2, 548c1–2, 549a9–550b7.

impossible to discriminate among his competing appetites and will adopt the democratic decision rule of trying to satisfy whatever desire makes the most insistent demand at the moment.<sup>16</sup> The democratic person can find no way of resisting his appetites – unlawful ones aside – and is vulnerable to the appeal of tyranny.<sup>17</sup> Oligarchic, democratic and tyrannical people are ruled by different aspects of their desires, and all are unhappy.<sup>18</sup> Aristotle offers a different evolution and logic of transformation, but based on a similar understanding of the psyche.<sup>19</sup> Socrates' accounts are the starting point for his arguments on both subjects, and when discussing constitutions Plato is present as a kind of silent interlocutor.<sup>20</sup>

Plato's Socrates makes an explicit analogy between the psyche and the polis, and insists that both individuals and cities require a consensus about who is to rule. In a just city, every person performs his assigned role, making civic justice a collective representation of individual justice. Socrates also draws parallels between individual and political pathologies. He describes four deviant constitutions – timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny – each of which comes about in the same way as its individual counterparts. This happens to be the progression that Athens went through in Socrates' lifetime, and the *Republic* can be read as a commentary on that city's constitutional history. For people to live good and just lives, Socrates concludes, their appetites and spirit must be well-trained by reason and willing to do the right thing. At the level of the polis, this requires the active collaboration of all citizens, making justice

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 553a1–555b1, 554d2–3, d10–e5 and 559d4–561a5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 560e5, 561a6–562a2, 561c6–d5 and 572b10–573b4.

<sup>18</sup> The tyrannical person (ibid., 571a1–576e2) is the most pathological because he is ruled by lawless appetites. He is overcome by *pleonexia*, or unlimited desires (343e7–344c8, 348b8–350c11, 542a2–b1, 571a1–592b6). The democratic person (558c8–562a2) is ruled part of the time by unnecessary appetites, but never by illegal ones. The oligarchical person (554a5–8, 553a6–555b1) is ruled by his necessary appetites. In addition to external constraints, he imposes internal ones. The timocratic person (548d6–550d4) is ruled by his spirit, to which he has surrendered completely. He has moderated his necessary and unnecessary appetites, and is less likely to succumb to *pleonexia*. Only the philosopher (473c11–541b5) is ruled by reason and has moderated his appetite and spirit.

<sup>19</sup> According to Aristotle, *Politics*, 1286b19–21, the early polis had few citizens and was ruled as an extension of the household (*oikos*) by kings. When many persons equal in merit arose, they all felt themselves worthy of kingship, and set up a commonwealth with a constitution. The ruling class sooner or later succumbed to its appetites and enriched themselves at public expense. Riches also became paths to honor, so oligarchies developed. They degenerated into tyrannies, and then into democracies, because love of gain among rulers diminished their numbers while strengthening the people (*dēmos*). Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1365b33–1366a16, also describes regime types.

<sup>20</sup> Rowe, "Aristotelian Constitutions."

on the individual level the prerequisite of civic harmony. For individual and city alike, the three parts of the psyche must be in balance and work together harmoniously.<sup>21</sup>

Aristotle's analysis of constitutions also parallels his understanding of the individual; lack of discipline (*akrasia*) in individuals and cities leads to instability. The institutional arrangements he thinks most likely to maintain discipline in cities are an extrapolation from his preferred regimen for the individual. It is self-evident, he writes in the *Politics*, that "the same life is best for each individual, and for states and for mankind collectively."<sup>22</sup> Thucydides extends this understanding to foreign policy. Social relations among fifth-century Greeks were embedded in a dense web of relationships, governed by an elaborate set of conventions that encouraged expectations of support while imposing constraints and obligations. Relations with fellow citizens were conceptualized as an extension of domestic household relations, as were, to a significant extent, relations between Greek cities. The fifth-century Greek lexicon did not have a word for international relations. Like Herodotus, Greeks most often used *xenia*—a Homeric term best translated as guest friendship—to describe relations among cities.<sup>23</sup>

### *Levels of analysis*

Social science has become specialized in a double sense. It is divided into disciplines and divided within disciplines. Much of the latter division is on the basis of level of social aggregation. The traditional subfields of economics are micro and macro, the former pertaining to the firm, and the latter to the larger economic environment in which firms and other economic actors operate. Principal specializations within psychology include neuro and cognitive (about the individual), group and social (about smaller and larger collectivities). Political science is different in that its subfields are defined by subject, but most of them are then further divided by level of aggregation. International relations, for example, has long been organized in terms of the system, state, substate and individual levels of analysis.<sup>24</sup> For the most part, different problems are assigned to different levels of analysis, and different approaches and theories are generally used to address them.

<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 430e6–431a2, 441d12–e2.

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1325b30–2.

<sup>23</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.69.

<sup>24</sup> Singer, "The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations," is the classic statement of this framework.

Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle distinguish between individuals and cities, and describe politics at what we call the individual and state level. Thucydides extends this analogy to the regional level, to Hellas as whole. None of these thinkers frames problems in terms of levels of analysis, and efforts to map their writings on to this formulation do an injustice to their understandings of the social world. They do not conceptualize political behavior in horizontal, if permeable, layers, each with its own appropriate mode of explanation. They conceive of social interactions of all kinds as taking place in a discrete number of nested domains, each characterized by similar dynamics and amenable therefore to the same kind of analysis. If we need a modern analogy, fractals come closest to capturing the Greek understanding of human behavior. They replicate the same patterns at different orders of magnification.

As we have seen, Plato and Aristotle begin with a description of the individual psyche, whose categories and pathologies they then extend to the polis. People and *poleis* alike are motivated by appetites, spirit and reason. Order or disorder in either is attributable to balance or imbalance among these three motives. Plato's *Republic* describes a city, but it is offered as a collective representation of a well-ordered human psyche, with its philosophers embodying the drive of reason. The constitution Plato lays out for Kallipolis is similar in all important respects to what he believes is best for the individual. It is derived from first principles by philosophers whose wisdom comes from their holistic understanding of the good. They know how to order the life of the polis to the benefit of all citizens regardless of their particular skills and intellectual potential. They rely on guardians to impose correct opinion on the polis and enforce the constitution, including its provision of denying its citizens contact with outsiders, as far as possible.<sup>25</sup> The physical isolation of Kallipolis is necessary because of the absence of other virtuous cities.

Greek understandings of psyche and balance are the basis of a parsimonious theory of order that nicely bridges levels of analysis. They also reveal – as Thucydides documents – how balance or imbalance at any level of aggregation (i.e. individual, city, region) has important implications for balance and order at other levels. Plato talks about the direction of change (with tyranny his default condition), and Aristotle describes some of the mechanisms of change, but neither offers a theory of change. Such a theory is implicit in Thucydides, and is based on the interplay of material and intellectual forces and how they affect individual and

<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 506c, *Statesman*, 309c6–10.

collective balance. I will explicate, draw out and expand upon these insights, and extend them to modern foreign policy and international relations. I use both terms because a theory of international relations embedded in a theory of society is also a theory of foreign policy. There can be no meaningful theory of international relations just at the system level. For this reason, as we shall see, it becomes more difficult to differentiate a theory of international relations from one of foreign policy.

### *Ontology and epistemology*

The dominant ontology treats actors as autonomous, egoistic and often without history. It assumes that politics is best studied through the choices made by these actors. Rationalist theories nevertheless assume that these choices are shaped, if not determined outright, by environmental pressures and constraints. Constructivists start from the premise that people and their societies are mutually constitutive, but in practice many constructivist scholars treat identities and interests as social constructions. Each paradigm emphasizes one side of a complex social reality, and confronts difficulties in determining the respective roles of agents and structures. The tension between individual and social identities, and individual and collective interests, are only two of the tensions that characterize the relationship of human beings to each other and their societies. Other key polarities pit honor against interest, socially assigned roles against personal preferences, religious beliefs and practices against family loyalties and both of these against civic obligations.<sup>26</sup> Societies face similar tensions. In a recent book, Diana Mutz explores the tensions between deliberative and participatory democracy, which, she contends, requires a tradeoff between maximizing the participation of citizens and respect and tolerance for their differences.<sup>27</sup>

Greek tragedy explores many of these dualisms.<sup>28</sup> It reveals the generally destructive consequences of rejecting a middle ground in favor of unwavering commitments to any extreme. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Antigone's loyalty to her brother and the gods brings her into conflict with Creon, who is just as committed to upholding civic order and his authority as head of the family. There are lesser collisions between Antigone and her sisters, Creon and his son and Creon and Teresias, each of them equally

<sup>26</sup> Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, pp. 323–54, and “Reason, Emotion and Cooperation,” develop this argument at greater length.

<sup>27</sup> Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*. <sup>28</sup> Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, chs. 8 and 9.

emblematic. These conflicts arise not only as a result of the choices these characters make, but also from their inability to empathize with one another. They understand the other's position as a reality without justification. Tragic conversations, like their real-world counterparts, are self-defeating when protagonists talk past each other, fail to develop empathy and learn nothing new about themselves. Antigone and Creon interact in this way with catastrophic consequences for themselves, their family and their polis.

By dramatizing extreme commitments and their consequences, tragedy makes us sensitive to the way in which even ordinary human beings in their quotidian lives are pulled in opposite directions by conflicting needs, multiple identities and the different loyalties to which they give rise. As a general rule, these conflicts become more acute in periods of transition when discourses, and the values, conventions and practices they sustain, are questioned or breaking down. At most times and in most societies, human behavior is arrayed somewhere along the continuum between the polar extremes that tragedy describes. Very rarely does it mirror any of these poles, and invariably with destructive consequences. Like tragedy, we must start from the premise that these polarities define the extremes of the human condition and are not themselves good starting points for understanding behavior. We must represent, not suppress, the diversity and inherent instability of individual and collective identities, interests and motives, and their complex interactions with the discourses, social practices and institutions they generate and sustain.

I argued in *Tragic Vision of Politics* that multiple discourses encourage multiple identities, which are inherently unstable and accelerate the pace of social and political change. In contrast to most theories that take stable structures, societies and identities as the norm, tragedy encourages us to emphasize the complexity and dynamism of social life. The accommodations individuals and societies make with key polarities are temporary and fragile. They are uneasy compromises that can never be adequately justified by logic, may be difficult to legitimize politically and are likely to encounter a succession of moral and political dilemmas. Like the moon's tug and pull on the oceans, they give rise to inner tides that find outward expression in breaking waves of conflicting obligations and loyalties. Our search for ontological stability must give way to acceptance of the truth that social life, and our understandings of it, are, and must always be, in a state of flux.<sup>29</sup> We must accordingly privilege process over structure as

<sup>29</sup> Lapid, "Introduction" to *Identities, Borders, Orders*.

our principal category of metaphysical understanding, a subject to which I will return in the next section.

A focus on change dictates a radical break with the dominant epistemology in political science. Individuals and societies, I contend, adapt to changing circumstances by ever-shifting understandings of and accommodations to key polarities. As there are only so many quasi-stable sites along any of these continua, a new accommodation may be quite different from the one it replaces. Polarities are interconnected in complex ways. Changes in one can affect other accommodations, as their consequences ripple through the system. The system can return to something close to its prior state, but even minor changes can sometimes produce major systemic change by setting off something akin to a chain reaction.

For these reasons, equilibrium is not a useful concept in studying political order even in the short term. It assumes a state or states of equilibrium to which the system returns. In practice, changing accommodations, even when they are minor, generate new pressures and new accommodations, bringing about significant change over time. Evolution of this kind renders the concept of stability something of an oxymoron. Some of the most “stable” political systems – measured in terms of their longevity – are those that have evolved significantly over the course of time, so much so in some cases that comparisons between these systems at time *T* and *T* plus 100 years suggests that we are really looking at two very different systems. Georgian England in comparison to late Victorian Britain, or Victorian Britain in comparison to late twentieth-century Britain offer nice illustrations. The institutions governing the country were more or less unchanged, but the nature of the political culture, the distribution of power across classes, the demography of the country and many of its key social and political values underwent significant change, transforming the way in which these institutions functioned and the roles they performed for society.

Shifts in the nature of accommodations along any fault line can be dampened or amplified as they work their way through the society. Order is an open system. None of its key components can be studied in isolation from the rest of the social world, because important sources of instability and change for the components in question can emanate from any of them. Physical scientists study non-linear processes by modeling them. They often start with linear processes that are reasonably well understood, to which they add additional variables, and arbitrarily vary their value, or rate of change, in the hope of discovering the outer boundaries of linearity, and beyond them possible patterns or domains of order that may develop

in non-linear domains. Turbulence is the paradigmatic example. At a certain point, flow becomes turbulent and unpredictable. Within this turbulence, areas of stability can form, where flow can be described by linear models or equations. The Great Red Spot of Jupiter is a case in point, and is an island of relative and temporary stability in the storm raging throughout Jupiter's atmosphere. Durable political orders may be best understood as islands of this kind; they are in a state of flux, just less so than the sea of political turbulence that surrounds them. By identifying such islands, the ways in which they evolve, maintain their apparent stability, and where they come up against the edge of chaos, we can learn a lot about the processes that build, maintain and destroy orders.

### *Process philosophy*

From the time of the ancient Greeks there has been a deep divide between philosophers who believe nature should be understood in terms of its units and those who think it is best described as a process. The atomistic conception began with Leucippas and Democritus, two fifth-century thinkers, who, according to Aristotle, sought to reconcile the plurality, motion and change with the Eleatic denial of the processes of coming and ceasing to be. They assumed the existence of primary, unchanging particles whose combination and separation accounted for the observable phenomena of generation, corruption and death.<sup>30</sup> Heraclitus of Ephesus, who wrote around 500 BCE, is difficult to interpret by virtue of the limited fragments we possess and the oracular style of many of them. He has nevertheless been read as a philosopher who emphasizes the primacy of process, as suggested by his often-quoted line to the effect that you cannot step twice into the same river. Everything is in motion and a matter of activity which brings about continual change (*panta rhei*).<sup>31</sup> Since Aristotle, the atomistic formulation has dominated philosophy and, until quite recently, the physical sciences. Quantum mechanics has compelled us to reject the notion of stable particles and to question the distinction between substance and process. At the macro level, there are a host of phenomena, among them storms, that cannot effectively be analyzed

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *On Coming to Be and Passing Away*, 324a35–325a31; Taylor, "The Atomists."

<sup>31</sup> Heraclitus, B4 9a, in Diels and Kranz, *Die Fragmente*; Hussey, "Heraclitus"; Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, I, pp. 57–81.

in terms of objects or statics. Dynamic processes are more the work of “forces” than of “agents.”

In modern times, Leibniz was among the first scientists and philosophers to adopt a dynamic of view of nature. He invented the concept of “appetition” to distinguish human from animal souls and describe the striving and conscious, logical process through which humans recognize, order and reorder reality.<sup>32</sup> The early twentieth-century French philosopher Henri Bergson also rebelled against the fixity and rigidity that the logicians and materialists ascribed to reality. He popularized the idea of process, and its implication for human autonomy. If change was real, he insisted, so was novelty, and with novelty came freedom. The physical and social worlds were fluid by nature, and atomistic approaches at best convey the illusion of change the way the cinema does by displaying still pictures at rapid intervals.<sup>33</sup>

Process philosophy in its modern form developed with the writings of Alfred North Whitehead and his disciples Paul Hartshorne and Paul Weiss. Building on Bergson’s idea of “nature as a process,” Whitehead emphasizes the centrality of temporality, change and passage to our world.<sup>34</sup> In his world view, “Becoming is as important as being, change as stability.”<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Rescher, the most prominent contemporary advocate of process philosophy, defines a process “as an actual or possible occurrence that consists of an integrated series of connected developments unfolding in programmatic coordination: an orchestrated series of occurrences that are systematically linked to one another either causally or functionally.”<sup>36</sup> Process philosophy is committed to five fundamental propositions:

1. Time and change are among the principal categories of metaphysical understanding.
2. Process is a principal category of ontological description.
3. Processes are more fundamental, or at least not less fundamental, than things for purposes of ontological theory.
4. Several, if not all, major elements of ontological repertoire (nature, persons, substances) are best understood in process terms.
5. Contingency, emergence, novelty, creativity are among the fundamental categories of metaphysical understanding.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> McCrae, *Leibniz*, pp. 30–6, 131–45, and “The Theory of Knowledge”; Wilson, *Leibniz’ Metaphysics*, pp. 131–7; Rescher, *Leibniz’s Metaphysics of Nature*.

<sup>33</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 332. <sup>34</sup> Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, ch. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Rescher, *Process Philosophy*. <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22. <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6, 22.

Existing theories of international relations are atomistic in that their base units are states and other actors that are said to comprise a system. They also rely on so-called structures for their independent variables. For realist theories, the putative anarchy of the international system rewards and punishes certain kinds of behavior. For neorealism, the number of actors and their relative power determines the polarity of the system which in turn determined frequency of war and the stability of the system. Liberals emphasize the character of the units that make up the system and the way a system shaped by liberal, trading states provides incentives for other units to become liberal, trading states. Hedley Bull and Alexander Wendt posit three kinds of international systems (Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian) which arise from the “identities” of actors and their interactions. Marxists direct their attention to the mode of production, which determines not only the character of economic and political relations, but legal and social relations as well. Realism, liberalism and Wendtian constructivism hold their actors and structures constant because they would lose their analytical purchase if they were allowed to vary.<sup>38</sup> These theories acknowledge the possibility of change but its causes, of necessity, lie outside the theories. Only Marxism, to its credit, allows its structures to evolve, and understands change as an interactive process between the economic-political consequences of structures (feudalism, capitalism and socialism) and the way in which that behavior in turn reshapes those structures.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to these theories, I privilege process over structure and change over stability, and attempt to describe the dynamics that bring about change. I build my theory around ideal types, which can be described as non-existent structures. Spirit-based worlds have distinctive characters that give rise to a range of related behaviors, but real worlds only resemble such an ideal-type world in part and so do their behaviors. Realism describes another ideal type: a fear-based world. Liberalism is one variant of a third ideal type: an interest-based world. Real worlds generally contain some elements of all three, are unstable and are constantly in flux. Over time, they move toward or away from one or more of these ideal-type worlds. Reality is further complicated by the fact that these societies and the systems in which they interact almost invariably contain considerable local variation, making them “lumpy,” more difficult to describe and correspondingly more volatile.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence, “Imperial Peace or Imperial Method,” criticizes the “democratic peace” paradigm and its static definition of democracy for this reason.

<sup>39</sup> Marx, *Capital*, I.25, pp. 612–21, for one of many examples.

Table 2.1. *Foundational assumptions*

Assumptions	Ancients	Moderns
Human motives	Three-fold	Appetite
Balance	Mechanical	Organic
Source of balance	Internal	External
Levels of analysis	Similar	Distinct
System state	Change/cycle	Equilibrium
Ontology (actors)	Embedded	Autonomous

For these reasons, a general theory of international relations must be more a theory of process than of structure. It must establish templates for determining the character of particular worlds and their subsystems, but also identify the dynamics that move them to and away from these states, and how they are related to or even arise from the character of these worlds. We must recognize, in the language of Bergson, that our understanding of the international system is a “snapshot” that freezes the moment and gives it an artificial appearance of stability.<sup>40</sup> To comprehend that order, we need to examine the previous frames through which it has progressed, and the dynamics that drove that progression. They may also give us an inkling of where it is heading, and just possibly when it is likely to undergo a rapid phase transition or more gradual evolution into some other kind of world. I say an inkling, because we are describing a non-linear process in which simple projections of the past into the future are almost certain to be misleading.

The preceding discussion of the foundational assumptions of my theory is intended to provide a roadmap for readers and distinguish my theory from other ones. For the most part my assumptions derive from the Greeks, although they are by no means all shared by even Plato and Aristotle. Table 2.1 summarizes these assumptions and compares them to their modern counterparts.

In the sections that follow, I elaborate the outlines of a combined theory of politics and order that builds on these foundational assumptions. I start with motives and their associated hierarchies and principles of justice. I contend that each motive generates a distinctive logic concerning cooperation, conflict and risk-taking. I then turn to order and its breakdown and

<sup>40</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 232.

examine the dynamics associated with the latter. The dynamics of breakdown are more or less universal, although the sources of tensions within societies vary according to which motive is dominant. I recognize that single-motive worlds are, by definition, ideal types, and that real worlds always reveal multiple motives. I argue that for the most part motives mix, not blend, which has important implications for behavior. Lastly, I address the question of change and transformation.

### Motives

Plato and Aristotle posit three fundamental drives – appetite, spirit and reason – each seeking its own ends. Three paradigms of international relations – realism, liberalism and Marxism – are rooted in appetite. Liberalism assumes that people and states seek wealth, and use reason instrumentally to design strategies and institutions conducive to this goal. Realism differs from liberalism in arguing that concern for security must come first in an anarchical world. As I noted in the introduction, realists root their paradigm in Hobbes's observation – generally taken out of context – that people are motivated to find ways out of the state of nature, not only to preserve their lives, but to protect their property and create an environment in which they can satisfy other appetites.<sup>41</sup> Marxism is also anchored in appetite, although the young Marx was equally concerned with the spirit. He wrote about man's alienation from his labor, and how socialism would restore workers' self-esteem by reordering their relationship to what they produced. Marx was a close reader of the Greeks, and appreciated their richer understanding of human motives and related understanding that human happiness required more than the satisfaction of appetites.

The spirit has not been made the basis for any paradigm of politics or international relations, although, as Machiavelli and Rousseau recognized, it has the potential to serve as the foundation for one, and Hobbes described "vanity" – his term for the spirit – as a powerful, fundamental drive and principal cause of war.<sup>42</sup> I attempt to remedy this conceptual oversight. With Homer's *Iliad* as my guide, I construct an ideal-type honor society in chapter 3, and use it as a template to understand the role of the spirit in real worlds, ancient and modern. In this chapter, I provide a

<sup>41</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 126.

<sup>42</sup> The quest for prestige, and its political consequences, are discussed at some length by Machiavelli in the *Prince* and the *Discourses*, Hobbes in the *Leviathan* and Rousseau in his "Fragments on War" and *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*.

brief overview of the characteristics and tensions of spirit-based worlds and their implications for foreign policy. I do the same for interest- and fear-based worlds, showing how these ideal-type worlds differ from each other in their organizing principles and behavior.

### *Spirit*

A spirit-based paradigm starts from the premise that people, individually and collectively, seek self-esteem. Simply put, self-esteem is a sense of self-worth that makes people feel good about themselves, happier about life and more confident about their ability to confront its challenges. It is achieved by excelling in activities valued by one's peer group or society and gaining the respect of actors whose opinions matter. By winning their approbation we feel good about ourselves. Self-esteem requires some sense of self, but also recognition that self requires society, because self-esteem is impossible in its absence. There is a large literature in psychology about self-esteem and its beneficial consequences, although efforts to build self-esteem in the absence of substantive accomplishments have come in for serious criticism.<sup>43</sup>

The spirit is fiercely protective of one's autonomy and honor, and for the Greeks the two are closely related. According to Plato, the spirit responds with anger to any restraint on its self-assertion in private or civic life. It wants to avenge all affronts to its honor, and those against its friends, and seeks immediate satisfaction when aroused.<sup>44</sup> Mature people are restrained by reason, and recognize the wisdom of the ancient maxim, as did Odysseus, that revenge is a dish best served cold.

Self-esteem is a universal drive, although it is conceived of differently by different societies. For the Greeks, identity was defined by the sum of the social roles people performed, so esteem (how we are regarded by others) and self-esteem (how we regard ourselves) were understood to be more or less synonymous because the latter depended on the former. For modern Westerners, esteem and self-esteem are distinct words and categories and are no longer synonymous. We also distinguish external honor – the only kind the Greeks recognized – from internal honor, a modern Western concept associated with behavior in accord with our values. We can behave in ways that provoke the disapproval of others but still feel good about ourselves if that behavior reflects our values and

<sup>43</sup> Dechesne *et al.*, "Terror Management and Sports Fan Affiliation."

<sup>44</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 440c–441c.

beliefs and confers internal honor. We must nevertheless be careful about making hard and fast distinctions between Greeks and moderns, because there is some evidence that internal honor was not entirely foreign to Athenians. Socrates accepts his death sentence, when it may have been intended to make him go into exile, which is what his friends plead with him to do, because he insists on behaving in a manner consistent with his beliefs.<sup>45</sup>

Even more than appetite, the spirit is mediated by society. People can satisfy some appetites by instinct, but must be taught how to express and satisfy the spirit through activities deemed appropriate by the society. They need appropriate role models to emulate. For Aristotle, emulation, like many behaviors, is motivated by pain and pleasure. We feel pain when we observe people, who are much like us, and who have good qualities and positions we do not have but might. To escape this pain we act in ways that make it possible for us to possess these goods and feel good when we obtain them.<sup>46</sup>

Societies have strong incentives to nurture and channel the spirit. It engenders self-control and sacrifice from which the community as a whole prospers. In warrior societies, the spirit is channeled into bravery and selflessness from which the society also profits. All societies must restrain, or deflect outwards, the anger aroused when the spirit is challenged or frustrated. The spirit is a purely human drive; organizations and states do not have psyches and cannot be treated as persons. They can nevertheless respond to the needs of the spirit in the same way as they do to the appetites of their citizens. It is readily apparent, as I noted in the introduction, that people join or support collective enterprises in the expectation of material and emotional rewards. They can build self-esteem in the same way, through the accomplishments of nations with which they affiliate. Arguably the most important function of nationalism in the modern world is to provide vicarious satisfaction for the spirit.

There are a bundle of concepts associated with the spirit that must be defined with some care. The first of these is self-esteem, which I have described as a universal human need on a par with appetite. For Plato and Aristotle, and classical Greek literature more generally, self-esteem or self-worth is an affect, and like all emotions for the Greeks, is mediated by the intellect. We only feel good about ourselves when we recognize that we are esteemed for the right reasons by other actors whom we respect and admire.

<sup>45</sup> Plato, *Crito*.

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1388a29–1388b30.

Esteem and self-esteem – for me the more relevant concept – map on to different conceptions of identity. In the ancient world, I noted above, identity is conceived of as social in nature.<sup>47</sup> People did not lack a concept of self, but that self was relationally defined and has been described as the sum of their socially assigned roles.<sup>48</sup> Our word for person derives from *persona*, the Latin for mask, and describes the outer face that one presents to the community.<sup>49</sup> In the modern world, individual identity is thought to have become increasingly important, and with it, the concept of self-esteem has emerged. Durkheim observed that the replacement of the collectivity by the individual as the object of ritual attention is one of the hallmarks of transitions from traditional to modern societies. From Rousseau on, Enlightenment and Romantic ideologies emphasized the uniqueness and autonomy of the inner self.<sup>50</sup> Modernity created a vocabulary that recognizes tensions between inner selves and social roles but encourages us to cultivate and express our “inner selves” and original ways of being.<sup>51</sup>

Self-esteem is a subjective sense of one’s honor and standing and can reflect or differ from the esteem accorded by others. Tension and conflict can arise, internally and socially, when actors’ self-esteem is considerably lower or higher than their external esteem. Esteem and self-esteem can also be described as respect and self-respect. The opposite of esteem is shame, an emotion that arises in response to the judgments, or expected judgments, of others. Both forms of esteem are stipulatively social. Aristotle describes shame as a “pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past or future, which seem likely to involve us in discredit.” Examples he provides include throwing away one’s shield in battle, withholding

<sup>47</sup> Yack, *The Fetishism of Modernities*; Fitzgerald, *Metaphors of Identity*, p. 190; Lapid, “Culture’s Ship.”

<sup>48</sup> Durkheim, *Division of Labor in Society*, preface and pp. 219–22; Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, p. 134.

<sup>49</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, part I, xvi, p. 112; Andrew, *Worlds Apart*, pp. 98–103.

<sup>50</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Bb, Cc, described the “authentic” Romantic as a “beautiful soul,” pure in its inwardness and uncorrupted by modernity’s divisiveness. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul*; Berman, *The Politics of Individualism*. On Durkheim, see his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* and *The Division of Labor in Society*; Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, pp. 378–90; Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*; Collins, “Categories, Concepts or Predicaments?”

<sup>51</sup> Many concepts of self rely on the idea of interpellation developed by Althusser in “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” For the development of the concept of the relational self, see Shotter, “Social Accountability and the Social Construction of ‘You’”; Butler, *Excitable Speech*; Eakin, *How our Lives Become Stories*; Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction*.

Table 2.2. *The spirit*

Motive	Goal	Instrument
Spirit	Self-esteem	Honor/standing

payment from someone deserving of it, making a profit in a disgraceful way and having sexual relations with forbidden persons or at the wrong times or places.<sup>52</sup> Aristotle is clear that we shrink from knowledge of our behavior, not the acts themselves, as we are primarily concerned with how we appear in the eyes of those who matter most to us.<sup>53</sup> We must exercise due caution with the binaries of social and individual identities, and esteem and self-esteem, because Greek tragedy (e.g. Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Medea*) reveals that self-esteem to some degree existed in fifth-century Athens. Even in the ancient world, these binaries may describe differences of degree than of kind.

Self-esteem is closely connected to honor (*timē*), a status for the Greeks that describes the outward recognition we gain from others in response to our excellence. Honor is a gift, and bestowed upon actors by other actors. It carries with it a set of responsibilities, which must be fulfilled properly if honor is to be retained. By the fifth century, honor came to be associated with political rights and offices. It was a means of selecting people for office and of restraining them in their exercise of power. Table 2.2 summarizes the relationships among the several concepts I have introduced in this section. It suggests that the spirit is best conceived of as an innate human drive, with self-esteem as its goal, and honor and standing the means by which it is achieved.

Honor is inseparable from hierarchy. Hierarchy is a rank ordering of status, and in honor societies honor determines the nature of the statuses and who fills them. Each status has privileges, but also an associated rule package. The higher the status, the greater the honor and privileges, but also the more demanding the role and its rules. Almost wherever they have appeared, kings, at the apex of the social hierarchy, have been understood to mediate between the human and divine worlds and derive their authority and status from their latter connection. This is true of societies as diverse as ancient Assyria, Song China and early modern Europe.<sup>54</sup> Status can be ascribed, as in the case of kings, or achieved, and in

<sup>52</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1383b15–1884a21. <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 1384a22–8.

<sup>54</sup> Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria"; Yates, "Song Empire." In Europe, the divine right of kings is reflected in key texts from Augustine to Bossuet.

traditional honor societies the two are expected to coincide. The king or chief is expected to be the bravest warrior and lead his forces into battle. Other high-ranking individuals must assume high-risk, if subordinate roles. Service and sacrifice – the means by which honor is won and maintained – have the potential to legitimize hierarchy. In return for honoring and serving those higher up the social ladder, those beneath them expect to be looked after in various ways. Protecting and providing for others is invariably one of the key responsibilities of those with high status and office. The Song dynasty carried this system to its logical extreme, integrating all males in the kingdom into a system of social status signified by seventeen, and then twenty, ranks. Obligations, including labor and military service, came with rank, as did various economic incentives. As in aristocratic Europe, the severity of punishments for the same crime varied by rank, but in reverse order.<sup>55</sup>

Great powers have had similar responsibilities in the modern era, which have been described by practitioners and theorists alike.<sup>56</sup> The Security Council is an outgrowth of this tradition. Its purpose, at least in the intent of those who drafted the United Nations Charter, was to coordinate the collective efforts of the community to maintain the peace. Hierarchies justify themselves with reference to the principle of fairness; each actor contributes to the society and the maintenance of its order to the best of its abilities and receives support depending on its needs.<sup>57</sup>

Honor is also a mechanism for restraining the powerful and preventing the kind of crass, even brutal exploitation common to hierarchies in modern, interest-based worlds. Honor can maintain hierarchy because challenges to an actor's status, or failure to respect the privileges it confers, arouse anger that can only be appeased by punishing the offender and thereby "putting him in his place." Honor worlds have the potential to degenerate into hierarchies based on power and become vehicles for exploitation when actors at the apex fail to carry out their responsibilities or exercise self-restraint in pursuit of their own interests.

I define hierarchy as a rank order of statuses and use the term in this way throughout the book. Max Weber offers a different understanding of hierarchy: an arrangement of offices and the chain of command linking them together. Weber's formulation reminds us that status and office

<sup>55</sup> Yates, "Song Empire."

<sup>56</sup> Onuf, *The Republican Legacy*, on Pufendorf, Grotius, Vattel and Wolff; Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*; Neumann, "Russia as a Great Power"; Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, p. 70; Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 137; Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society*, p. 100.

<sup>57</sup> For a thoughtful modern take on fairness, see Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*.

are not always coterminous, even in ideal-type worlds. In the *Iliad*, as we shall see, the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles arises from the fact that Agamemnon holds the highest office, making Achilles his subordinate, and Achilles, the bravest and most admired warrior, deeply resents Agamemnon's abuse of his authority. In international relations, great powerdom is both a rank ordering of status and an office. As in the *Iliad*, conflict can become acute when the two diverge, and states – more accurately, their leaders and populations – believe they are denied an office commensurate with the status they claim.

Standing and honor are another pair of related concepts. Standing refers to the position an actor occupies in a hierarchy. In an ideal-type spirit world, an actor's standing in a hierarchy is equivalent to its degree of honor. Those toward the apex of the status hierarchy earn the requisite degree of honor by living up to the responsibilities associated with their rank or office, while those who attain honor by virtue of their accomplishments come to occupy appropriate offices. Even in ideal spirit worlds there is almost always some discrepancy between honor and standing because those who gain honor do not necessarily win the competitions that usually confer honor. In the *Iliad*, Priam and Hector gain great honor because of their behavior on and off the battlefield but lose their lives and city. In fifth-century Greece, Leonidas and his band of Spartan warriors won honor and immortality by dying at Thermopylae. Resigning office for the right reasons can also confer honor. Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus was made dictator of Rome in 458 and again in 439 BCE. He resigned his absolute authority and returned to his humble life as a hardscrabble farmer as soon as he saved his city from the threat of the Volscians and Aequi. His humility and lack of ambition made him a legendary figure after whom a city in the wilderness of Ohio was named.<sup>58</sup> George Washington emulated Cincinnatus and retired to his plantation at the end of the Revolutionary War. Later, as first president of the new republic, he refused a third term on principle and once again returned to Mt. Vernon. His self-restraint and commitment to republican principles earned him numerous memorials and a perennial ranking as one of the three top presidents in history.

Honor and standing can diverge for less admirable reasons. Honor worlds are extremely competitive because standing, even more than wealth, is a relational concept. Hobbes compares it to glory and observes that "if all men have it, no man hath it."<sup>59</sup> The value placed on honor in spirit-based worlds, and the intensity of the competition for it, tempt actors to take short cuts to attain it. Once actors violate the rules and get

<sup>58</sup> Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, III, 26–9.

<sup>59</sup> Hobbes, *De Cive*, I.1.

away with it, others do the same to avoid being disadvantaged. If the rules governing honor are consistently violated, honor becomes a meaningless concept. Competition for honor is transformed into competition for standing, which is more unconstrained and possibly more violent. As we shall see, this is a repetitive pattern, especially in international relations.

The quest for honor generates a proliferation of statuses or ranks. These orderings can keep conflict in check when they are known and respected and effectively define the relative status of actors. They intensify conflict when they are ambiguous or incapable of establishing precedence. This is most likely to happen when there are multiple ways (ascribed and achieved) of gaining honor and office. Even when this is not a problem, actors not infrequently disagree about who among them deserves a particular status or office. This kind of dispute has particularly threatening consequences in international relations because there are no authorities capable of adjudicating among competing claims.

External honor must be conferred by others and can only be gained through deeds they regard as honorable. It has no meaning until it is acknowledged, and is more valuable still when there is a respectful audience. The Greek word for fame (*kleos*) derives from the verb “to hear” (*kluein*). As Homer knew, fame not only requires heroic deeds but bards to sing about those deeds and people willing to listen and be impressed by them. For honor to be won and celebrated there must be a consensus, and preferably one that transcends class or other distinctions, about the nature of honor, how it is won and lost and the distinctions and obligations it confers. This presupposes common values and traditions, even institutions. When society is robust – when its rules are relatively unambiguous and largely followed – the competition for honor and standing instantiates and strengthens the values of the society. As society becomes thinner, as it generally is at the regional and international levels, honor worlds become more difficult to create and sustain. In the absence of common values, there can be no consensus, no rules and no procedures for awarding and celebrating honor. Even in thin societies, honor can often be won within robust subcultures. Hamas and other groups that have sponsored suicide bombing, have publicized the names of successful bombers, paid stipends to their families and encouraged young people to lionize them.<sup>60</sup> Such activity strengthens the subculture and may even give it wider appeal or support.

<sup>60</sup> Levitt and Ross, *Hamas*, pp. 59–60, report monthly stipends of \$5–5,500 to prisoners of Israel and \$2–3,000 to widows or families of those who have given their lives.

Honor societies tend to be highly stratified and can be likened to step pyramids. Many, but by no means all, honor societies are divided into two groups: those who are allowed to compete for honor and those who are not. In many traditional honor societies, the principal distinction is between aristocrats, who are expected to seek honor, and commoners, or the low-born, who cannot. This divide is often reinforced by distinctions in wealth, which allow many of the high-born to buy the military equipment, afford the leisure, sponsor the ceremonies or obtain the education and social skills necessary to compete. As in ancient Greece, birth and wealth are never fully synonymous, creating another source of social tension. Wealth is generally a necessary, but insufficient, condition for gaining honor. Among the egalitarian Sioux, honor and status were achieved by holding various ceremonies, all of which involved providing feasts and gifts to those who attended. Horses and robes, the principal gifts, could only be attained through successful military expeditions against enemy tribes, or as gifts from others because of the high regard in which brave warriors were held.<sup>61</sup>

Recognition in the elite circle where one can compete for honor is the first, and often most difficult, step in honor worlds. The exclusiveness of many honor societies can become a major source of tension, when individuals, classes or political units demand and are refused entry into the circle in which it becomes possible to gain honor. What is honorable, the rules governing its attainment, and the indices used to measure it are all subject to challenge. Historically, challenges of this kind have been resisted, at least initially. Societies that have responded to them positively have matured, and in some cases gradually moved away from, completely or in part, their warrior base.

A final caveat is in order. Throughout the book I use the term recognition to mean acceptance into the circle where it is possible to compete for honor. Recognition carries with it the possibility of fulfillment of the spirit, and it is not to be confused with the use the term has come to assume in moral philosophy. Hegel made the struggle for recognition (*Kampf um Anerkennung*) a central concept of his *Philosophy of Right*, which is now understood to offer an affirmative account of a just social order that can transcend the inequalities of master–slave relationships.<sup>62</sup> In a seminal essay published in 1992, Charles Taylor applied Hegel's

<sup>61</sup> Hassrick, *Sioux*, pp. 296–309.

<sup>62</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, III.A.178–96. For interpretations, see Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*; Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, esp. ch. 4; Onuf, "Late Modern Civil Society."

concept to the demands for recognition of minorities and other marginalized groups. He argues that human recognition is a distinctive but largely neglected human good, and that we are profoundly affected by how we are recognized and *mis*recognized by others.<sup>63</sup> The political psychology of recognition has since been extended to international relations, where subordinate states are assumed have low self-images and low self-esteem. Axel Honneth stresses the importance of avoiding master–slave relationships among states.<sup>64</sup> Fernando Cornil argues that subaltern states enjoy the trappings of sovereignty but often internalize the negative images of them held by the major powers.<sup>65</sup>

I acknowledge the relationship between status and esteem, but make a different argument. In terms of at least foreign policy, it is powerful states, not weak ones, who feel the most humiliation. My explanation for this phenomenon draws on Aristotle's understanding of anger, which is narrower than our modern Western conception. It is a response to an *oligōria*, which can be translated as a slight, lessening or belittlement. Such a slight can issue from an equal, but provokes even more anger when it comes from an actor who lacks the standing to challenge or insult us. Anger is a luxury that can only be felt by those in a position to seek revenge. Slaves and subordinates cannot allow themselves to feel anger. It is also senseless to feel anger towards those who cannot become aware of our anger.<sup>66</sup> In the realm of international relations, leaders – and often peoples – of powerful states are likely to feel anger of the Aristotelian kind when they are denied entry into the system, recognition as a great power or treated in a manner demeaning to their understanding of their status. They will look for some way of asserting their claims and seeking revenge. Subordinate states lack this power and their leaders and populations learn to live with their lower status and more limited autonomy. Great powers will feel enraged if challenged by such states.<sup>67</sup> I believe we can profit from reintroducing the Greek dichotomy between those who were included in and excluded from the circle in which it was possible to achieve honor and Aristotle's definition of anger. Both conceptualizations help to illuminate important social and political phenomena that would otherwise not be noticed or flagged as important.

<sup>63</sup> Taylor, "Politics of Recognition."

<sup>64</sup> Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*; Honneth and Fraser, *Recognition or Redistribution?*

<sup>65</sup> Cornil, "Listening to the Subaltern."

<sup>66</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378b10–11, 138024–9. Konstan, *Emotions of the Ancient Greeks*, pp. 41–76, for an analysis.

<sup>67</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1379b10–12, on the anger provoked by slights from our inferiors.

Let us turn to the wider implications of honor as a motive for foreign policy. First and foremost is its effect on the preferences of states and their leaders. Realists and other international relations scholars insist that survival is the overriding goal of all states, just as domestic politics explanations assert that it is for leaders.<sup>68</sup> This is not true of honor societies. As we shall see in the next chapter, Achilles spurns a long life in favor of an honorable death that brings fame. For Homer and the Greeks fame allows people to transcend their mortality. Great deeds carry one's name and reputation across the generations where they continue to receive respect and influence other actors. In the real world, not just in Greek and medieval fiction, warriors, leaders, and sometimes entire peoples, have opted for honor over survival. We encounter this phenomenon not only in my case studies of ancient and medieval societies but also in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and Japan. Morgenthau and Waltz draw on Hobbes, and Waltz also on Rousseau, to argue that survival is the prime directive of individuals and political units alike. Leo Strauss sees Hobbes as an important caesura with the classical tradition and among the first "bourgeois" thinkers because he makes fear of death and the desire for self-preservation the fundamental human end in lieu of aristocratic virtues.<sup>69</sup> A more defensible reading of Hobbes is that he aspired to replace vanity with material interests as a primary human motive because he recognized that it was more effectively controlled by a combination of reason and fear. For Hobbes the spirit and its drive for standing and honor remained universal, potent and largely disruptive forces.

As Thucydides and Hobbes understand, the quest for honor and the willingness to face death to gain or uphold it make honor-based societies extremely war-prone. Several aspects of honor contribute to this phenomenon. Honor has been associated with warrior societies, although as we will see not all warrior societies are honor societies, and not all warrior societies are aristocratic. In warrior societies that are aristocratic, the principal means of achieving honor is bravery in combat. War is not only

<sup>68</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3rd edn., p. 10, holds that "successful political action [is] inspired by the moral principle of national survival." Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 92, draws on Hobbes and Rousseau to stress the individual's will for self-preservation as the primary human goal in the hierarchy of human motivations. The assumption that survival is the core objective of states is undisputed in the field. See also Wight, "Why There Is no International Theory"; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 46; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*.

<sup>69</sup> Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*. See also Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* and "Introduction" to Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Hayes. "Hobbes' Bourgeois Moderation."

considered a normal activity in such societies but a necessary one, because without it young men could not demonstrate their mettle or distinguish themselves. More fundamentally, war affirms the identity of warriors and their societies. I have argued elsewhere that Thucydides considered the threat Athenian power posed to Spartan identity, not their security, the fundamental reason why the Spartan assembly voted for war.<sup>70</sup> Erik Ringmar makes a persuasive case that it was the principal motive behind Sweden's intervention in the Thirty Years War, where standing was sought as a means of achieving a national identity.<sup>71</sup> In chapters 6 through 9 I will show that such considerations were important for leaders and peoples from post-Westphalian Europe to the post-Cold War world.

In honor societies, status is an actor's most precious possession, and challenges to status or to the privileges it confers are unacceptable when they come from equals or inferiors. In regional and international societies, statuses are uncertain, there may be multiple contenders for them and there are usually no peaceful ways of adjudicating rival claims. Warfare often serves this end in honor societies. It often finds expression in substantive issues such as control over disputed territory, but can also arise from symbolic disputes (e.g. who is to have primacy at certain festivals or processions, or whose ships must honor or be honored by others at sea).

For all three reasons, warfare in honor worlds tends to be frequent, but the ends of warfare and the means by which it is waged tend to be limited. Wars between political units in honor societies often resemble duels.<sup>72</sup> Combat is highly stylized, if still vicious, and governed by a series of rules that are generally followed by participants. As we will see, warfare among the Greeks, Aztecs, Plains Indians, and eighteenth-century European states offer variants on this theme. By making a place for violence in community-governed situations it is partially contained and may be less damaging than it otherwise would be.<sup>73</sup> These limitations, however, apply only to warfare between recognized members of the same society. War against outsiders, or against non-elite members of one's own society, often has a no-holds-barred quality. Greek warfare against tribesmen

<sup>70</sup> Thucydides, book 1; Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, ch. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action*.

<sup>72</sup> In book 1, ch. 1, pp. 75–6, of *On War*, Clausewitz equates war to a duel in which each combatant tries through physical force to compel the other to do his will. "His immediate aim is to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance." Countless duels make a war, but their purpose is the same. "War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."

<sup>73</sup> Hobsbawm, "Rules of Violence" makes this point.

or against the Persians at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea, and American warfare against native Americans in the nineteenth century, illustrate this nasty truth.

Despite the endemic nature of warfare in warrior-based honor societies cooperation is not only possible but routine. Cooperation is based on appeals to friendship, common descent and mutual obligation more than it is on mutual interest. The norms of the hierarchy dictate that actors of high status assist those of lower status who are dependent on them, while those of lower status are obliged to serve as their clients. Friendship usually involves the exchange of gifts and favors, and provides additional grounds for asking for and receiving aid. Cooperation in honor societies is most difficult among equals because no actor wants to accept the leadership of another, and thereby acknowledge its higher standing. This situation makes cooperation difficult even in situations where there are compelling mutual security concerns.

As honor is more important than survival, the very notion of risk is framed differently. Warrior societies are risk-accepting with respect to both gain and loss. Honor cannot be attained without risk, so leaders and followers alike welcome the opportunity to risk limbs and lives to gain or defend it. Actors will also defend their autonomy at almost any cost because it is so closely linked to their honor, unless they can find some justification for disassociating it from honor that is convincing to their peers. Risk-taking will be extended to the defense of material possessions and territory to the extent that they have become entwined with honor.

To summarize, honor-based societies experience conflict about who is “recognized” and allowed to compete for standing; the rules governing agon or competition, the nature of the deeds that confer standing and the actors who assign honor, determine status and adjudicate competing claims. Tracking the relative intensity of conflict over these issues, and the nature of the changes or accommodations to which they lead, provides insight into the extent to which honor remains a primary value in a society and its ability to respond to internal and external challenges. It also permits informed speculation about its evolution.

### *Appetite*

Appetite is the drive with which we are all familiar. Plato considered wealth to have become the dominant appetite in Athens, a development that has found an echo in all societies where some degree of affluence becomes possible. There are, of course, other appetites, including sex,

food, drink, clothing and drugs, but contemporary economists and liberals either ignore them or assume their satisfaction depends on, or is at least facilitated by, wealth.

Appetites can be satisfied outside of society, but more easily within it. Many appetites are innate, but their expression is socially constructed. Sex, undeniably a universal drive, finds expression in diverse ways depending on the culture. In some societies women are not expected to derive pleasure from the sex act, and in Victorian Europe there is evidence that many did not.<sup>74</sup> In some societies, post-pubescent boys are considered appropriate sexual partners for men, while in others, this is considered unnatural and taboo. For Athenians, playing the role of penetrator versus the penetrated distinguished manly sex from its effeminate counterpart. For many modern Americans sexual preference is determined by the gender of one's partner. In the modern era, Smith and Hegel comment on the extent to which our desires, especially for luxuries, which we feel as needs, are products of our imagination and induced by the society in which we live.<sup>75</sup>

Material well-being is generally abetted by the well-being, even prosperity, of other actors. This is a hard-won insight.<sup>76</sup> Early efforts at wealth accumulation often involved violence, as it appeared easier and cheaper to take other people's possessions than to produce them oneself or generate the capital necessary for their purchase. Until recent times piracy was an honored profession, and slavery, often the result of raiding expeditions, was considered an acceptable means of acquiring wealth. Riches gained through conquest became an important goal of empires, and the norm against territorial conquest only developed in the twentieth century. Even trading economies (e.g. the Carthaginians, Portuguese and British) historically viewed wealth as a zero sum game and sought to exclude competitors from access to raw materials and markets they controlled. Recognition dawned only slowly that generating surplus through production and trade made societies and their rulers richer than obtaining it through conquest, that production and trade benefited from peace, and that affluence was as much the result of cooperation as it was of conflict. It was not until the late eighteenth century that even economists began

<sup>74</sup> Gay, *Schnitzler's Century*, pp. 81–6, 267, 282. Marie Stopes, *Married Love or Love in Marriage*, first published in 1918, was offered as a corrective and made the radical – at the time – case for female sexual satisfaction in marriage.

<sup>75</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 197.

<sup>76</sup> Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, for the development of arguments in the eighteenth century that stressed the importance of reciprocity in trade over traditional approaches emphasizing the autonomy of the state and its economic competition with other units.

to understand that the free exchange of capital, goods, people and ideas is in the long-term common interest of all trading states.<sup>77</sup>

Modern appetite-based worlds are based on the principle of equality, of which Rousseau is the outstanding theorist.<sup>78</sup> By the third decade of the nineteenth century, Tocqueville noted, equality was well on its way toward becoming the only principle on which legitimate government could be based.<sup>79</sup> In such an order everyone is supposed to be recognized as an ontological equal and have the same opportunities for advancement. The hierarchies that result – based on wealth – are no less steep than their spirit-based counterparts, but are entirely informal. They come with no defined statuses or privileges and without attached rule packages. Status is not as evident as in traditional hierarchies, so actors must actively seek to display their wealth in support of their claims for standing.<sup>80</sup> Not everyone seeks to be identified and ranked this way. In the absence of rule packages there is also no requirement to share resources with others who are less well-off. Redistribution of wealth, to the extent this occurs, must be imposed by governments through progressive income and estate taxes and deductions for charitable donations. Proponents of egalitarian orders assert that they benefit everyone with skills and commitment because status is based on personal qualities. Adam Smith maintains that one of the great benefits was the ending of personal dependency, allowing people to sell their skills and labor on the open market. Personal freedom and unrestricted markets are alleged to make more efficient use of human potential and encourage people to develop their potential. They are also defended on the grounds that they generate greater wealth, making those who end up at the bottom of the hierarchy substantially better off than they would be in traditional, clientalist orders.<sup>81</sup>

Plato describes appetite and spirit as two distinct drives or motives. He provides examples to show how they can come into conflict, as when

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, ch. 1, was among the first to observe that the division of labor permitted more efficient production and wealthier societies. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, for a contemporaneous and somewhat more jaundiced account of the social consequences of the division of labor.

<sup>78</sup> Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, which explicitly rejects contracts of submission and the clientalist hierarchies they instantiate. Every citizen, he insists, must be bound by the same laws and obligations.

<sup>79</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I, introduction, pp. 3–6. <sup>80</sup> Ibid., II.3.2, p. 540.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.3.6. For extreme formulations of this position, see Hayek, *Road to Serfdom* and *Constitution of Liberty*; Kristol, *Two Cheers for Capitalism*; Berger, *The Capitalism Revolution*.

someone is thirsty but drinking in the circumstances would be socially inappropriate. In this example behavior allows a culturally informed observer to determine which motive is dominant. In other instances this might not be apparent, as wealth and honor have been implicated with each other from the beginning of human history and are sometimes difficult to disentangle. In ancient Greece, as in many societies, wealth was a prerequisite for honor.<sup>82</sup> In Europe, titles were not infrequently sold or awarded on the basis of wealth, and in seventeenth-century France conferred privileges that were a vehicle for increasing one's wealth. In much of Western Europe by the mid-nineteenth century, and earlier in some countries, aristocrats were primarily distinguished from the rich bourgeoisie by the age of their wealth. More confusing still is the seeming fusion of wealth and standing in our epoch. Rousseau describes *amour propre*, the passion to be regarded favorably by others, as the dominant passion of modernity. In contrast to savage man, who sought esteem directly, his "civilized" counterpart seeks it indirectly, though the attainment and display of material possessions.<sup>83</sup> According to Adam Smith, we better our condition "to be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency, and approbation."<sup>84</sup> Modernity, at least in the West, has arguably transformed wealth into an ever more instrumental good because it has become the chief source of standing. According to Schumpeter, entrepreneurs are motivated by "the dream to found a private kingdom" in the form of an eponymous company that carries one's name and fame across the generations. Like Greek and Trojan heroes on the battlefield, financial success for entrepreneurs is "mainly valued as an index of success and as a symptom of victory."<sup>85</sup>

Ideal-type actors in an appetite world would behave differently than they would in a spirit-based world. Cooperation would be routine, indeed the norm, and built around common interests. It would endure as long as actors shared interests and end when they diverged. As interests change, or others became more salient, alliances (formal and informal) would shift, and yesterday's partners might become today's opponents. Relations among units would resemble the kind of shifting coalitions the authors of *Federalist* no. 10 expected to develop in the Congress.<sup>86</sup> Conflict would be as common as cooperation, as actors would have opposing interests

<sup>82</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1286b15, recognizes that riches have become a path to honor.

<sup>83</sup> Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality*, pp. 147–60, 174–5.

<sup>84</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.2.1.

<sup>85</sup> Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, p. 82.

<sup>86</sup> Hamilton *et al.*, *Federalist Papers*, no. 10 by James Madison.

on numerous matters of importance. Their conflicts, however, would be non-violent and rule-governed because all actors would recognize their overriding interest in maintaining peaceful relations and the institutions, procedures and general level of trust that enabled peaceful relations. The outcome of disputes would depend very much on the relative power of actors, the structure and rules of the institutions in which their conflicts were adjudicated and their skill in framing arguments, bargaining with opponents and building coalitions. Actors might even be expected to develop a set of rules about changing the rules of the game.

Because interests – primarily economic interests – dictate policy preferences, conflicts within political units would mirror those between them. Domestic and transnational coalitions would form to advance common interests and provide mutual assistance. Risk-taking in interest-based worlds is described by prospect theory: actors are willing to assume more risk to avert loss than they are to make gains.

Liberalism is the quintessential paradigm of politics and international relations based on the motive of interest. Theories and propositions rooted in this paradigm, including those associated with the democratic peace research program, do a comprehensive job of laying out the assumptions of an interest-based world and the behavior to which it gives rise. Many liberals nevertheless make the mistake of confusing their ideal-type descriptions of an interest-based world with the real world, in which interest is only one important motive. Liberals further err in thinking that the world they describe – one composed of capitalist democracies – is the only efficient response to the modern industrial world. A compelling argument can be made that it is only one of several possible interest-based responses, and that its emergence was a highly contingent outcome.

### *Reason*

We also lack a paradigm for reason, but with more reason, so to speak. Just and ordered worlds do not exist at any level of aggregation. Greek and modern philosophers have had to imagine them. For Plato, it is Kallipolis of the *Republic* or Magnesia of the *Laws*. For Aristotle, it is *homonoia*, a community whose members agreed about the nature of the good life and how it could be achieved. For Augustine, it is a culture in which human beings use their reason to control, even overcome, their passions, and act in accord with God's design.<sup>87</sup> For Marx, it is a society in which

<sup>87</sup> Augustine, *City of God*.

people contribute to the best of their abilities and receive what they need in return. For Rawls, it is a utopia that conforms to the principles of distributive justice. As most of these thinkers acknowledge, disagreements would still exist in reason-informed worlds, but would not threaten the peace because they would not be about fundamental issues of justice and would be adjudicated in an environment characterized by mutual respect and trust. Plato, Aristotle and Rawls understand their fictional worlds as ideals toward which we must aspire, individually and collectively, but which we are unlikely ever to achieve. Their worlds are intended to serve as templates that we can use to measure how existing worlds live up to our principles. As Plato might put it, even imperfect knowledge of any form can motivate citizens and cities to work toward its actualization. Partial progress can generate enough virtue to sustain reasonable order in individuals and societies. Thucydides offers Periclean Athens as an example – one that Plato unambiguously rejects – while Aristotle makes the case for polity, a mixture of oligarchy and democracy.

Order in reason-informed worlds arises from the willingness of actors to cooperate even when it may be contrary to their immediate self-interest. All actors recognize that cooperation sustains that *nomos* that allows all of them to advance their interests more effectively than they could in its absence. Conflict exists in reason-informed worlds, but it is tempered not only by recognition of the importance of order, but, as Aristotle notes in his description of an *homonoia*, by a fundamental agreement about underlying values that minimizes the nature of conflict and the cost of being on the losing end. To maintain this consensus, actors often favor compromise over outright victory in conflicts. Compromise that allows common projects is also a vehicle for building and sustaining the common identities that maintain the underlying value consensus. Rawls's difference principle incorporates a risk-averse propensity on the part of actors which he assumes is a universal human trait that will still operate behind the veil of ignorance, even though all other social orientations have been shorn away.<sup>88</sup> He has rightly been criticized for this move and it is more reasonable to assume that even in a reason-informed world risk propensity will depend on the characteristics of the society and actors in question.

Reason-informed worlds may or may not have hierarchies. Plato's Republic has a hierarchy based on the principle of fairness. Everyone, including women, occupies a position commensurate with their abilities and character. Aristotle's aristocracy, for him the ideal form of

<sup>88</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pp. 8, 53, 57, 65, and "Some Reasons for the Maximum Criterion."

government, is also hierarchical and combines principles of fairness and justice. It is hierarchical in that aristocrats are in a superior position to the demos because of their superior qualities, but egalitarian in the ways aristocrats relate to one another and their understanding that honor and office should be assigned on the basis of merit.<sup>89</sup> Rawls recognizes a hierarchy based on wealth and attempts to offset the principle of equality with that of fairness. The veil of ignorance allegedly leads actors to conclude that everyone should have the same opportunities to better themselves. The principle of difference dictates that the only inequalities (hierarchies of wealth) that are allowed are those that demonstrably permit the poorest members of society to become better off.<sup>90</sup> Plato and Aristotle recognize that their reason-informed worlds would be short-lived. Plato expects his republic to become corrupt after a few generations, while Aristotle expects aristocracies to degenerate, even to the point of revolution, when a few actors monopolize the honors of state.<sup>91</sup>

Theories of cooperation in international relations – realist, liberal institutionalist, social capital and “thin” constructivist alike – tell us next to nothing about how the commitment to restore order comes about or how it is translated into political action. These theories address the narrower problem of issue-based cooperation. For analytical purchase they rely on the same explanatory mechanisms imported from microeconomics: external stimuli in the form of environmental constraints and incentives and the choices of other actors. They frame the problem of cooperation on a case-by-case basis, with actors cooperating or defecting in each instance on the basis of instrumental calculations of self-interest. The more interesting and fundamental question is the underlying propensity and willingness to cooperate with a given set of actors. In its absence, order is impossible, and cooperation, if possible at all, is unlikely to extend beyond the most obvious, important and self-enforcing issues.<sup>92</sup>

Plato and Aristotle address this question. For their answers, they turn to reason – not instrumental reason, but reason the drive – because of its potential to construct ordered and just worlds by constraining and educating appetites and spirit. These are separate but related processes. The initial stage consists of limiting expressions of appetite (e.g. overindulgence in food or alcohol) and spirit (ill-chosen methods of competition or ill-timed expressions of anger) that are self-defeating or self-destructive.

<sup>89</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1307a27–8.

<sup>90</sup> Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 65.

<sup>91</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1306b23–7.

<sup>92</sup> Finnemore and Toope, “Alternatives to ‘Legalization’”; Lebow, “Reason, Emotion and Cooperation.”

Reason must go on to teach appetite and spirit alike to become more discriminating, develop more refined tastes and seek higher goals. Plato distinguishes between *epithumia*, which are unreasoning or animal desires, and *eros*, which can be educated by reason and directed toward the good and the beautiful and even the kind of wisdom concerned with the ordering of states and families.<sup>93</sup> For Aristotle, reason can constrain and educate appetite and spirit alike. Together with education it can lead people to more sophisticated appetites and ways of satisfying the spirit, which in turn require greater self-constraint and longer postponement of gratification. For both Plato and Aristotle, reason the drive must also deflect people and their societies from seeking wealth as an end in itself, as opposed to acquiring it as a means of satisfying the requisites of a good life. They condemn the appetite for wealth on the grounds that it can never be satisfied; when people become consumed by its pursuit, they have no time for leisure and reflection. Both activities are important components of the educational process because from time to time we need to take ourselves out of our daily routines and reflect upon them and the lessons they can teach us about life and happiness. For intellectually gifted people, leisure also allows the pursuit of wisdom through philosophy.<sup>94</sup>

Education is a life-long project whose object Plato describes as the attainment of mental health in the form of psychological balance.<sup>95</sup> Aristotle characterizes it as a process that teaches people to follow the mean between excess and deficit in almost everything.<sup>96</sup> Justice is not an overarching virtue for Aristotle as it is for Plato, but for both philosophers it is a mental state that we might not unreasonably equate with truly enlightened self-interest.<sup>97</sup> Justice has several key components, the first of which – the exercise of appropriate self-restraint – I have already noted. Education not only teaches reasons for self-restraint, it seeks to make its exercise habitual. With maturity, education increasingly becomes a self-guided process:

<sup>93</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 209a–b; Hall, *Trouble with Passion*, p. 65.

<sup>94</sup> These arguments are developed by Plato, in the *Republic*, and by Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Eudaimonian Ethics* and *Politics*.

<sup>95</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 430e6–431a2, 441d12–e2, 444e7–445a4.

<sup>96</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b35–1107a4.

<sup>97</sup> Their conceptions of justice differ. For Plato, it was balance and harmony among the components of the psyche or city, with each performing its proper function. For Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a15–24, 1129b17–19, 1129b25–6, justice is not an attribute a person can possess in isolation, but a quality that can only develop and find expression in social relations. Justice is an active virtue that requires people to make, implement and adjudicate laws, not just follow them. It is the “complete” or “perfect” virtue because it requires possession and exercise of all other virtues. Aristotle accordingly distinguishes virtue, which applies to individuals, from justice, which operates at the communal level.

reason, experience and reflection combine to provide more sophisticated grounds for self-restraint. Reason widens citizens' horizons and circle of concerns by convincing them of their dependence on their community, not only for physical protection, but for creating and maintaining the conditions and fostering the relationships that enable appetite and spirit to be satisfied in the most fulfilling ways.<sup>98</sup>

For reason to constrain spirit and appetite, it must educate them, just as it must constrain them to educate them. This seeming tautology is resolved by the active involvement of parents and guardians who impose on young people the kind of restraints they are incapable of imposing on themselves, and educate them by means of the examples of their own lives.<sup>99</sup> Role models are critical components of individual and civic education necessary to bring about reason-informed worlds.<sup>100</sup> Unfortunately, as Socrates discovered, people are at least as likely to resent, even punish, others who lead just lives. Plato and Aristotle sought unsuccessfully, I would argue, to find some way out of this bind, and the difficulty of doing so was an important reason for their general pessimism. Plato resorted to the "noble lie" to create his fictional city of Kallipolis; its founders agree among themselves to tell their descendants that their *nomos* was established by the gods. He does not tell us how the founders themselves gained enough wisdom and insight to devise these laws and willingly submit themselves to their constraints.

The understanding of reason shared by Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle differs in important ways from modern conceptions of reason. For the ancients, as we have seen, reason is an instrumental facility and a drive with goals of its own. A second important difference is its relation to affect. Plato and Aristotle believe that reason can only have beneficial effects in concert with the proper emotions.<sup>101</sup> Dialogue is valuable for Plato because of its ability to establish friendships. When we feel warmly

<sup>98</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II. 2.8, pp. 501–3 for the doctrine of self-interest well understood.

<sup>99</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1101b14–1103b26.

<sup>100</sup> Plato, *Republic*, book II, 377b to III, 399e, spends a lot of time talking about the poets as inappropriate role models. The Guardians and the literature they approve are intended as their replacement. Aristotle (see below) had a more favorable view of literature, and especially of tragedy, which he believed could have powerful beneficial consequences.

<sup>101</sup> Aristotle makes the most explicit case for the beneficial interaction of reason and emotion in his discussions of mimesis and tragedy in *Poetics*. In *Poetics*, 1448b7, he contends that we have impulse toward mimesis (*kata physin*), and in 1448b5–6, that the pleasure we derive from looking at representations of reality made by artists is connected to our ability to learn from them, and also functions as an incentive to learn from them. We learn from tragedy (1450) because of the pity and fear it inspires in us through our ability to imagine

toward others, we empathize with them and can learn to see ourselves through their eyes. This encourages us to see them as our ontological equals. Affect and reason combine to make us willing to listen to their arguments with an open ear, and, more importantly, to recognize that our understandings of justice, which we think of as universal, are in fact parochial. We come to understand a more fundamental reason for self-restraint: it makes it possible for others to satisfy their appetites and spirits. Self-restraint is instrumentally rational because it makes friendships, wins the loyalty of others and sustains the social order that makes it possible for everyone to satisfy their appetites and spirit. Self-restraint also brings important emotional rewards because spirit and appetite are best gratified in the context of close relations with other people.

For Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, what holds true for individuals holds true for their cities. The most ordered and just cities are those with properly educated citizens. Guided by reason and love for their polis, they willingly perform tasks to which they are best suited and take appropriate satisfaction from their successful completion. The foundation of the city is the friendship (*philia*) that citizens develop with one another, and regional peace is built on friendship among cities (*poleis*).<sup>102</sup> At both levels, relationships are created and sustained through a dense network of social interaction and reciprocal obligations that build common identities along with mutual respect and affection.<sup>103</sup>

Despite the modern emphasis on reason as an instrumentality, we find echoes of Plato and Aristotle in the writings of some influential eighteenth- and nineteenth-century figures. Adam Smith maintains that reason can teach prudence, discipline and honesty to self-interested people – a set of qualities he calls “propriety” – that lead them, among other things, to defer short-term gratification to make longer-term gains.<sup>104</sup> This is very similar to Aristotle’s concept of *phronēsis*, often translated as practical reason or prudence. It arises from reflection upon the

ourselves in the role of the tragic hero. This association in turn produces catharsis, a purging of our soul.

<sup>102</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a21, 25–7, 1159b25, 1161a26–8, 1161b12. In 1155a32, he writes “when men are friends they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they need friendship as well.” Plato’s vision of an ideal community was not dissimilar. In the *Republic*, 419a–421a, Socrates describes such a community as one in which benefits are distributed fairly, according to some general principle of justice.

<sup>103</sup> Thucydides, 1.37–43, has the Corinthians express the same sentiments in a speech to the Athenian assembly. Their invocation of justice is unintentionally ironic, as they have just subverted this very traditional notion of justice in their off-hand dealings with Corcyra.

<sup>104</sup> Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.i.5, VI.i.

consequences of our behavior and that of others. It is concerned with particulars, but can help us make better lives for ourselves, by influencing how we go about attempting to achieve goals that are important to us.<sup>105</sup> Hegel is even closer to Aristotle in arguing that reason must combine with affect, and together they can teach people to act ethically and affirm their civic obligations. Insight grounded in reason (*eine Einsucht durch Gründel*) has the potential to liberate us, at least in part, from our appetites, give direction to our lives and help us realize our full potential as individuals.<sup>106</sup>

### Order and its breakdown

Real worlds at best approximate this ideal, and most do not even come close. Those that function reasonably well must, of necessity, contain enough reason to constrain appetite and spirit and direct them into productive channels. They must restrain actors, especially powerful ones, by some combination of reason, interest, fear and habit. Self-restraint is always difficult because it involves deprivation, something that is noticeably out of fashion in the modern world where instant gratification and self-indulgence have increasingly become the norm. Experimental evidence indicates that about one-third of Americans put their personal material interests above shared norms when there are no constraints on them other than conscience. This behavior can only effectively be constrained by high levels of normative consensus, resource dependence on other actors and dense links to these actors and a broader community.<sup>107</sup>

Spirit and appetite-based worlds are inherently unstable. They are intensely competitive, which encourages actors to violate the rules by which honor or wealth is attained. When enough actors do this, those who continue to obey the rules are likely to be seriously handicapped. This provides a strong incentive for all but the most committed actors to defect from the rules. This dilemma is most acute in spirit-based worlds because of the relational nature of honor and standing, which makes it a zero sum game unless there are multiple hierarchies of honor and standing. Appetite-based worlds need not be this way, but actors often frame

<sup>105</sup> Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1139a29–1141b20.

<sup>106</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 132, 144, 147, 149–52. On Hegel's grounding in Aristotle, see Lear, *Aristotle*, pp. 160–74; Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, pp. 33–4.

<sup>107</sup> Zelditch, "Process of Legitimation"; Zelditch and Walker, "Normative Regulation of Power"; Johnson *et al.*, "Legitimacy as a Social Process"; Tyler, "Psychological Perspectives on Legitimacy and Legitimation."

the acquisition of wealth as a winner-take-all competition and behave competitively even when cooperation would be mutually beneficial. Here too, lack of self-restraint encourages others to emulate their behavior. Disregard for rules accordingly takes two forms: non-performance of duties (including self-restraint) by high-status actors, and disregard of these status and associated privileges by actors of lesser standing. The two forms of non-compliance are likely to be self-reinforcing and have the effect of weakening hierarchies and the orders they instantiate.

Thucydides and Plato lived through the Peloponnesian War, the succession of demagogues it brought to power, the short-lived but brutal tyranny of the Four Hundred and the subsequent restoration of democracy. Thucydides was exiled from Athens for twenty years, possibly as a result of efforts by Cleon to deflect attention from his defeat at Delium.<sup>108</sup> In 399 BCE, Plato's mentor Socrates was condemned to death on the trumped-up charges of atheism and corrupting youth. Aristotle had an easier life; the Athens of his day was a relatively stable democracy. He nevertheless had to leave the city on two occasions, and give up the Lyceum he had founded, when relations between Athens and his native Macedonia became strained. Each of these thinkers accordingly drew upon a store of personal as well as historical experiences to reflect upon the causes of disorder.

All three attributed civil disorder to lack of self-restraint, especially on the part of high-status actors, and considered it a consequence of psychological imbalance.<sup>109</sup> For Plato, oligarchic people and regimes are ruled by their spirit, and democratic people and regimes by their appetite. The difficulty of appeasing the spirit or appetite, or of effectively discriminating among competing appetites, sooner or later propels both kinds of people and regimes down the road to tyranny.<sup>110</sup> Tyranny is initially attractive because a tyrant is unconstrained by laws. In reality, the tyrant is a true slave (*tōi onti doulos*) because he is ruled by his passions and is not in any way his own master.<sup>111</sup> Thucydides tells a similar story about the two leading protagonists of the Peloponnesian War. In Sparta, reason loses control to the spirit, and in Athens, to both spirit and appetite.

Building on their understandings, we can formulate propositions about why and how psychological balance and imbalance and their dynamics lead to order and disorder. My starting point is the different principles of

<sup>108</sup> Thucydides, 5.26.5.

<sup>109</sup> Aristotle also observes, *Politics*, 1302b34–1303a21, that changes in the demographic balance among classes can also lead to civil disorder.

<sup>110</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 439d1–2, 553d4–7. <sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 571c8–9, 579d9–10.

justice and hierarchies associated with spirit- and interest-based worlds. Traditional spirit-based worlds, I noted earlier, are based on the principle of fairness, and their hierarchies are clientalistic. Every status in their hierarchies, the bottom rungs aside, has responsibilities for those who occupy lower statuses and has the right to look to those above them for support. In return for the benefits they receive from those of higher rank, people honor and serve them. The rule packages associated with different statuses require different kinds of self-restraint, and the closer one moves toward the apex of the hierarchy, the more extensive these constraints become. Honor is not only a function of rank, but of how well actors of high status and office perform their respective roles. Clientalist hierarchies are designed to restrain selfishness and its consequences by embedding actors with resources in a social order that requires them to protect and support those who are less advantaged and feel shame if they do not meet their responsibilities. When clientalist orders are robust, they satisfy the spirit of those with high status and the security and appetites of those with low status. In appetite-based worlds, hierarchies arise from the different degree of success actors have in accumulating wealth. When society in appetite worlds is robust, rewards are roughly proportional to merit because each actor has a relatively equal opportunity to compete.

In both kinds of orders the most common and destructive kind of imbalance is at the elite level. When high-status actors, whether individuals or political units, no longer restrain their spirit or appetite, they subvert the principles of justice associated with their respective hierarchies. Unconstrained spirit, which intensifies the competition for honor, is likely to generate acute and disruptive conflict *within* the dominant elite. It has wider consequences for the society because it intensifies conflict, not infrequently leads to violence, and reduces, if not altogether negates, the material and security benefits clientalist hierarchies are expected to provide for non-elite members of society. Unconstrained appetite also undermines an elite's legitimacy and arouses resentment and envy on part of other actors. It can encourage a more diffuse imbalance in the overall society when other actors emulate elite self-indulgence and disregard the norms restraining the pursuit of wealth at the expense of others. Loss of control to the spirit was a persistent threat to order in the ancient world and early modern Europe, where it was a major cause of civil and interstate wars. Loss of control to the appetite was not unknown in Greece, where it was initially associated with tyrants and oligarchies. In our world, it is endemic to all kinds of regimes and their elites, and has made rapacity a principal source of conflict at every level of order.

Spirit-based societies are vulnerable to other kinds of imbalance. For much of history, spirit-based societies have also been warrior societies where competition, and the aggression associated with it, is deflected outwards in warfare against communal adversaries. Skill in battle and defense of the homeland in turn provide a justification for a warrior elite's claim to honor, standing and political authority.<sup>112</sup> The elite's standing and authority can be threatened when changes in the conduct of warfare require the participation and skills of lower-status groups. In Athens, the development and growing importance of the navy, staffed largely by less-wealthy citizens, paved the way for wider democratization of society.<sup>113</sup> If external threats recede, warrior classes have an interest in generating new conflicts to sustain their authority and to avoid destructive, inward deflection of competition and aggression. The combination of external peace and internal lack of elite restraint will generate strong pressures to limit its authority. Warrior societies accordingly have incentives to have frequent wars, but to limit and regulate such conflicts so they do not disrupt society or demand extraordinary resources. They can also devise alternative forms of competition. The original Olympic Games were intended to serve this end, and their modern counterpart was envisaged, at least in part, as a substitute for war. It was no accident that competition in the modern Olympics was initially limited to so-called "gentlemen" athletes.

For Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, elite imbalance results in the same behavioral pathology: high-status actors violate the principles on which their elite status is based. They fail to exercise the prudence and self-restraint (*sophrosunē*) of their predecessors. Thucydides and Plato believe that intellectuals accelerate this process of decay by undermining the values that encourage public service, sacrifice and self-restraint by the elite. They problematize social orders that were previously accepted and reproduced as natural practice. Politicians skilled in the art of rhetoric are another source of corruption. In Athens, Thucydides laments, they used "fair phrases to arrive at guilty ends."<sup>114</sup> They twisted and deconstructed the language, giving words meanings that were often the opposite of their traditional ones, and used them to justify behavior at odds with

<sup>112</sup> Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, is the classic work on the subject.

<sup>113</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1297b16ff, 1305a18; Raaflaub, "Equalities and Inequalities in Athenian Democracy"; Hanson, "Hoplites into Democrats"; Strauss, "The Athenian Trireme, School of Democracy," who makes the case from the perspective of the *thetes*, arguing that trireme service created a sense of class solidarity and entitlement which translated into political influence.

<sup>114</sup> Thucydides, 3.82.

conventional practices and values. By the late fifth century the code of “ancient simplicity” (*eūthēs*), so admired by Thucydides and Plato, had not merely declined, Thucydides reports, it had been “laughed down and disappeared.”<sup>115</sup> Aristotle notes that elite corruption stimulates the appetites of poorer people, making them want a greater share of the wealth and more supportive politicians who promise it to them. Such a process appears to be underway in the United States where elite greed is increasingly open and extreme and marked by ever increasing gaps between the compensation of employees and CEOs, and increases in all forms of tax evasion by the wealthy.<sup>116</sup> This dynamic is not limited to affluent societies; Mao Zedong made a parallel argument about revolutionary bureaucracies and how quickly they become corrupted.<sup>117</sup>

Thucydides’ account of Athenian politics during the Peloponnesian War indicates that intra-elite competition stimulates wider imbalance in societies. Members of the elite, intent on advancing their political standing, mobilize support among non-elite actors. Cleon appealed to the masses in language that encouraged them to put their self-interests above those of the community. E. E. Schattschneider describes a similar process in American politics: individuals or groups who lose a political struggle in one arena seek to expand the struggle into new arenas of contestation if they expect it to improve their chances of success.<sup>118</sup>

For Thucydides and Aristotle, the defining moment of civic breakdown is when actors or factions capture the institutions of state for partisan purposes. The assembly and courts no longer serve to regulate and constrain competition for wealth and honor, but intensify it by enabling one faction to advance its standing or enrich itself at the expense of others. Those in power may use these institutions to expel, punish or kill opponents. At the international level this kind of behavior often takes the form of attempting to so improve one’s strategic position as to make challenge all but impossible. Aristotle observes that when conflict becomes sufficiently acute, a leader, faction or state can feel the need to act preemptively; they prepare to strike out before they are victimized. Once a cycle of violence and retribution begins, it becomes difficult to stop. Thucydides provides a chilling description of how runaway civic tensions escalated into an utterly destructive civil war (*stasis*) in Corcyra.<sup>119</sup> Aristotle offers Rhodes, Thebes, Megara and Syracuse as his examples of breakdown (*stasis*) and revolution (*metabolē*).<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 3.83.      <sup>116</sup> Lebow and Lebow, *Running Red Lights and Ruling the World*.

<sup>117</sup> Young, “Mao Zedong and the Class Struggle in Socialist Society.”

<sup>118</sup> Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People*.      <sup>119</sup> Thucydides, 3.69–85.

<sup>120</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1302b22–34.

Thucydides describes an important cognitive-linguistic component of this process. One of the most famous passages of his history describes a feedback loop between words (*logoi*) and deeds (*erga*). As language is stretched, words not only lost their meaning, but took on new ones that justify, even encourage, behavior at odds with traditional *nomos*. In my follow-on volume I will return to this passage and its thoughtful analysis of the relationship between words and deeds because it suggests a useful empirical way of tracking the transition to and from fear-based worlds.

For Lenin and some academic students of revolution, civic unrest and revolution is most likely to occur when a sharp economic downturn follows a period of sustained economic growth.<sup>121</sup> The Greeks are also sensitive to class conflict, but believe it will be most acute when the discourses that reconcile diverse classes through a widely shared and overarching commitment to the community as a whole lose their authority. In this situation, the wealthy and high-born become more rapacious and the *dēmos* less accepting of their subordinate economic and political status. Thucydides and Plato understood that learning to live with affluence can be just as difficult as accommodating poverty. Plato described both extremes as destabilizing because wealth makes for luxury and idleness, and poverty for mean-mindedness and bad work.<sup>122</sup> Their observations suggest the proposition that neither wealth nor poverty per se produce instability and revolution, but lack of empathy and self-restraint. Hegel makes a similar argument.<sup>123</sup>

To summarize, breakdown is the result of imbalance. Reason loses control of spirit or appetite. The most damaging kind of imbalance is that of an elite. When reason loses control of the spirit among an elite it provokes destructive conflicts within the elite. When reason loses control to appetite, elite overindulgence arouses envy, resentment and emulation by the rest of the population. Elite imbalance in the direction of the spirit encourages the subversion of institutions for parochial ends and encourages counter-responses, or even preemption, by those who are threatened. Elite imbalance in the direction of the appetite also leads to violation of *nomos*, which is aggravated by a process of elite appeals for support to other actors on the basis of mutual self-aggrandizement. In extreme circumstance, the competition in

<sup>121</sup> Lenin, *State and Revolution*. <sup>122</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 421e4–422a3.

<sup>123</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 195, 239, 244, 253, 266, 271–2, argues that the polarization of wealth between the rich and poor, brought about by the love of luxury and extravagance of the business (*gewerbetreibenden*) classes, encouraged a sense of inward resentment and rebellion against the rich, the society and the government.

“outbidding” not only threatens other members of the elite, it exacerbates relations between the elite and the demos and encourages preemption by threatened actors. External forces enter into the picture when they create or contribute to imbalance by exposure to different societies with different practices and levels of affluence, or by removing the basis, or changing the character, of outwardly directed elite competition for honor and standing.

These forms of imbalance can occur at the individual, domestic, regional and international levels. Their consequences are more or less the same, as are the dynamics that undermine order once we move beyond the individual level. As we shall see, there is also a considerable contamination effect in which imbalance at any level threatens balance at neighboring levels. Balance can also encourage balance at other levels, but has a weaker effect. This is another reason why orders are more likely to unravel than be sustained and strengthened. The Greek understanding of order offers a critical perspective on current practices and the discourse of maximization so central to them. Western theories of economics sanction the pursuit of maximal objectives, and not only in economics. These theories rest on a broader, modern valuation of appetite more generally that looks favorably, even encourages, actors to pursue their satisfaction to the limit. The only self-restraint that is considered worthwhile is tactical. Greek conceptions of balance, by contrast, emphasize deeper reasons for self-restraint as this often makes it possible for others to achieve their goals. Doing so helps sustain the community that is essential to the satisfaction of appetite and spirit alike.

A final, complicating caveat must be entered. If order depends on robust hierarchies, the maintenance of those hierarchies by elites can contribute to disorder when entry into the elite is restrictive and increasingly challenged. It will also have this effect when the distribution of motives in a society has changed, undermining the legitimacy of the principle on which the hierarchy is based. So depending on the circumstances, efforts to defend a hierarchy and its associated values can have differential consequences for order.

### *Fear*

Aristotle defines fear “as a pain or disturbance due to imagining some destructive or painful evil in the future.” It is caused “by whatever we feel has great power of destroying us, or of harming us in ways that tend to cause us great pain.” It is the opposite of confidence and is associated

with danger, which is the approach of something terrible. It is aroused by the expectation, rather than the reality, of such an event and encourages a deliberative response. It is often provoked by another actor's abuse of its power and is threatening to the social order, not just to individuals.<sup>124</sup>

Following Aristotle, I argue that the principal cause of the breakdown of orders is the unrestricted pursuit by actors – individuals, factions or political units – of their parochial goals. Their behavior leads other actors to fear for their ability to satisfy their spirit and/or appetites, and perhaps for their survival. Fearful actors are likely to consider and implement a range of precautions which can run the gamut from bolting their doors at night to acquiring allies and more and better arms. Escalation of this kind is invariably paralleled by shifts in threat assessment. Actors are initially regarded as friends, colleagues or allies and evoke images rich in nuance and detail, which give way to simpler and more superficial stereotypes of adversaries or, worse still, of enemies.<sup>125</sup> This shift, and the corresponding decline in cognitive complexity, undermines any residual trust and encourages worst-case analyses of their motives, behavior and future initiatives. Mutually reinforcing changes in behavior and framing can start gradually but at some point can accelerate and bring about a phase transition. When they do, actors enter into fear-based worlds.

Fear is an emotion, not a fundamental human drive. In this sense it differs from appetite, spirit and reason. It arises from imbalance and the application of human imagination to its likely, or even possible, consequences. Fear triggers a desire for security which can be satisfied in many ways. In interstate relations, it is usually through the direct acquisition of military power (and the economic well-being that makes this power) or its indirect acquisition through alliances. It is also a catalyst, as it is at the domestic level, for institutional arrangements that provide security by limiting the capabilities and independence of actors who might do one harm. Table 2.3 compares fear to appetite, spirit and reason.

My take on fear-based worlds differs from that of most realists in two important respects. I do not attribute fear-dominated worlds to anarchy, but to a breakdown in *nomos* caused by the lack of constraint by elite actors. The logic of anarchy assumes that those who are weak are the most threatened in a fear-based world, and the most likely to balance or

<sup>124</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1382a21–33, 1382b28–35. Konstan, *Emotions of the Ancient Greeks*, pp. 129–55, for a discussion.

<sup>125</sup> Herrmann, *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy*; Tetlock, "Accountability and Complexity of Thought"; Levi and Tetlock, "A Cognitive Analysis of Japan's 1941 Decision for War,"; Levy, "Learning and Foreign Policy."

Table 2.3. *Motives, emotions, goals and means*

Motive or emotion	Goal	Instrument
Appetite	Satiation	Wealth
Spirit	Esteem	Honor/standing
Fear	Security	Power

bandwagon. The breakdown of *nomos* thesis suggests that it is elite actors who set the escalatory process in motion, and are often the ones who feel most threatened. The history of the last two centuries provides numerous examples of this phenomenon at the domestic and international levels. The same kinds of breakdowns occur within states and the systems in which they interact and are the result of the same dynamics. I believe Thucydides intends his account of the slide to civil war and barbarism in Corcyra to be read as a parallel in almost every respect to the process that spread war throughout Hellas. Both outcomes are described by the Greek word *stasis*, translated as civil war, acute conflict or the breakdown of order.

Fear-based worlds differ from their appetite and spirit-based counterparts in important ways. They are highly conflictual, and neither the ends nor the means of conflict are constrained by norms. Actors make security their first concern and attempt to become strong enough to deter or defeat any possible combination of likely adversaries. Arms races, reciprocal escalation, alliances and forward deployments intensify everyone's insecurity, as the security dilemma predicts. Precautions are interpreted as indicative of intentions, which provoke further defensive measures and can lead to acute conflict, and perhaps outright warfare brought about by preemption, loss of control or a decision to support a threatened third party. Thucydides suggests that the Spartan declaration of war on Athens was the result of this process.<sup>126</sup> Such patterns of escalation are well described in the international relations literature.<sup>127</sup>

In traditional spirit-based worlds (those dominated by warrior elites) wars tend to be frequent but limited in their ends and means. In fear-based worlds wars may be less frequent because they tend to be more unrestrained in their ends and means, and hence are often – although not

<sup>126</sup> Thucydides, 1.81–9.

<sup>127</sup> Herz, "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma," *Political Realism and Political Idealism*, p. 24, and "The Security Dilemma in International Relations"; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma."

always – recognized as riskier and more costly. They are also more difficult to prevent by deterrence and alliances, the stock-in-trade realist tools of conflict management. One of the most revealing aspects of Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War is the absolute failure of all alliances and all forms of deterrence intended to prevent war. They almost invariably provoked the behavior they were intended to prevent.<sup>128</sup> General and immediate deterrence failed in fifth-century Greece for the same reasons they often do in modern times: they appeared to confirm worst-case fears of their targets, convincing them of the need to demonstrate more, not less, resolve, in the equally false expectation that it would deter their adversaries from further aggressive initiatives.<sup>129</sup> When target actors are focused on their own problems and needs, and are committed to their own strategic plans as the only means they see of addressing those problems, deterrence is likely to fail. Challengers are highly motivated to deny, distort, explain away or discredit obvious signs of adversarial resolve.<sup>130</sup> Both sets of conditions are less likely in appetite- and spirit-dominated worlds, and for this reason deterrence is least likely to succeed in precisely those circumstances where realists consider it most needed and appropriate.

Fear of a common adversary creates strong incentives for cooperation, but cooperation will only last as long as the threat. Under some conditions, fear encourages bandwagoning – that is, cooperation with the threatening actor, not with those allying against it.<sup>131</sup> Risk-taking is prevalent because security is such an important goal, and loss of security is understood to have catastrophic consequences. As I will discuss in chapter 7, actors find it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between loss and gain because security, as Waltz properly reminds us, is relational in nature.

Hierarchies can exist in fear-based worlds, but do not always do so. In Hobbes's war of all against all there are no hierarchies, only anarchy, although he leaves open the possibility of people going into league with

<sup>128</sup> Lebow, "Thucydides and Deterrence."

<sup>129</sup> Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, chs. 4–6; Lebow and Stein, "Deterrence: The Elusive Dependent Variable," "Rational Deterrence Theory," and *We All Lost the Cold War*, chs. 3, 12; Hopf, *Peripheral Visions*; Chang, *Friends and Enemies*; Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*.

<sup>130</sup> Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, chs. 4–6; Jervis *et al.*, *Psychology and Deterrence*, chs. 3 and 5; Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, ch. 3.

<sup>131</sup> On balancing and bandwagoning, see Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," and "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation"; Christiansen and Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks"; Kaufman, "To Balance or Bandwagon?"; Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit."

others to protect themselves or take what they want from third parties.<sup>132</sup> Modern-day realists describe anarchy as the opposite of order, but nevertheless recognize the possibility of hierarchies. Under bipolarity, for example, many lesser powers attach themselves to one or the other of the hegemonic alliance systems in the expectation of protection or other benefits. Such a hierarchy can function along the lines of a traditional spirit-based hierarchy, as did the Spartan alliance or, arguably, NATO. Alternatively, it can be another fear-based order, as was the Athenian alliance or the Warsaw Pact.

Fear-driven worlds are the opposite of honor and interest worlds in the sense that they are like lobster traps: easy to enter and difficult to leave. Once fear is aroused it is hard to assuage. Worst-case analysis, endemic to fear-based worlds, encourages actors to see threat in even the most benign and well-meaning gestures. It creates a snowball effect, making fears of such worlds self-fulfilling. Actors who contemplate steps toward trust and accommodation rightfully worry that others will misunderstand their intent or exploit their concessions. Pure fear-based worlds are few and far between, but most political units for most of their history have had to worry to some degree about their security. For this reason, realists see fear-driven worlds as the default, and the state to which human societies inevitably return. History gives ample cause for pessimism, but also for optimism. If Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War reveals how lack of self-restraint and the fear it arouses can quickly lead actors into destructive realist worlds, his "Archeology" shows that escape is possible, as civilization arose from barbarism.<sup>133</sup> Recent history provides no shortage of examples of both processes. Competition for colonies in the late nineteenth century, sought primarily for reasons of standing, got out of hand, led to increasingly unrestrained competition in the Balkans, and helped to push the European powers into World War I.<sup>134</sup> Beggar-thy-neighbor policies during the Great Depression reveal how quickly a partially liberal trading world can be destroyed.<sup>135</sup> Europe's phenomenal economic and political recovery after World War II, based in large part on the consolidation of democracy in Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece, has transformed that continent in ways that would have been dismissed

<sup>132</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13, para 8, and ch. 17, para. 13.

<sup>133</sup> Thucydides, 1.2–13. Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, ch. 3.

<sup>134</sup> The most forceful exponent of this thesis is Schroeder, "World War I as Galloping Gertie," and "Necessary Conditions and World War I as an Unavoidable War." For a rejoinder, Lebow, "Contingency, Catalysts and International System Change."

<sup>135</sup> Kindleberger, *The World in Depression*.

out of hand as idle dreams if offered as a prediction as late as the early 1950s.

### Mixed worlds

Greek descriptions of constitutions could be abstract and idealized, or more specific when describing a particular city. Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle understood that real polities were more complex and often combined elements of more than one type of regime. Aristotle offers his typology of constitutions as ideal types, and the constitution he favors is a mixed world. He regards a polity as the second-best constitution, but the best among attainable worlds.

The concept of an ideal type is implicit in Plato's forms as well as Aristotle's constitutions, but was only developed by Max Weber at the beginning of the twentieth century. Weber had two somewhat different understandings of ideal types. He devised the concept initially to replace intuition as a means of understanding the behavior of societies with different values and world views. Ideal types of this kind have no external validity because they do not correspond to any historical reality. He offered his typology of authority as an example.<sup>136</sup> He later reconceptualized ideal types to give them a more empirical connection to the societies he studied. He described them as an analytical accentuation of aspects of one or more attributes of a phenomenon to create a mental construct that will never be encountered in practice, but against which real-world approximations can be measured. Such ideal types were not intended as a basis for comparison, but a schema for understanding a specific culture or situation.<sup>137</sup>

All four of our worlds qualify as ideal types according to Weber's first definition. Worlds of spirit, appetite, reason and fear are analytical constructs, useful to understand the behavior of societies, but without direct correspondence in reality. This is most evident in the case of reason-informed worlds, which have remained a remote ideal ever since they were conceived by Socrates or Plato. In such a world, appetite and spirit

<sup>136</sup> Turner, "Introduction" to *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*. Underlying the concept of ideal types is the assumption, made explicit by Weber, that people in different cultures and historical epochs have different world views (*Weltanschauungen*). These world views are based on value choices that require no additional justification. In Turner's informed reading of Weber, world views determine what it is we seek to explain, and what "facts" we consider relevant.

<sup>137</sup> Weber, "Objectivity" in *Social Science and Social Policy*, pp. 90–5.

have been constrained and shaped to desire only what produces true happiness and behavior that accords with justice.

Worlds of spirit, appetite and fear, but probably not reason, also fit Weber's later understanding of ideal types. They are abstractions of societies that exist, or have existed. All these worlds require some degree of reason, but it is instrumental reason. If actors constrain their appetite or spirit, it is for the same reason that Odysseus did when he discovered his house full of suitors importuning his wife Penelope: he understood that by suppressing his rage now he would increase his chances of subsequent revenge. Reason as an end in itself operates at another level of abstraction. It constrains spirit and appetite, but in order to reshape and redirect them to enable a happier, ordered and more just life. All relatively stable systems depend on this process, but in practice, reason's control over appetite and spirit never progresses to the point of bringing about anything close to a reason-driven world. I will accordingly limit myself to three ideal-type worlds, and keep a reason-informed world in the background as a kind of ideal or Platonic form.

Realists do not think of their paradigm as an ideal type, but as a description of the real world of international relations. The validity of this claim depends very much on the formulation in question. Strong claims, like Waltz's assertion that "In international politics force serves, not only as the *ultimo ratio*, but indeed as the first and constant one," describe few, if any, actual worlds, and can only be considered ideal types.<sup>138</sup> Weaker claims bear a closer relationship to reality. Robert Gilpin contends that anarchy and the primacy of the state do not imply a world of constant warfare, only the recognition that "there is no higher authority to which a state can appeal for succor in times of trouble."<sup>139</sup> By relaxing their assumptions, realist, liberal or Marxist theories can make a better fit between their claims and real worlds. In doing so, they must give up making determinant claims and acknowledge that there is more going on in the world than can be described by their respective theories.

Some theorists avoid this tradeoff and insist on the primacy of their paradigm. Through selective attention or interpretation, they stretch their theory's reach into domains where competing theories have staked out claims. A well-known article by Stephen Krasner purports to demonstrate the relevance of realism to international political economy by showing that trade negotiations are characterized by intense struggles over the shape and terms of agreements in which relative power is the most important

<sup>138</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 113.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

predictor of outcome.<sup>140</sup> His findings are not incorrect but only take on meaning in context, and that context indicates just how constrained the exercise of power was in the negotiations he studied. Force, or threats of force, were not considered – and would have shocked participants if they had been made – nor were threats of economic boycotts mooted. Power was exercised in more subtle ways, in accord with the norms that developed to govern trade negotiations among actors who recognize the mutual benefits of cooperation. What Krasner's findings demonstrate is that so-called realist and liberal worlds are both mixed. Power struggles are everyday occurrences among states who are members of what Karl Deutsch called "pluralistic security communities," just as certain kinds of restraint are common in warfare in all but the most hostile realist environments.<sup>141</sup>

Weber was adamant about the need to distinguish ideal types from real worlds. The former give us a clear picture of what a "pure" world of its kind would be like, and a benchmark for measuring how closely it is approached by real worlds. By determining which features of real worlds conform most closely to one or more ideal-type worlds we get a better sense of what kind of worlds they are. By tracking changes over time we can get an inkling of where such worlds are heading. If we could chart the courses of multiple worlds over time, we could search for patterns that might tell us more about the paths – past and future – of worlds that interest us. Such a project would lay the groundwork for a common research agenda for scholars working within different paradigms. It would focus attention on the ways in which elements of their respective paradigms combine to shape the character and politics of a unit or system. Examining the tensions generated by mixed states, and mixed states within mixed systems, would also be helpful in understanding short-term change by identifying the fault lines along which it is most likely to occur.

In this volume, I take only an initial step toward this ambitious goal. I examine the ways in which all three motives found expression in the societies I analyze from ancient to modern times. All three motives are present in every society, although the relative stress put on them by societies and actors within those societies varies considerably. As noted earlier, motives are sometimes very difficult to separate out analytically, and all the more so in the modern world where material possessions have become a marker of standing. Another complicating factor – again most apparent in the

<sup>140</sup> Krasner, "Global Communications and National Power".

<sup>141</sup> Deutsch *et al.*, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, pp. 6–7.

modern period – is the tendency of actors to respond to one motive but explain and justify their behavior with respect to another. Governmental officials routinely invoke security to justify policies motivated by spirit or interest because they believe it is easier to sell them to the public. As the spirit all but dropped out of the political and philosophical lexicon during the Enlightenment, although honor and “national honor” did not, behavior motivated by the spirit is the least likely to be acknowledged by contemporary actors. Despite these problems it is often possible to make judgments about the actors’ motives and how they are reflected in their foreign policies, and in due course I will discuss the methods appropriate to such an enterprise. My supposition, validated by my case studies, is that multiple motives interact as mixtures, not solutions. They do not blend, but coexist, and often in ways that makes the behavior of actors appear contradictory. As no simple explanation will reconcile such behavior, it offers *prima facie* support for the inference that mixed motives are at work.

### **Change and transformation**

Marxism aside, most theories of international relations attempt to explain stability, and do so by invoking allegedly enduring structures. They do not address change, or if they do, they frame it such a way that its causes lie outside the theory. Plato and Aristotle explicitly, and Thucydides implicitly, use the traditional Greek three-fold division of the psyche to develop proto-theories of change that bridge levels of analysis. Their core insight is that balance or imbalance at any level of analysis – but especially imbalance – are likely to produce similar changes at adjacent levels of analysis. Greater balance across individual, domestic and regional levels will produce or sustain order at these levels of interaction, and imbalance will do the reverse. A theory of change should also say something about its direction. It can be aimless and unpredictable (like Brownian motion), cyclical (as most Greeks and realists contend) or toward some end (as liberals and Marxists maintain). It is useful here to review these several positions, before presenting my own.

Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle understand the rise and fall of social orders as a cyclical process. They are deeply pessimistic about the ability of human beings to construct orders that incorporate principles of justice and doubtful about the longevity of such orders. Thucydides, like Protagoras, nevertheless recognizes that there has been progress from subsistence-level barbarism to the wealth and civilization of the

polis.<sup>142</sup> In his *Symposium*, Plato acknowledges that law-givers and philosophers aspire to create something enduring but insists that only philosophers have any chance of success. All constitutions, even the best ones, are destined to decay.<sup>143</sup> In the *Republic*, he acknowledges that this would also happen to his Kallipolis.<sup>144</sup> Aristotle considers the life cycle of a constitution no different in principle from that of living things. He laments that “time is by its nature the cause . . . of decay, since it is the number of change, and change removes what is.”<sup>145</sup>

Modern realists have drawn on these understandings, especially that of Thucydides, to construct their own theories, all of which see order as precarious and fear-based worlds as the default. They conceive of the history of international relations in cyclical terms, as Thucydides certainly did – a series of accommodations to fear-based worlds or doomed attempts to escape from them. Liberals and Marxists posit an end to history; for liberals it is a world of democratic, trading states, and for Marxists, a world of communism, in which classes seek to exist and the state withers away. “End” should be understood in a double sense here: as telos, it is the expression of something’s latent potential, and the goal toward which history propels societies. Neither Marxism nor the many variants of liberalism acknowledge the possibility of further evolution. Wendtian liberalism, which posits the inevitable triumph of a Kantian world in the context of a world state, is another representative of this genre.<sup>146</sup>

In contrast to these telos-driven theories, I conceptualize the problem of change at multiple, but interrelated levels. Each level involves different time scales and kinds of change. The overall scheme incorporates concepts of both cycle and evolution. As with biological evolution, there is no linear path, as evolutionary principles of adaptation have the potential to produce considerable diversity even after natural selection has had its effect.<sup>147</sup> Nor is there any preordained goal toward which evolution strives.

### *Level 1*

The most superficial level of change is the one described by realists: a pattern of repeated attempts, temporary successes but ultimate failures to escape permanently from fear-based worlds. They are the default state

<sup>142</sup> Hegel and Weber also conceive of history as cyclical and repetitive, but composed of non-repetitive acts, and incorporating the idea of progress.

<sup>143</sup> Plato, *Symposium*, 206c–207c. <sup>144</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 546d5–547a5.

<sup>145</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 222b. <sup>146</sup> Wendt, “Why a World State Is Inevitable.”

<sup>147</sup> Kehoe, *Humans*, p. 107, on the non-linearity of human development.

because, for reasons already noted, they are easy to enter and difficult to leave.<sup>148</sup>

Political units and the systems in which they interact experience periods of relative order, followed by a decline, even a breakdown or collapse, which prompts efforts at reconstruction.<sup>149</sup> These orders can be unitary or pluralist, hierarchical or coalition-based, limited to a narrow elite or encompassing a broader circle of actors, and based on any one or a combination of the hierarchies I have described. They must nevertheless incorporate some widely accepted principle of justice if they have any hope of longevity. Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli and Max Weber all observe that tyranny is the shortest-lived of all political regimes because it is the only order not founded on some principle of justice.<sup>150</sup>

There are important causal links between order at the individual and system levels; both are sustained by balance and undermined by imbalance, defined in terms of reason's success in constraining – and, at least in part, in educating – the spirit and appetite. Changes in the internal balance of actors – especially powerful actors – are likely to have profound effects on balance and imbalance at the system level. Powerful actors are not immune to changes in balance at the system level. It is possible, although difficult, for well-ordered units to survive, at least for a while, in a system that has become increasingly disorderly. The reverse is more difficult. System order depends on the internal order of key units. If those actors are powerful enough, they can impose order, or create strong incentives for certain kinds of order, as did the concert of powers after the Congress of Vienna, and the United States in Western Europe after World War II. If powerful units succumb to imbalance – Periclean Athens, the France of Louis XIV, Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany, and the United States under George W. Bush are cases in point – it is very difficult for less powerful units to sustain order at the international level.

The responsible mechanisms at this most superficial level of change are not the ones posited by contemporary realists. To the extent that realist theories address change and order, it is through the balance of

<sup>148</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 255, makes the mistake of thinking they are the easiest worlds to escape from because their culture matters so little. This is, of course, what makes them so hard to leave.

<sup>149</sup> Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, defines classical realism in reference to its efforts to reconstruct order after catastrophic wars by attempting to combine the best of the old with the most promising of the new.

<sup>150</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 571c8–9 and 579d9–10; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1315b11, who considers oligarchy a short-lived constitution for the same reason. Weber, *The Profession and Vocation of Politics*, p. 311.

power. Power transition theories differ in their specific predictions, but they all assume that changes, or impending changes, in the balance of power between hegemon and challengers have the potential, if not the near certainty, of triggering war. Hegemonic war, whether initiated by a declining hegemon or rising challenger, can change the character of the system by altering its polarity. For some power transition theorists and neorealists, miscalculations of the balance are important catalysts of war, because if both sides could calculate the balance properly they would adjust their relationship accordingly.<sup>151</sup>

I invoke miscalculation, but in the deeper, almost structural sense it is understood by Greek tragedy. Tragedy treats miscalculation of the military balance as merely one example of the more general inability of human beings to understand and control their environment. The tragic poets and Thucydides understood that we live in an open-ended and reflexive world whose interconnections are beyond the ken of any actor, and especially those whose judgments are influenced by their political and psychological needs.<sup>152</sup> Human behavior not infrequently leads to outcomes that are tragic in the sense of producing consequences that are the reverse of those intended.<sup>153</sup> This is most likely to happen to actors who are powerful and have been successful in past ventures. Tragic heroes are self-centered, hubristic figures who revel in their own importance and come to believe they are no longer bound by the laws and conventions of man. Reason has lost control over their spirit or appetites. Tragic poets explore this pathology through a standard plot line: success intoxicates heroes and leads them to inflated opinions of themselves and their ability to control man and nature alike. They trust in hope and become susceptible to adventures where reason would dictate caution and restraint. The Greeks used the word *atē* to describe the aporia this kind of seduction induces, and the *hamartia* (miscalculation) it encourages.<sup>154</sup> *Hamartia* ultimately leads to catastrophe by provoking the wrath of the gods (*nemesis*). The

<sup>151</sup> Organski, *World Politics*; Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger*; Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Doran and Parsons, "War and the Cycle of Relative Power," on power transition. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 168–70; Jervis, "War and Misperception," and Mesquita, *The War Trap*, on miscalculation and war.

<sup>152</sup> Thucydides, book 1, offers several examples of miscalculation of actors' intentions or of the military balance of Corinth, Corcyra, Athens and Sparta for these reasons.

<sup>153</sup> Frost, "Tragedy, Ethics and International Relations"; Mayall, "Tragedy, Progress and the International Order"; Rengger, "Tragedy or Skepticism?"; Lebow, "Tragedy, Politics and Political Science."

<sup>154</sup> English translators of Aeschylus often render *atē* as delusion, but it also suggests a more onerous connotation suggestive of the potential for self-destruction. Dawe, "Some

*Persians* of Aeschylus, produced in the spring of 472 BCE, at the height of Themistocles' power, is an early example of this genre and is seemingly intended as a cautionary tale about the consequences of hubris. Herodotus and Thucydides apply the pattern to Persia and Athens to explain their imperial overstretch and the *nemesis* to which it leads at Salamis and Sicily respectively.<sup>155</sup>

The phenomenon of hubris is universal and common to individuals, organizations and political units. It brings us back to motives and their importance. Hubris and miscalculations of the balance of power are not innocent cognitive errors as most realist theories assume but more often the result of motivated bias. As Diodotus argues in the Mytilenian Debate, people greedy for honor (which requires autonomy) or wealth are attracted to risky ventures and convince themselves that they will succeed even in the face of contradictory evidence.<sup>156</sup> Janice Stein and I have shown how motivated bias lay behind many of the most important twentieth-century deterrence failures. In most of our cases the challenger was motivated by need arising from a combination of strategic and domestic political problems or pressures. However, the results were the same as Diodotus' description of people driven by seeming opportunity: hubris that led actors to embrace complex, risky and unrealistic schemes and to deny, distort, explain away or ignore information indicating that they were unlikely to succeed.<sup>157</sup>

### *Level 2*

At this level, change is directional and long-term, and consists of movement to and away from different ideal-type worlds. Making allowance for considerable variation, human history begins with societies that are appetite-driven and subsequently transition to worlds of the spirit, and later back to appetite. The first iteration of appetite revolves around hunger, as hunter-gatherers and early agricultural settlements are consumed with the problem of subsistence. The second iteration of appetite dominance takes place in more affluent societies, where it is possible, at

Reflections on *ate* and *hamartia*"; Doyle, "The Objective Character of *Atē* in Aeschylean Tragedy."

<sup>155</sup> Lebow, *Tragic Vision of Politics*, ch. 4 for an analysis and comparison.

<sup>156</sup> Thucydides, 3.41–8; Lebow, "Thucydides and Deterrence."

<sup>157</sup> Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, chs. 4–6; Lebow and Stein, "Deterrence: The Elusive Dependent Variable," "Rational Deterrence Theory," and *We All Lost the Cold War*, chs. 2–7.

least for the elite, to indulge more varied appetites, and more sophisticated variants of basic appetites. This transformation, and the in-between transition to a spirit-based world, reflects increasing complexity in the division of labor. Smith, Marx and Durkheim offer theories of historical development to which this increasing complexity is central and responsible for the progression of society from subsistence, through agricultural to commercial or industrial societies.<sup>158</sup>

Early social orders are egalitarian, as Smith noted, because everyone is poor.<sup>159</sup> Anthropologists have observed that many subsistence societies are organized around their food needs and this is reflected in their relatively simple division of labor and assignation of status.<sup>160</sup> Some of these units prosper and accumulate enough surplus to sustain a more complex social order, and with it statuses emerge that are unrelated to an actor's role in acquiring, producing, processing or distributing the means of sustenance. Often higher status requires distance from such primary activities, as it did for aristocracies in Europe, Meso-America, China and Japan. The spirit is given more leeway for expression, and is not infrequently directed by society into the display of bravery and military skill in combat with external foes. Such a need was pronounced in many pre-literate societies, as warfare was endemic and the cost of defeat often catastrophic.<sup>161</sup> The increasing frequency of warfare is itself a function of the success of small societies in rising above subsistence levels. Surplus allows population growth, greater propinquity of settlements and greater competition for territory and other scarce resources. As external competition becomes more acute, or its material benefits more obvious, warriors increase their standing and authority in the society. Some of these societies become warrior societies and expand at the expense of their neighbors.<sup>162</sup>

<sup>158</sup> Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, I.i, on the division of labor, and *Wealth of Nations*, I.iv and *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, "Report of 1762–63," on the ages of man. According to the student who took notes on Smith's lectures, he divided history into hunting-gathering, shepherding, agricultural, and commercial societies; Kant, "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History," pp. 221–34; Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, pp. 400–1 for his distinction between traditional and modern societies. On Smith, see Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*.

<sup>159</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.iv; Ross, "An Overview of Trends in Dietary Variation from Hunter-Gatherer to Modern Capitalist Societies"; Cohen, "The Significance of Long-Term Changes in Human Diets and Food Economy."

<sup>160</sup> Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society*; Flannery, *The Early Mesoamerican Village*.

<sup>161</sup> Keeley, *War before Civilization*, for compelling evidence from Europe and North America.

<sup>162</sup> Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, pp. 23–2, argues that the imperialism of early empires is an irrational policy judged from the interests of the political unit, but not for

Not every successful social order is a warrior society, but those that are have definitive advantages at this stage of historical development. The Mongols offer a particularly striking example. A nomadic, illiterate people, they nevertheless conquered highly developed, wealthy societies with much larger populations. Societies that use high levels of agricultural surplus to support warriors, equip them with the best weapons the technology of the day has to offer and display a gift for organization, expand their domains, which provide the resources for further expansion. This is how great empires like those of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Athens and Rome came into being.<sup>163</sup> The swords of empires are nevertheless double-edged. Territorial overextension and overexpenditure on military forces can make empires vulnerable and hasten their demise.

Successful empires do more than expand their territorial reach. They foster internal peace and the conditions for economic development. Development gives rise to new classes, including wealthy farmers, who control large tracts of land; producers or finishers of goods, like potters and tanners; and merchants who sell produce and manufactures at home and abroad. When permitted, members of the new classes adopt the language, dress and values of the dominant elite, and seek acceptance by it, and entry into higher political and social circles. Failure to incorporate at least some members of the commercial or professional classes impedes unity and ultimately weakens the political unit vis-à-vis more progressive competitors. It also makes it difficult to sustain the elite. Sparta's aristocracy underwent a demographic decline that drastically reduced the size of the army it could field. The political and social exclusion of groups, whose position is based on wealth, but increasingly also on public service, encourages them to assert themselves and their class values. Their affluence and visibility, even when they are not integrated into the dominant elite, is usually enough to set in motion the transition from spirit to interest-based worlds. Such a process takes place in roughly the same way in preindustrial and industrial worlds. It is not surprising, therefore, that

the warrior classes, whose vocation and claim to power rested on conquest. This is a one-sided account because empires only arise and prosper because of their warrior classes. At a certain point in their history, warrior classes may push them to expand beyond what their capabilities for conquest or administration permit, leading to disaster. More recently, Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation*, argues that empires expand when they improve their ability to extract resources and mobilize armies at reasonable cost, both of which depend on effective centralized bureaucracies. Cooley, *Logics of Hierarchy*, maintains that empires give evidence of both centralized and decentralized bureaucracies, which have different implications for expansion and integration.

<sup>163</sup> Pagden, *Lords of All the World*; Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*.

political, social and intellectual developments in fifth-century Greece and eighteenth-century Europe reveal striking parallels.<sup>164</sup>

Transformations from appetite to spirit to interest-based worlds are progressive but not linear. They are not infrequently interrupted by breakdowns in order, and the decay, even disappearance, of key political units, as well as retrogression toward fear-based worlds. These breakdowns can and do occur at any stage of historical development. They may be repeated more than once in a unit or system before it transitions to the next stage of development. All of these transitions occur first in units, and can transform the system when enough units change and pressure mounts on other units to do so as well. For reasons I will also make clear in the course of my case studies, environmental pressures of this kind generally have opposing effects: they encourage change in some units but also strenuous opposition on the part of some others to the new order. These latter units may attempt to halt or slow change through aggressive foreign policies, as Germany arguably did in 1914. Not all units make all of the transformations I have described at the same time, as some are almost certain to lag far behind. Such a delay is more likely to work against than for transformation, because such units or regions will become increasingly disadvantaged and socially and politically threatened by the ongoing transformation. Their orders will become less stable, their leaders more insecure and their intellectuals more hostile to other cultures by virtue of their own low self-esteem. Much of the contemporary Middle East gives evidence of this phenomenon.

Ancient Greece had multiple breakdowns of order at the unit and system level. The Peloponnesian War, as portrayed by Thucydides, was the result of imbalance in small powers like Corcyra, middle powers like Corinth, and between the two most powerful units in the regional Greek political system, Athens and Sparta. Their imbalance became more acute as the war progressed, which spread the conflict to previously uninvolved third parties, and destroyed order throughout most of the Greek world. At a deeper level, breakdown of order at the unit and regional level was due to social, intellectual and economic changes in Greece. In *Tragic Vision of Politics*, I argue that fifth-century Greece underwent a process of modernization that began to transform Athens from a spirit-based to an interest-based society. This transformation was a fundamental cause of imbalance within Athens, and between the Athenian and Spartan alliance systems.

<sup>164</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.iv, and *Lectures on Jurisprudence* offer a similar four-stage model of historical development.

Similar changes took place in early modern and modern Europe and in Japan, where they also helped to bring about imbalance, breakdown of order and destructive wars. It is not accidental, I will argue, that the Peloponnesian War and World Wars I and II occurred when those transitions were only partially completed. Transitions are danger periods because they led to reason's loss of control over the spirit without offsetting this by more effective control over the appetite. Modern transition from spirit- to appetite-based societies in Europe were accompanied by three devastating wars (the Napoleonic Wars and World Wars I and II). A seemingly stable regional order has emerged, but a stable global order is nowhere in sight.

### *Level 3*

A still deeper level of change involves both a transformation in the ordering principles of the system (e.g. from appetite to spirit), and an evolution in the ways these drives find expression. The present age may herald the tentative beginnings of such a transformation, a theme I develop in chapter 9. The kind of double transformation I envisage at level 3 does not preclude further transformations in the character of the system or in its ordering principles. There is no visible end to human history, unless we destroy ourselves as a species.

Appetites are unchanging but not their expression. As Aristotle understands, appetites are often learned; we come to enjoy things that at first appeared unpleasant to us.<sup>165</sup> Food provides the most obvious example. Many hunter-gather societies have monotonous diets and their meals are simply prepared and without much in the way of garnishes. With the emergence of a division of labor a more varied and sophisticated diet becomes possible, at least for the elite. It includes high price-tag items in short supply – eels and imported wines for classical Athenians – which are consumed and served to others as both a matter of taste and a demonstration of or claim to status.<sup>166</sup> Imperial cuisines may subsequently develop, which are even more complex and labor-intensive. Then comes a shift from gourmand to gourmet, from stuffing one's belly to filling it well, and with food presented in a way that pleases. There is also a shift (college students excepted) from consuming as much alcohol as possible to

<sup>165</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1369b16–19.

<sup>166</sup> Appalled by this display, Plato, *Republic*, 373a–b distinguishes between necessary and unnecessary appetites.

drinking high-quality spirits, wine or micro-brews in moderation. Staple foods of earlier times that provided sustenance and protein to the masses (e.g. polenta, herring) are shunned, but may reenter the diet later in sophisticated variants or as complements to what are understood to be elegant and refined dishes (as polenta is now served with *funghi porcini*, or seaweed as a wrapper for sushi). Paralleling this development may come a change in body image: large and fat—an indicator of successful childbirth—is replaced by svelte as desirable and sexually attractive, along with a taste for clothes that show off such figures. These developments indicate how change in one appetite can serve as a catalyst for changes in others, and vice versa.

The spirit undergoes an even more dramatic transformation. Most spirit-based worlds are warrior societies in their earliest iterations. Status is achieved through military prowess or related activities like winning athletic competitions. High status is often restricted to an aristocratic elite, making ascribed status a precondition of achieved status. As spirit-based societies evolve, or return in subsequent iterations, more pathways for winning honor open up, and more members of societies are allowed to compete for honor. In classical Athens, skill in rhetoric and poetry became additional routes to honor. In the course of the last two centuries, numerous other routes to honor have emerged at the national and local levels. Hierarchies have proliferated, allowing individuals to win honor in increasingly diverse and multiple ways. I hypothesize that advanced honor societies are no longer warrior societies, as other means of competition replace war and are seen as less disruptive to order and other social goals. Efforts to substitute sports competitions for wars and surrogate competition through scientific and cultural accomplishments are all steps in this direction.

As equality became the dominant principle of justice in the modern world, all of these hierarchies became increasingly open to entry from people from any class of the society. In theory, it should be possible, at least in the Western world, for any individual with commitment and some skills to find a route to winning honor. As the Special Olympics and Paralympics indicate, we have even designed areas for competition for the handicapped to win honor and enhance their self-esteem. We are witnessing a similar development in international relations where recognition as a great power was once closed to non-Caucasian political units and where non-whites and professionals were frequently excluded from international sports competitions. It would have been unthinkable a century ago for any kind of international congress or organization to be chaired by anyone

not representing a great power. Recent secretaries-general of the United Nations have come from less powerful, non-Caucasian countries (e.g. Ban Ki-moon, Kofi Annan).

Change at all three levels has profound implications for the principles of order and their associated hierarchies. Hierarchies emerge with the division of labor that transforms subsistence-level, appetite-based societies into spirit-based worlds. These hierarchies are generally hereditary, allow little mobility and divide actors into a small elite who are able to compete for honor and standing and a large majority who are not. Those at the top feel superior and have their status confirmed by high office and the deference and subordination of those at the bottom. They in turn are expected to assume responsibilities toward those who honor them. They justify themselves with reference to the principle of fairness. In such societies there is usually a single hierarchy, although tensions within it emerge when high status and high performance do not coincide, or when the elite fail to exercise the self-restraint and responsibilities associated with office. Appetite-driven worlds often inherit hierarchies of this kind, and its actors struggle to free themselves from the vertical pattern of relations and to replace it with a horizontal pattern based on the principle of ontological equality. Such a process was evident in early modern Europe and accelerated during the Enlightenment where the concepts of the state of nature and contracts were mobilized to justify orders based on the original equality of actors.

Mature appetite-based worlds – those with a more advanced division of labor and fewer restraints on individual actors – reflect more fully the principle of equality. For Adam Smith, the truly liberating feature of commercial society was its ability to end hierarchies based on personal dependency that justified the domination of one man by another. To the extent that everyone became a merchant or free laborer, rather than a lord, retainer, serf or peasant, horizontal ties would proliferate, freeing people of direct, personal, even inherited, forms of dependency.<sup>167</sup> Hierarchies also develop in such worlds and they are based on wealth and its display. Display is central because, as Smith observes, people generally seek wealth not for the material advantages it confers but for the status it brings.<sup>168</sup> The hierarchies that result are informal in the sense that they are not institutionally defined, are not associated with office and do not entitle actors to particular privileges. Nor do they carry associated rule packages, allowing, if unconstrained by law and custom, the practice of

<sup>167</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, I.iii.3.5–6.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., I.iii.2.1 and 3.1.

an undiluted selfishness which is far more difficult to indulge in traditional hierarchies.<sup>169</sup> Tensions arise when practice betrays principle, as it does when some actors, or group of actors, are excluded from using their physical and mental resources to better themselves, or unfair obstacles are put in their way, or when actors who are rich and powerful use their influence in public institutions to lock in their advantages and pass them on to their descendants.

Levels 2 and 3 of historical change involve a multiplication and blurring of hierarchies. New and more sophisticated appetites develop, new domains open up or are recognized as arenas where actors can compete for honor and standing, hierarchies become less exclusive, and the expressions of appetite and spirit become increasingly intertwined and difficult to distinguish from one another. This diversity, as Simmel suggests, allows us to gravitate towards realms of activity in which we can excel.<sup>170</sup> Societies may ultimately develop in which the best (or worst) principles of fairness and equality combine to produce new forms of hierarchy that support more freedom, opportunity, affluence and self-esteem (or tyranny, poverty, oppression and constraint). The contemporary world is not short of examples of societies that have moved, however imperfectly, in both directions.

When we examine the international system in light of the historical development of domestic societies the difference is striking. Its evolution has been minimal, and only partially reflects changes evident in so many of its units. Honor has largely diverged from standing and the latter is still achieved primarily on the basis of military might, although economic power has become increasingly important in its own right. The international system remains a single hierarchy, with the great powers, or a single superpower, at the apex. Regional systems, some of them based on different principles, have nevertheless developed. The international system underwent its last transformation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the emergence of the post-Westphalian order.<sup>171</sup> This international hierarchy and its associated principle of order constitute something of an atavism in today's world, and one, for this reason, that is unlikely to endure. The state became the principal actor and

<sup>169</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.4.6, p. 662, on "individualism" and its consequences.

<sup>170</sup> Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, 468–70.

<sup>171</sup> This evolution and its causes are a highly contentious issue. For some of the relevant literature, see Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*; Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*; Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan*; Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*.

the concept of political friendship was mobilized to free units from hierarchies and their dependent relationships – at least in theory – and create equality among them.<sup>172</sup> Today, practices based on equality (e.g. one state, one vote in many international fora) are widespread and often in sharp conflict with the hierarchy that places great powers at its apex. In effect, two principles of order are in conflict, and many different outcomes are possible. I return to this question in chapters 9 and 10 where I use evidence from my historical cases to assess the prospects for a transformation of the international system.

### *The future*

In units and systems in which wealth has become paramount, the spirit can give the appearance of being in sharp decline. The spirit is ever-present as a motive, and, as Rousseau and Smith suggest, can find expression in material acquisition and its display. Affluence can become a new means of achieving standing, replacing, or at least supplanting, other criteria like high birth, military prowess, education and public service. To some degree this has happened in the West, and most markedly in the United States, which, as Tocqueville observed, was at the cutting edge of modernity because it possessed ample land for settlement and lacked an aristocracy and traditions to forestall, slow down or mask the pace of change.<sup>173</sup> More traditional expressions of the spirit nevertheless endure. Adam Smith lamented that the most obvious manifestation of “public spirit” in eighteenth-century Europe was reveling in the “glory” of victories in foreign wars.<sup>174</sup> In today’s United States, this remains the case; yellow ribbons adorn numerous cars and so do bumper stickers that proudly proclaim “These Colors Don’t Run.”

To the extent that wealth, and the material possessions and leisure it permits, become increasingly widespread, they can no longer serve as effectively as a source of standing. High-status items and pursuits are increasingly purchased or imitated by “lesser folk.” In Europe, this process was facilitated by urbanization, which produced concentrated markets and more fluid conceptions of self. The middle classes and the poor spent an increasingly large percentage of their disposable income on

<sup>172</sup> Roshchin, “The Concept of Friendship.”

<sup>173</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I, pp. 3–19.

<sup>174</sup> Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, VI.ii.2, pp. 340–1.

luxury items.<sup>175</sup> They were particularly interested in what Sidney Mintz calls “drug foods,” which include sugar, tobacco, coffee, tea and cocoa. These were exotic luxuries in the sixteenth century but household items by the end of the nineteenth.<sup>176</sup> Romans, Europeans, Chinese and Japanese introduced sumptuary laws to prevent the spread of distinguishing markers of clothing and consumer goods to the lower orders. Ming China attempted to regulate dress and tableware but their laws seem to have had little effect. As we shall see in chapter 6, Louis XIV was also frustrated in his attempt to regulate clothing, and similar efforts in seventeenth-century Italy, Spain, England, and even in increasingly bourgeois Holland, were no more successful.<sup>177</sup> New ways had to be found to distinguish between old and new wealth, or wealth and mega-wealth, a problem Veblen described nicely in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>178</sup> The barriers erected between old and new wealth in nineteenth-century Europe and America ultimately fell under the assault of democracy. Even clothing, once the most visible class marker in China and Europe, became increasingly uniform and even misleading.<sup>179</sup> In Latin America and the developing world, jeans have become a leveler, not only of classes, but of nationality. In Costa Rica, wide access to jeans, and foreign clothing more generally, helps to sustain the fiction of a classless society.<sup>180</sup>

There is still a sharp pyramid in material well-being in almost all developed societies, and between them and the lesser-developed world. For some decades, the gap between rich and poor nations has been increasing; roughly 85 percent of the world’s income now goes to the richest 20 percent of the population, while only 6 percent goes to the poorest 60 percent. For the time being, wealth remains a sharp delineator of status in much of the world. Barring environmental catastrophe – at which point, all bets are off – the current trend conceals a broader historical one towards a significant across-the-board regional, if not global, improvement in material well-being. Absolute wealth is increasing, even if relative differences have become more pronounced and might ultimately lead, as Smith predicted, to “universal opulence.”<sup>181</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism*, p. 95; Medick, “Plebian Culture in the Transition to Capitalism”; Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, pp. 114–15, 135.

<sup>176</sup> Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, p. 108; Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, pp. 114–15.

<sup>177</sup> Clunas, *Superfluous Things*, pp. 8–39, 151; Yamamura, *A Study of Samurai Income and Entrepreneurship*, pp. 41–7; Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, p. 131.

<sup>178</sup> Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*.

<sup>179</sup> Bann, *China’s Golden Age*, pp. 100–13; Pomeranz, *Great Divergence*, p. 131.

<sup>180</sup> Biesanz et al., *The Ticos*, p. 101. <sup>181</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I.i.

If absolute wealth continues to increase, I expect two related developments. The first, I have already noted, is the increasing difficulty of using wealth and lavish display as sources of standing. Producers, advertisers and some rich people will still be motivated to find new means of differentiation, and to some extent will succeed. As I write, a signal sign of status in Manhattan is the ability to book a table and suffer a *prix fixe* dinner at Masa, a Japanese restaurant with only twenty-six tables, whose chef decides what you will eat, how much of it you will eat, in what order and at what pace. Diners pay \$350 – not including drinks, tip or taxes – for this dubious privilege. The high, if not exorbitant, price of the meal only adds to its draw. Body work is another increasingly popular vehicle for displaying wealth. Tummy tucks, breast enhancement, face lifts and eye makeovers are increasingly widespread, and new, even costlier procedures are likely to come on line that will prove attractive to the wealthy.

The second development is increasing boredom with possessions and grooming (the other great source of display) and a corresponding search for meaning elsewhere. We witnessed glimmers of this in the ideology of the “flower power” children of the 1960s and in the lifestyle of an increasing number of people who come from old wealth and live lives of comfort, but not of extravagance. Ronald Inglehart’s studies of values in forty-three societies offer some empirical support for my prediction. He finds a strong positive correlation between economic development and cultural change. In the wealthiest countries, a gradual shift is underway, most marked among the young, from “materialist” values (emphasizing economic and physical security) toward “postmaterialist values” (emphasizing self-expression and the quality of life).<sup>182</sup> While this is not quite what I am talking about, Inglehart’s data indicates the extent to which people attempt to satisfy other needs once they attain a certain level of well-being. The most important need beyond appetite is the spirit.

The search for meaning beyond affluence can only go in the direction of the spirit, to honor and recognition, and with it self-esteem, achieved on the basis of one’s accomplishments or public service. In traditional societies, honor was the preserve of warriors, and achieved in combat, or at least maintained by the promise to serve in the front line in future conflicts. Warrior societies are *passé*, and if liberals are correct in their assumption that a peaceful democratic trading world is on the way, interstate war itself may become increasingly uncommon, and ultimately an atavism. In these circumstances, the nature of honor and standing will have to be reformulated.

<sup>182</sup> Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Society and Modernization and Postmodernization*.

I contend, and will try to demonstrate, that this is already taking place within advanced societies and is beginning to have important consequences for the international system. State standing has traditionally been based on military power, which is usually, but not always, backed by economic power. The United States currently claims standing on these grounds, but it can be demonstrated that this claim to standing – as opposed to cautious respect for American military power – is increasingly falling on deaf ears. We may be in the early stages of a shift of the very definition, not just the indices, of standing, that has profound and long-term implications for state identity and the practice of foreign policy and international relations.

### Problems

All theories have problems, and I want to flag some challenges and difficulties to my theory. I address in order problems of scope, drivers, actors, levels of analysis and evaluation.

### *Scope*

All systems have boundaries. They divide the system from the environment in which it operates. Boundaries cannot be imposed by fiat, and various strategies to identify them, including Luhmann's contention that systems define their own boundaries in the course of reproducing themselves, encounter difficulties. By insisting on the ontological priority of the state most international relations theories, and certainly those of Waltz and Wendt, all but rule out the possibility of shifting boundaries. Boundary issues are nevertheless receiving increasing attention in both security and political economy, where they have been shown to be unstable and porous.<sup>183</sup> Stefano Guzzini wryly observes that we do not really know what international relations is but nevertheless claim to have theories that describe it.<sup>184</sup>

Like all social domains, international relations is fuzzy. There is general agreement that it encompasses anything and everything that has to do with relations among states and other important actors (e.g. non-state political groups, non-governmental and international organizations,

<sup>183</sup> Stubbs and Underhill, *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*; Cerny, "Globalization and Collective Action"; Jacobson and Lapid, *Identities, Borders, Orders*; Kratochwil, "Constructing a New Orthodoxy?"

<sup>184</sup> Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy*; Behnke, "Grand Theory in the Age of its Impossibility."

multinational corporations) whose activities and influence extend beyond the confines of a single political unit. Attempts to define international relations more precisely only elicit controversy; a line drawn anywhere will almost certainly provoke a response from scholars or practitioners that it is too limiting or too encompassing. The practical solution to this problem was suggested long ago by Samuel Johnson, who observed that there was great uncertainty about when dawn and dusk began and ended, but that everybody could agree about the existence of night and day.

As my theory addresses what are generally considered to be core problems of international relations (e.g. the nature and goals of political units, the character and stability of regional and international political systems, the likelihood and character of international cooperation, the probability of war and peace, the causes of system change), I intend to finesse boundary questions. I claim, with some justification, I believe, to be addressing problems that are unambiguously night or day. This answer is not meant to be flippant but to highlight the truth that boundary problems arise from our desire to divide the physical and social worlds into manageable categories. Despite the holistic nature of knowledge we require artificial categories of knowledge, and with them artificial divisions that isolate some phenomena for study while excluding others. As none of these categories and boundaries we impose are natural, the only appropriate criteria for their assessment is their utility. Do they tell us something interesting and useful, and perhaps in an elegant manner? Boundaries, like order, are products of theories and not things that can be determined in the abstract. This is not a novel argument but harks back to Francis Bacon, one of the fathers of modern science, who recognized the extent to which his project was, like literature, involved in the imposition of clever artifice on reality to give it the appearance of order. "Poetry," he reminds us, "can give some satisfaction to the mind, wherein the nature of things doth seem to deny it."<sup>185</sup>

### *Drivers*

Powerful theories explain a lot on the basis of a few assumptions. This is very difficult in the social sciences because of the complexity, openness and reflexivity of social systems. Parsimonious grand theories do not take us very far and require secondary drivers and additional typologies to

<sup>185</sup> Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, book 2, p. 34.

extend their reach.<sup>186</sup> In keeping with my Greek foundations I try to strike a middle ground between a parsimonious theory of limited empirical value and a richer one that would be unwieldy in its complexity. I try to demonstrate that my starting assumptions of the three-fold nature of the psyche, the different kinds of orders to which they give rise, and the related concept of balance and imbalance, go a long way in accounting for the goals of actors, their approaches to cooperation, conflict and risk, and the causes of order and disorder in individuals, societies, and regional and international systems. To explain the causes of balance and imbalance, I invoke balance and imbalance at adjacent levels, which is simply an extension of one of my core assumptions. I offer additional reasons for changes within levels. The causes for these changes are in turn amenable to explanation and I attempt to provide a partial answer by developing the outlines of a theory of history. It puts changes in balance into a broader context, and offers underlying explanations for them (e.g. imbalance is most likely in times of transition between spirit-based and appetite-based worlds). My theory of history requires additional drivers and typologies, but it retains considerable parsimony by drawing on attributes of appetite and spirit to help explain the historical progression between appetite- and spirit-based worlds and the changing character of these worlds. By developing two parallel theories – one of order, the other of the historical progression of orders – and building them around the same units (my ideal-type worlds), I attempt to maximize the explanatory power of my analytical categories while keeping them relatively parsimonious.

Some readers may be troubled or confused by the use of several different but related typologies: the three-fold nature of the psyche, and the four kinds of ideal-type worlds, and, in my follow-on volume, four principles of justice. I struggled without success for ways of dispensing with the first or second of these typologies, or of merging them in some elegant manner. The typologies are related but different, and both, I am convinced, are necessary. All three psychic drives give rise to ideal-type worlds, but so does fear, which is not a drive of the psyche, but an emotion that comes to the fore in proportion to reason's loss of control over spirit and appetite. Dispensing with the psyche would eliminate reason, essential to explain balance and imbalance, and equally critical to account for learning. Doing away with my four-fold typology of ideal-type worlds would

<sup>186</sup> In the introduction I discussed this problem in the context of neorealism, and its need to introduce distinctions among types of actors to make it relevant to the world of foreign policy.

eliminate fear, which is the basis of the realist paradigm. By retaining both typologies, I can account for all existing paradigms of international relations, demonstrate the need for an additional paradigm of politics, and lay its foundation. I can also say something about how these several paradigms are related in theory and practice. In the conclusion, I expand upon this theme, and believe this is the appropriate place to do it because by then the reader will be quite familiar with all of my categories and many of the ways in which they relate to one another.

### *Ontology*

Theories must define their units. Most theories of international relations make states their units, an understandable if controversial choice given their political importance and legal standing in the modern age. Limiting units to states nevertheless provokes the reasonable objection that they are not the only important international actors. In this chapter I have talked about individuals, societies, states and regional and international systems. This is admittedly confusing, but defensible, I believe, if we think of these categories in terms of units and systems. My irreducible starting point, as it was for the Greeks, is the individual psyche, whose several components interact in ways that help us understand the individual as a system. Individuals are the units for societies and states, which I treat in turn as units of higher levels of systems.

This still leaves me with the problem of distinguishing between societies and states. Do we need both categories? This was not a question that would have occurred to the Greeks, as the polis and the society were more or less coterminous. This is not true in the modern world, where state and society have become conceptually as well as empirically and legally distinct.<sup>187</sup> Unlike the polis, Durkheim observed, "the state is too remote from individuals, its connections with them too superficial and irregular, to be able to penetrate the depths of their consciousness and socialise them from within."<sup>188</sup> I cannot dispense with either category. Society is important because it is the system in which individuals interact, and the one most directly affected by their collective balance and imbalance. Modern

<sup>187</sup> Luhmann, "The 'State' of the Political System," for a strong statement of the distinction between state and society, and the dominance of the state over society. On the blurring of the distinction between state and society, see Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*; Keane, "Despotism and Democracy," pp. 35–71.

<sup>188</sup> Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, preface to the second edition, p. liv.

states are certainly affected by balance and imbalance in the society, but they are partially insulated from it by institutional and other mechanisms. I need states because, for better or worse, they are the principal units in regional and international systems. Balance and imbalance in states does not always reflect, and at times may be quite different from, balance and imbalance in societies. This creates a double complication for my theory: the need to address both society and state and the need to distinguish effectively between them.

My use of Greek conceptions of the psyche and the notion of nested layers of social aggregation creates a framework that might appear to exclude non-state actors like international organizations and multinational corporations. They are not direct expressions of individuals or societies, so are not part of the chain of units and systems I use to trace the consequences of balance and imbalance. Although they are not presently included in my theory, they are by no means precluded from incorporation. Non-state actors can be analyzed in terms of the same typology of goals (spirit, appetite and reason) as other actors, as can the key actors, individuals or organizations that constitute their membership or leadership. Non-governmental organizations are particularly interesting theoretically, because some of them may come the closest of all actors at the international level to being motivated by reason. They are substantively important as examples because actors learn in part through a combination of mimesis and reflection.

### *Levels of analysis*

I offer and attempt to justify the Greek understanding of nested units as an alternative to the levels of analysis framework so common to social science and international relations theory. This allows me to explain order and disorder at different levels of social aggregation in a parsimonious manner. My theory assumes extensive homology in the rules that govern balance and imbalance in individuals, societies, states and regional and international systems, thus permitting the claim that changes at one level can affect (or alternatively, mirror) changes at adjacent levels. In a follow-on study I intend to make a strong empirical case for the existence of these similarities. I recognize but downplay the differences within and across these levels. For purposes of exposition this is an appropriate strategy because it allows for greater clarity. Stressing uniformities can hinder analysis if it ignores critical differences that would confound a theory, or prevent it from recognizing and addressing important anomalies. I will

accordingly relax my insistence on the full comparability of systems, and the rules governing balance and imbalance within them, in the course of my treatment of this phenomenon and that of change.

Cities are treated as reifications of individuals by Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides on the grounds that their constitutions are analogous to different expressions of the human psyche. Plato describes a progression of constitutional pathologies that he believes to mirror exactly the progression within individuals. Even if we acknowledge these parallels, individuals and cities differ in important respects and we need to be very careful not to treat them as equivalent. Parallels in structure or process enable a theory to bridge levels of aggregation, but to do this effectively we must acknowledge differences that might influence, hinder or distort these comparisons. Affect is one of the most important differences. The small size of most Greek cities and the personal basis of their politics made it more likely that the emotions of citizens and their city ran along parallel tracks. In modern states, size, the social divide and many layers of institutions between the political elite and voters confound the comparison. The problem is more acute when we move from the level of political units to regional and international systems. We cannot convincingly attribute affect to states and the systems in which they operate, only to those individuals who occupy important positions within them.

The larger problem here is reification: treating the state as if it were a person. This fiction is recognized by international law, and prominent theorists like Waltz, Jervis and Wendt routinely refer to the "motives," "beliefs," "feelings," even the "personalities" of states.<sup>189</sup> To some extent this is a linguistic convention; Jervis is absolutely explicit about the problems of psychologizing states.<sup>190</sup> Wendt goes the furthest in treating states as persons; his "alter" and "ego" blur the distinction between the two and in a subsequent article he makes the case for treating states as persons.<sup>191</sup> My comparison between persons and states (and by extension, regional and international systems) falls somewhere between these two theorists. I argue that order and disorder have the same effects for all, and that it comes about in the same way: reason gains or loses control over spirit and appetite. At the same time, I recognize important differences in the

<sup>189</sup> Vincent, *Theories of the State*, ch. 6, on the state as a legal person and its critics. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 91–2, on the survival motives of states; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, p. 71, on state beliefs; Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 291–4, on states as psychological persons.

<sup>190</sup> Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>191</sup> Wendt, "The State as Person in International Theory," and "Social Theory as Cartesian Science."

ways in which this occurs at different levels of analysis. What goes on in the head of the individual is not what happens in the councils of state, and states usually differ from regional or international systems by virtue of the density of their institutions and enforcement capabilities. My comparison is only an analogy, but one I believe offers considerable analytical purchase.

Comparisons across levels of analysis run into a second problem: systems differ in the extent to which their characteristic patterns of behavior are emergent properties, determined, but not predicted, by unit behavior. Such an outcome underlies Adam Smith's understanding of capitalism in the *Wealth of Nations*, and is nicely characterized by Hegel as "the cunning of reason." It assumes that beneficial outcomes can emerge at the system level from entirely self-interested behavior at the agent level.<sup>192</sup> Following the pioneering work of Friedrich Hayek, emergent properties has become an increasingly important field in economics and political science.<sup>193</sup> In sharp contrast to much research in the social sciences that is *within* levels of analysis, this research stresses the connections *between* levels. Outcomes at the system level are the result of the ways in which the consequences of behavior are mediated by rules at the system level. These rules can remain hidden, making it difficult to compare systems in the absence of numerous iterations of interactions based on real or simulated data.

I posit fairly direct and traceable links between motives and behavior, and system-emergent properties enter the picture when we progress from behavior to social structure. The hierarchies I describe are the result of unintentional behavior by actors, although efforts to maintain or transform them are often quite conscious and deliberate. The transformations between spirit and appetite worlds, and the kinds of developments within each that I associate with the third level of change, can also be characterized as emergent properties. To the extent they are successful, these worlds encourage behavior that undermines the *nomos* that sustains them. In this dialectical process, actors produce unintended changes of the kind that have the effect of making the goals they seek more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

<sup>192</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, IV.ii.4 and 9; Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, II.(2).§37; Burbidge, "The Cunning of Reason."

<sup>193</sup> See Deutsch *et al.*, *Problems of World Modeling*; Bremer, *Simulated Worlds*; Cusack, and Stoll, *Exploring Realpolitik*; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*; Cederman, *Emergent Actors in World Politics*, and "Modeling the Size of Wars"; Epstein and Axtell, *Growing Artificial Societies*.

### *Evaluation*

Scientific theories must avoid tautology in the statement of the theory and elaboration of measures appropriate to their evaluation. They must have independent variables whose presence can be detected independently of their supposed effects. This is an endemic problem of even the best scientific theories; Newtonian mechanics and Darwinian evolution have both been accused of tautology.

Within social science, the problem of tautology is endemic to theories that rely on cultural or psychological variables. Both to some degree require us to look inside the heads of people for drives, inclinations, understandings or commitments to practices of which they may be unaware or unable to conceptualize or articulate. According to David Elkins and Richard Simeon:

Several characteristics of political culture pose special problems for measuring and describing it. First, it is often hard to disentangle from structural or psychological variables. Second, it is an abstract concept, not a concrete thing. It cannot be directly seen, heard, or touched; therefore it must be inferred from other clues. Third, for most of the members of a society, culture is unconscious, inexplicit, taken for granted; hence we cannot easily ask people about it directly. Fourth, while individuals participate in a culture, as a collective attribute of society, we do not describe a culture by simply aggregating all the individuals. How then do we find it?<sup>194</sup>

These problems are encountered by most categories and variables in social science; markets, polarity and the balance of power are as unobservable as anxiety or fear- or interest-driven worlds. Cultural explanations may be held in especially low esteem in political science because of the unsophisticated way in which they have been used by the authors of such prominent works as *The Civic Culture* and *Clash of Civilizations*.<sup>195</sup> Culture is badly defined, treated as static and monolithic, and not distinguished from other aspects of society or the environment that would establish its autonomy.<sup>196</sup> To the extent that the concept of culture is operationalized in these studies, it is in terms of the very behavioral attributes it is intended to explain.

<sup>194</sup> Elkins and Simeon, "A Cause in Search of its Effect, or What Does Political Culture Explain?"

<sup>195</sup> Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*; Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

<sup>196</sup> Jackman and Miller, *Before Norms*, pp. 188–96.

My theory relies heavily on cultural and psychological explanations. I employ culture in a double sense. Like Weber, I use it to explain human goals and their variation across societies and epochs. Like Durkheim, I use it to account for the means by which people and their societies pursue these goals. Psychology enters the picture because I use variation in the hierarchy and expression of the drives of appetite, spirit and reason as my criteria for distinguishing one culture from another. To use both sets of explanations properly, I need to define them carefully – and independently of their putative effects. I must also explicate the causal chain linking them and the behavior I want to explain. To avoid tautology my characterization of culture must have manifestations other than the behavior I expect them to produce. A similar problem arises from my constructivist emphasis on actors understanding their environment. I posit fear as the cause of transitions from appetite and spirit-based worlds to fear-based ones. Fear is an affect, and a highly subjective one. It is based on idiosyncratic, and at times irrational, assessments of others' motives. There can be no objective measures of fear or of the amount of fear necessary to prompt a phase transition. Its presence and effect will vary across actors, and our measures of fear must somehow tap their understandings. Ideally, we require measures independent of the behavior we attribute to fear, and they are very difficult to devise. Realism attempts, unsuccessfully, to finesse this problem by holding fear a constant in anarchical systems. The level of fear demonstrably varies from epoch to epoch, regardless of the polarity of the system, as a function of the judgments actors make of others' intentions.

Appropriate measures and indices are doubly important because my independent and dependent variables are not discrete but continuous. Even discrete variables, like shifts from bi- to multi-polarity, pose serious measurement challenges. Neorealism's failure to develop explicit protocols for determining the polarity of the international system makes it tautological and unfalsifiable. Continuous variables require us to track shifts along a continuum. Even if there are only a certain number of stable states along this continuum, measurement still demands reasonable precision. Most of my variables are continuous. Worlds are more or less spirit-, appetite- or fear-based, and all three motives can be observed to varying degrees in a unit or system. Reason too is a matter of degree, as are balance and imbalance, which reflect the degree of reason present. With relatively precise cardinal measures (i.e. dollar values for wealth), we could look for the intervals at which phase transitions were most likely to take place between different kinds of worlds. My measures are less

precise and, at best, allow me to say something about the range in which transitions occur. Fuzzy measures create the temptation, which I do my best to avoid, of measuring critical variables in terms of their theorized consequences. The task of understanding ultimately requires what Weber calls *sympathetisches Nacherleben*, an empathetic reliving of the motives, feelings and actions of others, established through careful attention to culture, texts and behavior.

One way to establish the role of culture is to track its evolution over time; in the case of my theory, transitions to and away from one or more of the ideal-type worlds I describe. If the indices for this evolution are different from the behavior I seek to explain I can determine the presence, or degree of presence, of these worlds independently of the kinds of foreign policy behavior they manifest, and thus avoid tautology. I attempt to do this in all but my most modern cases. For the classical Greeks and Romans I begin with an analysis of the society to determine the extent to which it meets the criteria of an honor society on the basis of internal criteria. My evidence is drawn largely from contemporary literature, philosophy and social practices. I then turn to foreign policy and warfare to see the extent to which they mirror the character of the society I have described. This becomes more difficult to do in the modern period where motives are mixed and interact in complex ways. So I adopt a different strategy in addressing nineteenth-century imperialism and subsequent cases. I show the ways in which the spirit found expression in these societies and attempt to document links between it and aggressive foreign policies. As further evidence of my explanation I attempt to demonstrate that these policies cannot adequately be explained with reference to appetite or fear.

A general theory of international relations is a grand theory. It is commonly assumed, Kal Holsti writes, that such theories can “bring together the essential, if not all, the animals of world politics into one theoretical ark.”<sup>197</sup> Stephen Brooks makes the case for a more “minimalist” role for grand theory. It should make few predictions itself, but offer a framework that orders a phenomenon, creates novel links and associations and inspires development of “middle range” theories.<sup>198</sup> According to Robert Merton, who coined the term, middle range theory is “intermediate to the minor working hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-by-day

<sup>197</sup> Holsti, “Retreat from Utopia.”

<sup>198</sup> Brooks, *The Globalization of Production and International Security*, ch. 2.

routines of research, and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master conceptual scheme.”<sup>199</sup>

My own view of grand theory mirrors that of Brooks. It should have something to say about all aspects of international relations, but not necessarily in the form of testable propositions. It should establish a research program, or at least lay the foundation for one, generate fresh perspectives, raise novel questions, and stimulate research that is relevant to theory and practice. I believe I meet these criteria. I propose a general framework for studying politics in terms of dynamic status hierarchies. I derive several theories from this framework, having to do with the rise of the state, the kinds of states that are most likely to be aggressive, the causes, character and frequency of cooperation and warfare, and the propensity of actors to seek or eschew risk. My framework also identifies a series of important questions that are not being asked, and provides some of the conceptual tools necessary for seeking answers to them.

Kant understood science as internally self-perpetuating; answers generated new questions and answers.<sup>200</sup> Positivists harbor the goal of cumulative theory that builds on previous research and knowledge. For Kant, however, science advances by finding new questions, not only answers to them; it is a dialectical process. Progress in our questions is every bit as important as progress in the answers we find to them. In this connection we can discover new answers to old questions, new questions or the inappropriateness of existing questions. Epistemic change, as Nicholas Rescher points out, “relates not only to what is *known* but what can be asked.”<sup>201</sup> It is on this basis that my framework and related theories ought to be judged.

<sup>199</sup> Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>200</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysic*, sec. 57.

<sup>201</sup> Rescher, *Process Philosophy*, pp. 60–1.