

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY – A SIMPLE START

- **DOES THEORY MATTER?**
- **WHAT ARE ITS PHILOSOPHICAL & HISTORICAL ROOTS?**
- **“REALISM” “LIBERALISM/IDEALISM”**
- **PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE**
- **ALL IR TEXTBOOKS HAVE THEORY CHAPTERS**

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**[www.uni-muenster.de/Politikwissenschaft/
Doppeldiplom/aktuelles.html](http://www.uni-muenster.de/Politikwissenschaft/Doppeldiplom/aktuelles.html)**

- **There you can also find further material to accompany our seminars on International Theory and International Politics**
- **Lost in the maze ??? Send email to meyersr@uni-muenster.de**

WHY THEORY?

- **IR THEORIES ARE GENERAL IDEAS ABOUT WORLD AFFAIRS**
- **IDEAS MATTER**
- **THEORIES INFLUENCE POLICIES AND POLITICS**
- **THEORY HELPS US DEAL WITH COMPLEXITY**

WHAT THEORIES DO

- **DESCRIBE**
- **EXPLAIN**
- **PREDICT**
- **PRESCRIBE**

THEORIES ARE NOT LAWS

- **THEY REFLECT HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES**
- **THEY REFLECT THE PERSONAL VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF THOSE WHO WRITE THEM**
- **THEY ARE CONTINUALLY BEING REVISED IN LIGHT OF CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES**

BE CRITICAL

- **FOR MOST COMPLEX PROBLEMS THERE ARE EASY SOLUTIONS THAT ARE OFTEN WRONG**
- **COMMON SENSE CAN BE NONSENSE**
- **STATES, LIKE PEOPLE, ACT FOR MANY REASONS THAT SOMETIMES CONTRADICT**
- **DIFFICULT CHOICES OFTEN MAKE FOR BAD POLICIES**

HOW THEORIES DEVELOP

- **THEORIES BEGIN WITH ASSUMPTIONS**
- **THEORIES OFFER HYPOTHESES**
- **THEORIES HAVE INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES**
- **PRACTICAL EXAMPLES ?**

HYPOTHESIS ?

- **IF WE CONTINUE TO BURN RISING AMOUNTS OF OIL THEN THE WORLD'S TEMPERATURE WILL RISE**
 - **INDEPENDENT VARIABLE - BURNING FUEL**
 - **DEPENDENT VARIABLE - GLOBAL CLIMATE**
- **SCIENTISTS TEST THEIR THEORIES EMPIRICALLY – MEASURING INDEPENDENT VARIABLE ... IN ORDER TO...**
- **SHOW A CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIP TO GLOBAL WARMING**

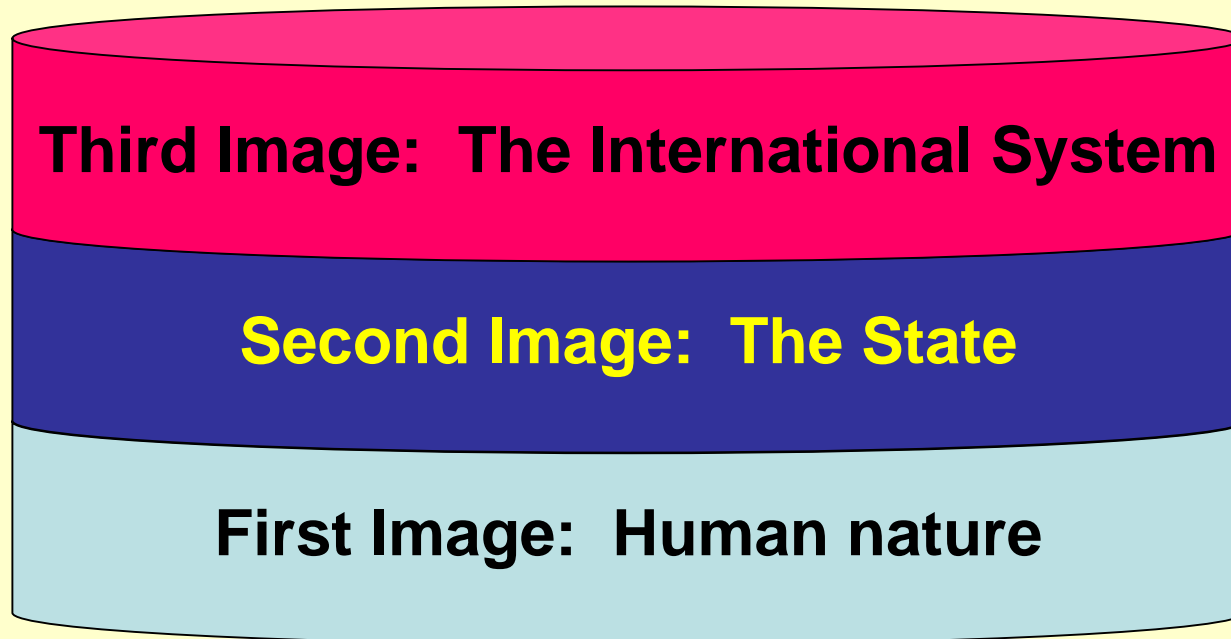
CONCEPTS TO KNOW

- **PREMISSES**
- **HYPOTHESES**
- **INDEPENDENT/DEPENDENT VARIABLES**
- **VALIDITY CRITERIA (Refutation vs. Corroboration)**
- **ACTORS**
- **LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**

Three Images or Levels of Analysis of International Relations

Three Images

Kenneth Waltz. 1954. *Man, the State, and War*.
What are the causes of war?



1st Image: Human Nature

Optimists

- People are basically good
- Social Reform, Education
- Crime and war are deviant behaviors
- Progress is possible, perhaps inevitable

But...

Does knowledge lead to peace?

Does knowledge imply same preferences for everybody ?

Pessimists

- Human nature is flawed
- Passion and egoism are fundamental
- Crime and war are normal
- Utopian ideals are not achievable

But...

Incomplete explanation

1st Image

- Original Sin: Augustine (354-430)
 - Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932)
- Thucydides (460-400 B.C.)
 - Fear, Power, Honour
- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)
 - Subconscious, repression
- Robert Jervis (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*

2nd Image: The State

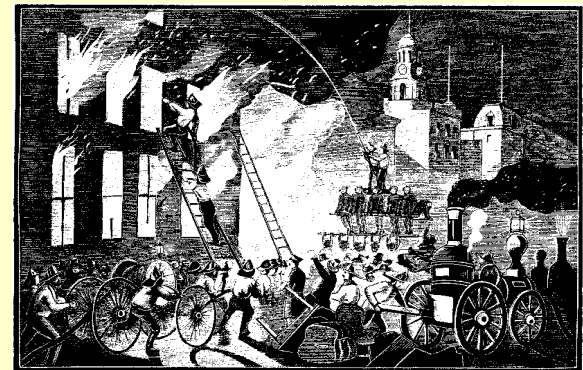


Despotic states

Bad Institutions



Internal strife



WAR

The State

Liberalism

- ★ Reason and progress make the eventual elimination of war possible



Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

On Perpetual Peace

- Historical evolution
 - Technology leads to more brutal wars
 - States will be compelled to become more peaceful as citizens have to bear the cost of warfare
- Republics < i.e. states ruled by law > will be inclined towards peace
- Commerce creates incentives to pursue peace
- World Society as voluntary association of peaceful states in legal federation

The State

Marxism-Leninism

- The **mode of production** determines social relations
- Government represents dominant class interests
- Under capitalism
 - Expanding production leads to diminishing returns
 - Search for profits leads to demand for new markets and investment opportunities

Conflict among capitalist states

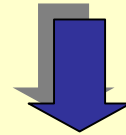
Harmony among socialist states

3rd Image: International anarchy

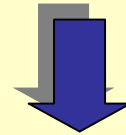
Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). *Leviathan* (1651)

- Human beings are animals that seek pleasure and survival
- In the **state of nature**, others are threats, so all are at war
- Life is “nasty, brutish and short”
- To transcend anarchy, we surrender our natural rights to an absolute sovereign in a social contract

**International
anarchy**



**State of
Nature**



**State of
War**

Thus, what is a Theory ? More Explanations...

- **Theory is "the net which we throw out in order to catch the world – to rationalize, explain, and dominate it."**

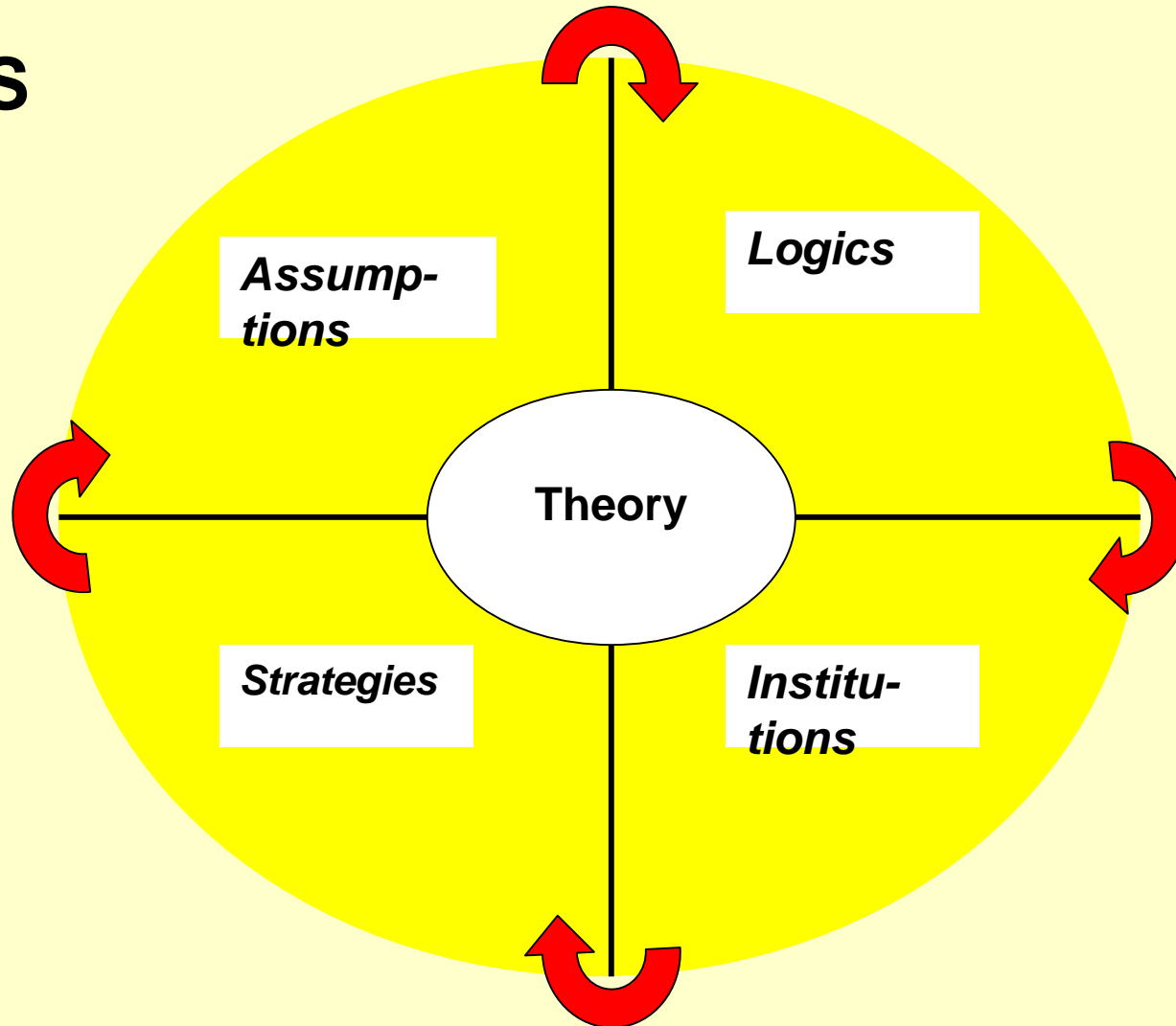
Karl Popper. Logik der Forschung, 1935: p.26

(The Logic of Scientific Discovery, London: Hutchinson, 1959.)

- A **good theory** should fulfil the following **functions**:
 - **describe, explain and predict** outside, i.e. empirical, phenomena
 - **verify or preferably falsify** (Popper) observational statements - by confronting accumulated knowledge with reality
- “No matter how many instances of white swans we may have observed, this does not justify the conclusion that *all* swans are white”.
- *Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, op. cit.*
 - enable us to **explore, explain, evaluate** and **extrapolate** (Wessels) – four -‘e’ approach
 - be **internally consistent** and coherent ... ideals of elegance of formulation and parsimony of concepts

Understanding Theories through the ALIS - Scheme

- **ALIS**



Napravi Pauzu !

