

The European Legacy

TOWARD NEW PARADIGMS

SPECIAL ISSUE

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A History of International Relations Theory. By Torbjørn L. Knutsen (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997) xi + 354 pp. £45.00 cloth £13.99 paper.

Torbjørn L. Knutsen's *A History of International Relations Theory* represents a history in two senses. First, it provides the general political, social, economic, and technological context in which theories of International Relations have developed. Second, it seeks to show the long-term shifts that have taken place in the nature of IR theory since the collapse of the Roman Empire. Inspired by Michel Foucault, Knutsen has sought to write an "archaeology" of International Relations knowledge, seeking to uncover more basic layers of meaning and to identify the deeper "internal rules" that guide scientific investigations. He hopes to show the interrelationship between knowledge, language, and power (275).

The book is most significant in that it puts to rest the view that IR theory largely originated in the aftermath of World War I. In distinguishing between a historic tradition (involving study of historic texts) and an analytic tradition (involving sustained communication among scholars), Knutsen argues cogently that a truly analytic tradition in IR scholarship began to develop in the Middle Ages—and not as late as World War I, as argued, for example, in the well-known text, *Contending Theories of International Relations* by J.E. Dougherty and R.L. Pfaltzgraff (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

The strength of Knutsen's book lies in the fact that it introduces and surveys general conceptions of theorists who are either not well-known, or who are not well-known for having closely analyzed issues related to the field of IR. Moreover, he traces the key themes of international relations throughout each era. Differing theoretical perspectives on anarchy, world order, international law, balance of power, sovereignty, nationalism, causes of war, realism, idealism, and "revolutionism," are compared and contrasted.

Knutsen accordingly examines the views of theorists from different historical eras who engage questions concerning "perpetual peace." He outlines the views of medieval theorist, Pierre DuBois, who advocated a federation of Christian states—in opposition to the formation of a unitary world-state. Knutsen also focuses attention on the early 18th century theorist, Émeric Crucé, whose views have been regarded as a blueprint for the League of

Nations. Knutsen, of course, discusses the ideas of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Knutsen likewise examines differing conceptions of the "balance of power." He surveys those theorists who find it a valuable conceptual tool, such as Francesco Guicciardini, Alberico Gentili, Giovanni Botero, Francis Bacon, Samuel Pufendorf, Henri Rohan, David Hume, as well as contemporary neorealists and neoliberals. He contrasts the above with balance of power critics such as William Godwin, Immanuel Kant, as well as contemporary "post-structuralists."

One weakness of the book lies in the fact that as it attempts to provide both a general historical context and a general history of ideas, it tends to spread itself too thin. Although Knutsen does focus on the historical spread of ideas and on revolutions in communications technology, his discussion of the political, social, and economic context in which differing IR theories have evolved does not always appear very consistent. In his admirable effort to achieve a "totality," it is not always clear which factors possessed a *predominant* influence on the birth of ideas. The lack of systematic criteria upon which to base his analysis is perhaps indicative of the weakness of his "archeological" approach.

The book is also problematic in that his analysis can at times be uneven or oversimplified. The views of certain theorists are explicated in greater detail, and are hence given greater weight, than those of others. Accordingly, some more consistency in explicating how each theorist deals with specific well-defined issues might have helped his study. In addition, a closer examination of theories of alliance formation, war causation, and the relationship between domestic and international politics, could have helped strengthen his argument that IR theory does, in fact, have a strong analytic tradition.

In particular, Knutsen argues contentiously that as Machiavelli was more preoccupied with domestic than international affairs, he contributed more to political theory than to IR theory (43). The problem with this approach is that Knutsen focuses too much attention on the question of balance and power, and not enough attention on issues concerning internal and external threat perception. He accordingly overlooks the role of Machiavelli in establishing a key link between the historic tradition of analysis and the newly emerging analytic tradition of international relations. (Knutsen, however, does admit that a systematic study of Machiavelli's diplomatic dispatches could strengthen the view of

Machiavelli as a *balance of power* theorist, and not just a *power* theorist [291 ff.]).

In surveying the nineteenth century and the rise of what he calls "continental nationalism," Knutsen emphasizes the influence of Darwin and makes a juxtaposition of Hegel, Marx, and Darwin in that each supported the idea of "progress-through-struggle." Knutsen argues that Marxian analysis represented a "limited critique" in the sense that it essentially remained within the tradition of Western modernity—in essence, replacing "one vision of modernity (capitalism) with another (socialism)" (200). Knutsen's postmodernist viewpoint, however, ignores the admittedly belated influence of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Furthermore, much as is the case for Machiavelli, a closer look at Marx's speeches, letters, and lesser-known writings might enhance the contemporary understanding of Marx's views of international politics, which have often been distorted by Cold War polemics. Using Knutsen's own distinction, it would seem important to differentiate between ideas that influenced scholarship in an analytic sense and those ideas that may have obtained a posthumous historic meaning, but that were not discovered or not understood at the time of their writing (or that need rediscovery).

Despite the few shortcomings mentioned above, Knutsen's book represents a pathbreaking and erudite study which is helpful for the continued investigation into the historic and analytic roots of IR theory—an area that needs further exploration.

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The Death of Adam: Evolution and Its Impact on Western Thought. By John C. Greene (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1995) (first edition 1959).

This is a welcome reissue of a now classic book on the history of evolutionary thought in Western culture. There is a new preface written by the author reintroducing the book; otherwise the original format, design, and content are reproduced from the original.

Given the glut of literature available on Darwin and the history of evolution at the present time, and the rise of a veritable "Darwin Industry" dedicated to understanding the development of Darwin's thought and life, it is easy to forget how original, fresh, and important Greene's *Death of Adam* was

when it first appeared in 1959. Appearing as it did in the same year of the centenary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin*, it received widespread attention and acclaim from diverse audiences, in part because the centennial celebrations had drawn attention to the paucity of high-quality historical scholarship on evolution and Darwin. *The Death of Adam* found a ready-made, eager audience that needed a proper historical assessment of evolution. As has become apparent with historical hindsight, the book and the author were actually then located at the cusp of a sea change in the new field of the history of science, that would see the appearance of the history of biology as a recognized field of inquiry in its own right (histories of the physical sciences had dominated scholarly inquiry).

Without any overt philosophical, scientific, or political agenda, and because of the vast expanse of issues covered (evolution from the Enlightenment to Darwin) and the sensitivity it showed to the theological complexities raised by Darwinian evolution, the book was considered a tempered, comprehensive account of evolution in the context of Western thought. Included herein were discussions not only on the specifics of evolutionary ideas, but also discussion of their intellectual origins, and effects on large-scale cultural attitudes. It quickly became part of the "canon" of the historical texts on evolution, introducing successive generations of younger historians of science to the history of evolutionary thought. This was so much the case that it is now nearly impossible to assess the book in 1996 with anything resembling scholarly "distance" or "objectivity" (as should well be the case for any influential book).

With this warning in mind, readers should note that the book appears as fresh as ever. Especially welcome is the clarity of style and the unpretentiousness of the prose, especially given the ambitious and profound nature of the subject. Both visually delightful and helpful are the illustrations and guides to each relevant section. Of special relevance to present-day historical audiences is Greene's inclusion of the history of anthropology. His discussion of race, class, and gender in the history of anthropology would impress any contemporary cultural historian. Even though it is close to forty years old, the book still stands as the best introduction to the history of evolution in Western thought. It will continue to be essential reading for students of the history of science.

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