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How to cite this article:
LOUIZA ODYSSEOS (2002). Dangerous ontologies: the ethos of survival and ethical theorizing in International Relations. Review of International Studies, 28, pp 403-418 doi:10.1017/S0260210502004035

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Dangerous ontologies: the ethos of survival and ethical theorizing in International Relations

LOUIZA ODYSSEOS[1]

Abstract. The article responds to a recent call for a more systematic interrogation of the persistence of the dichotomous relation between ethics and International Relations. The addition of ethics *into* International Relations, it has recently been claimed, has left unquestioned the ethical assumptions encompassed in the 'agenda' of International Relations itself. Thus, the article examines the ethics implicit in the 'agenda of IR' and, in so doing, considers the condition of possibility for a movement beyond the dichotomy 'ethics *and* IR' and towards 'an ethical International Relations'. To achieve this task the article calls for an understanding of ethics as *ethos*. It further illustrates how the 'dangerous ontology' of realist IR is discursively created through an exposition of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*. In this anarchical ontology of danger an 'ethos of survival' has come to be the relational framework through which the other is conceptually encountered as an enemy. Subsequently, the article considers what repercussions this ethos has for the reception of ethics into IR.

'We think restlessly within familiar frameworks to avoid thought about how our thinking is framed'.[2]

The discipline of International Relations (IR) has recently witnessed an incitement to ethical discourse. This incitement can be attributed, at least in part, to the end of the Cold War which has left the discipline devoid of the structural certainties by which actions were deemed appropriate in the past. Within this new international context, moreover, IR scholars increasingly attempt to understand the motivations underlying state action where no direct link to the 'national interest' can be made, as is sometimes the case, for example, with external intervention in conflicts. Similarly, catastrophes such as the genocide in Rwanda compel IR ethicists to understand the inaction by states in the 'international system' in the face of what are termed humanitarian crises.[3] Finally, current interest in ethical theories within IR is also sometimes motivated by the need to effect a change in the meaning and intention of 'ethics', or, in a similar vein, as a response to a perceived change in the meaning of the term. Recently, such a need to effect a change in the meaning of 'ethics' has arisen with the realization that ethics and IR are still understood in a dichotomous

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[1] Earlier versions of this article were presented at the London School of Economics, the War Studies Research Colloquium at King's College London and at the 'Ethics and International Relations?' panel at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association in Washington DC, 16–20 February 1999. I would like to thank Michael Banks, Tarak Barkawi, Stefan Elbe, Vivienne Jabri, Hakan Seckinelgin, Hideaki Shinoda, and Daniel Warner for their valuable comments. Also, special thanks to R.B.J. Walker for his critique of the paper as the panel's discussant at ISA.

[2] William E. Connoly, *Political Theory and Modernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 4.

[3] See David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

manner.[4] The separateness, in other words, of ethics from 'international' concerns is now seen as problematic and has brought about an eagerness among scholars of ethics in IR to examine what factors might have sustained it. It is within this latter context that the present article is situated.

In particular, this article examines the ways in which ethics appears as an additive, as an arguably necessary, but lacking, ingredient in IR. For, as *Millennium*'s editors explained in their introduction to the Special Issue on ethics, simply '*[b]ringing in* ethics as a new agenda item for consideration does not help us to understand the ethical questions that are in-built in the agenda itself'.[5] What follows below, then, amounts to an interrogation of the ethics of the 'agenda of IR' and a subsequent consideration of the condition of possibility for moving beyond the dichotomy of 'ethics *and* IR', and towards 'an ethical international relations'. Such an examination of the ethics of the 'agenda of IR' requires, in the first instance, an investigation of ontology or ground of the perspective which has historically dominated the discipline, namely, realism. For, it is from this ontology or ground that the 'agenda of IR' arises.

Furthermore, such an examination must also be concurrent with thinking of ethics as *ethos*,[6] which this article understands as an attitude and mode of relating to others. It is only by thinking of ethics as ethos that the operation of a particular *relationality to the other* within the ontology of political realism is revealed.[7] Specifically, the article argues that in realism there occurs a 'specific framing of the relationship of self/other as *self/enemy*',[8] that is, that the other is related to as an 'enemy'. Moreover, if we think of ethics as ethos, then the 'ethics' of the agenda of political realism can be seen as an 'ethos of survival'. Importantly, it is this framing of 'other-as-enemy' in political realism which also leads to a parallel framing of the relationship between IR and ethics, that is, a framing which reflects IR as the self and ethics as the enemy of IR. Thus, it can be shown that the realist ground on which some IR theories rest, and the ethos of survival that it generates, is largely accountable for sustaining the separateness of ethics and IR and it is its persistent questioning that might lead us to 'ethical theorizing'.

The discursive creation of the ontology of danger

The pervasive realist ontology of the anarchic world—out there—must receive systematic consideration as to the *relational schema*, or ethos of relating to the other, which it generates and perpetuates. As a staple of realist theorizing and analysis, the

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[4] This separateness was the main target of *Millennium*'s special issue in 'Ethics and International Relations'. See *Millennium* 27: 3 (1998), p. iv.

[5] 'Ethics and International Relations: A Note on the Special Issue', *Millennium*, 27: 3 (1998), p. iv, emphasis added.

[6] Recent formulations of this call can be found in Vivienne Jabri, 'Restyling the Subject of Responsibility in International Relations', *Millennium*, 27: 3 (1998) and David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[7] In the phenomenological sense of 'letting be seen'. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), p. 25.

[8] I thank R.B.J. Walker for his comments on this point.

notion that 'anarchy' is constitutive of academic IR is not new.[9] For example, Brian C. Schmidt writes in his study *The Political Discourse of Anarchy* that:

From an early point in the history of academic international relations, scholars embraced the view that the topics of central concern to the field—topics that included the study of the factors leading to war and peace, international law, international organization, colonial administration, and the means of achieving world order reform—were grounded in an ontology of anarchy. The idea that international relations was characterized both by the presence and absence of sovereignty has provided the intellectual paradigm within which the academic discourse of international relations has taken place.[10]

After a thorough investigation of the discursive history of 'anarchy' as the constitutive idea of academic IR, Schmidt concludes that 'the concept of anarchy is more a function of internal disciplinary debate than a self-referential empirical fact of the world'.[11] However valuable such a conclusion may be, what is imperative for ethical theorizing within the discipline of IR is not only an affirmation that anarchy *is* constitutive of IR. Rather, what is necessary is an investigation as to how this constitutive idea provides the *relational schema* through which IR, historically dominated by the realist perspective, theorizes encounters with and, more generally, coexistence with others. For the purposes of our analysis, a *relational schema* is the mode of relating to the other, a schema through which we conceptually encounter the other. The conceptual framework through which one perceives and comprehends the encounter with the other is what shapes how real encounters are expected to unfold.

What follows, then, is a discussion of the creation of the dangerous ontology within which realist IR operates. This ontology can be traced to Thomas Hobbes's political philosophy, not in an attempt to claim Hobbes as a progenitor of the discipline of IR, but as a political philosopher who has provided the ground *for* anarchy. Stuart Umphrey argues, in this regard, that '[Hobbes's] teaching…remains to be overcome in fact. Our way of regarding things political is still predominantly Hobbesian.'[12] Mary Dietz, a prominent Hobbes scholar, concurs when she writes that, '[Hobbes's] political theory … is at least partly constitutive of the ways in which we continue to understand and describe our own political practices.'[13] The Hobbesian description of the world as pre-socially dangerous has assumed immense significance in International Relations by providing the ground for the perspective of political realism, and this importance has long been recognized within the discipline.[14] What is still missing, however, is a recognition that Hobbes has also provided an 'ethos of survival' through which the other is encountered. This,

9 See, for example, Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization,* 46: 2 (1992), pp. 391–425; Also, Richard K. Ashley, 'The Powers of Anarchy: Theory, Sovereignty, and the Domestication of Global Life', in James Der Derian (ed.), *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 94–128.

10 Brian C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 231.

11 Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy*, p. 231.

12 Stuart Umphrey, 'Why *Politike Philosophia*?' in J.N. Mohanty (ed.), *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences* (The Hague, NL: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), p. 193.

13 Mary G. Dietz, 'Introduction', in Mary G. Dietz (ed.), *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1990), p. 4.

14 Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991) and R. John Vincent, 'The Hobbesian Tradition in Twentieth Century International Thought', *Millennium,* 10: 2 (1981), pp. 91–101.

however, can only be discerned if one seeks to understand ethics *as* ethos, as an attitude of relating to others. In this vein, it can be argued that for those operating within an ontology of danger, not only 'things political' but also 'things relational or ethical' are uniquely Hobbesian. However, that Hobbes offers just such a schema of relating to other, one that shapes the way responsibility is understood as something pertaining to the survival of the self, both in the state of nature and in the subsequent 'anarchic international realm', is not widely recognized in IR scholarship.[15] Rather, Hobbes's name is often invoked when the task at hand is to establish what R. John Vincent called the discipline's 'legacy',[16] without a thorough investigation of how the dangerous ontology, that forms an integral part of any such 'legacy', is created. It is to this task which the article now turns.

'The other' as enemy: justifying the scare quotes

The discursive creation of the Hobbesian ontology achieves its 'dangerous status' by linking danger and subjectivity; in other words, in *Leviathan* danger is grounded in man's nature. The text was written in the historical context of the chaotic political and social situation that the revolutionary climate of the 1650s brought about in England. Responding to this context, Hobbes provided a description of pre-state social existence as 'a state of nature', where people are enmeshed in a 'war of all against all'. Perhaps with an eye to advocate against such a political situation, he theorized the *transcendence* of the state of nature towards orderly coexistence through a Covenant. The Hobbesian solution to the posited dangerous ontology of 'the state of nature' created a fragile peace within a 'commonwealth'. Maintenance of this peace required the vigilance of a state apparatus, the Leviathan. This man-made covenant, by which order is brought about, is a product of man's reason and, as such, resisted any continuity with the medieval understanding of covenants as contracted between the people and a godly or princely sovereign. In Hobbes, the social contract is brought into being solely through man's action and, therefore, is radically individualist in its conception. The social contract has undoubtedly provided political thought with a powerful and lasting imaginary that inseparably links danger, government, and subjectivity.

Transcendence of the state of nature is only possible due to man's 'flash of reason', by which Hobbes meant man's ability to 'recognize as the real enemy not the rival, but "that terrible enemy of nature, death" '.[17] Hence, man self-interestedly chooses to transcend the dangerous state of nature by abandoning the multiplicity of wills present among the people at large. Relegating *responsibility for survival* to the Leviathan was the only means of temporally and spatially transcending the state

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[15] Notable exceptions are James Der Derian, 'The Value of Security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche, Baudrillard', in David Campbell and Michael Dillon (eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence* (Manchester: Machester University Press, 1993), and R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 3; Ashley, 'The Powers of Anarchy'.

[16] Vincent, 'The Hobbesian Tradition in Twentieth Century International Thought', p. 93.

[17] Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes: Its Basis and Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 22.

of nature, in which all persons were enemies to others. In the state of nature the enemy is omnipresent ('all against all') by definition. 'Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall'.[18] It is this conception of the other-as-enemy which makes the notion of an-archy 'dangerous' and establishes survival as the predominant preoccupation of the subject in the state of nature.

The other-as-enemy construct affects *how* the state of nature is theorized and, furthermore, *where* the state of nature is grounded. The enemy is omnipresent because the causes of war are to be found in man's nature. Hobbes writes in this respect, 'that in the nature of man, we find three principall causes of quarrell. First, Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory.' It is important to elaborate that Hobbes does not identify the state of nature in actual fighting and enmity. Rather, he explains that, '…the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary'.[19] The universal disposition to quarrel arises from the equality of men:

Nature hath made men so equall, in the faculties of body, and mind; as that though there bee found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body, or quicker of mind then [sic] another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can claim to himselfe any benefit, to which another may not pretend, as well as he.[20]

Equality, in this regard, leads to similar desires about the material goods or glory 'which neverthelesse they cannot both enjoy'. For this being impossible, men who desire the same thing 'become enemies; and in the way to their End….endeavour to destroy, or subdue one an other'.[21] Yet, in addition to the competition for material goods, the Hobbesian subject comes to desire power in itself. John McCumber argues that the materialist desire for specific objects, which distinguishes the Hobbesian subject, is supplemented 'with the general desire for power'.[22] When Hobbes suggests that there is in mankind 'a generall inclination…a perpetuall, and restlesse desire for Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death',[23] he thereby transforms power from being 'the universal means to satisfying desires into a universal object of desire on its own account'.[24] It is this transformation which delivers the subject to the state of nature and to an understanding of the enemy as the *other* person in competition for *power*, as well as material goods.

Moreover, man's ability to transcend his 'inclination to quarrel' becomes possible by another attribute of Hobbesian subjectivity, namely, Hobbes's distinction between 'danger' and 'sin'. When man is described as *evil* this means 'dangerous'; it should be understood not as theological evil but, rather, as 'the innocent evil of the beasts'.[25]

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[18] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 89.

[19] Both quotes in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 88–9.

[20] Ibid., p. 86–7.

[21] Ibid., p. 87.

[22] John McCumber, *Metaphysics and Oppression: Heidegger's Challenge to Western Philosophy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 138.

[23] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 70.

[24] McCumber, *Metaphysics and Oppression*, p. 138.

[25] Leo Strauss, 'Notes to *The Concept of the Political*' in Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 99.

Man's troublesome nature is, furthermore, compounded by the structure of the state of nature, namely, the absence of a common civil power. Prior to the laying down of his rights by agreeing to the covenant, man is at liberty to do as he pleases. There are no limits to his rights and liberties. He is 'dangerous' because of his quest for power, yet this endless quest for power is largely the result of lacking security to ensure his own survival. The evil of man is not theological but, rather, is grounded in materialist competition, itself pursued due to the lack of other means to security. Hobbes does not have a notion of sin, other than one tied to the disobedience to the covenant, and the laws stated by the Covenant.[26] He rejects a theological conception of evil while, at the same time, attributes danger to man's natural dispositions. Such a configuration of subjectivity, therefore, conceptually enables transcendence through a reformation of the structural conditions of the state of nature. Similarly, the other-as-enemy is not evil, but, rather, dangerous. This distinction between danger and evil is crucial as it explains, William E. Connoly argues, that the Hobbesian self has the reason to recognize the need for society but does not have the nature for it. The subject of the state of nature is in need of education and control.[27]

The state of nature leads man to seek survival, and in order to ensure it he may lay down all his rights but the right to his own life. The only inalienable right, which may not be given up to the Leviathan, is the right to life: 'man cannot lay down the right of resisting them, that assault him by force, to take away his life; because he cannot be understood to ayme thereby, at any Good to himself.'[28] Survival is, in this way, connected to man's natural right, which exists in the state of nature and becomes the *aetiology* for the creation of the Leviathan. Since man has an inalienable right to life, it is his responsibility to himself to ensure that he does survive. Therefore, to transcend the state of nature fulfils the responsibility one has towards oneself to survive. Indeed, transcendence of the state of nature becomes the foremost responsibility of the self and, as such, should not be seen merely as a pragmatic response to danger. As Leo Strauss argues, Hobbes's 'contention that the State originates only in mutual fear and can only so originate had thus moral, not merely technical, significance.'[29]

That survival is intimately connected to Hobbesian subjectivity becomes apparent when, Connoly argues, the state of nature is seen as a construct aiming to express Hobbes's political preoccupations at the time and place of writing:

When Hobbes discusses the state of nature he is talking to people already in civil society. He is not trying to convince them to move from a stateless condition to a state, from a condition in which the passions are wild to one in which they are domesticated. Rather he is persuading imperfectly domesticated subjects that they, in their present state, should consent to remain there and should commit themselves more fully to the habits and principles that ensure the stability of their condition, even though that condition does and must carry many 'inconveniences'.[30]

Thus, Connoly suggests, the purpose of the state of nature is to simulate 'what it would be like to live amongst others in a condition where civil power has been

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[26] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 201.
[27] Connoly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 27.
[28] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 93.
[29] Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 23.
[30] Connoly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 28. See also, Johann P. Sommerville, *Thomas Hobbes: Political Ideas in Historical Context* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1992).

removed'.[31] In this respect, it is advisable to realize that, for Hobbes, the description of the state of nature has an instrumental and disciplinary intent:

the state of nature is shock therapy. It helps subjects to get their priorities straight by teaching them what life would be like without sovereignty. It domesticates by eliciting the vicarious fear of violent death in those who have not had to confront it directly.[32]

Hobbesian subjectivity is shaped, therefore, by the confrontation with the possibility of violent death. Fear of death becomes the means by which the subject, although having no limits to his natural right, cultivates a disposition towards survival. In this manner, with the possibility of death, the right to self-determination and autonomy is relinquished, giving way to sovereign government: 'when one confronts the fear of early and violent death, one becomes willing to regulate oneself and to accept external regulations that will secure life against its dangers. The fear of death pulls the self together.'[33] Transcendence of the danger that man posed to one's self and to others was possible because the Hobbesian self is a curious entity.

The Hobbesian individual is, first, not a given but a formation out of material that is only partly susceptible to this form [social life] and, second, not merely an end in itself but more significantly a means to the end of a stable society. The Hobbesian individual is thus in part a product of the civil society which is to regulate it, and the Hobbesian problem is how to form it so that it will be able and willing to abide by the natural laws and contracts appropriate to civil society.[34]

Hobbes's configuration of subjectivity is, therefore, well served by the accentuation of man's immature and quarrelsome sociability and his disposition to strife. According to Connoly, this 'is a useful passion, useful to an ordering of the self and to peace and quiet in the social order'.[35] Connoly is gesturing towards the curious grounding of danger in human nature. The quarrelsome disposition of man is at once a cause for concern for man's own life and, at the same time, the means to choosing an orderly society, that is, to ensuring that his survival is safeguarded by a state apparatus. Thus, '[t]he self-interested self is an artifice, an artifice celebrated by Hobbes as the one most conducive to a well-ordered society'.[36]

At the same time, however, the achievement of this 'well-ordered society' cannot be taken to imply that survival ceases to be the relational schema through which society is ordered. It is precisely for the fulfilment of the responsibility to survive that a political order is preferred to an-archy and, therefore, instituted. In this way, moreover, the relational schema of relating to the other as a danger to be survived becomes embodied in a political order. What remains to be examined, however, is how survival becomes the relational schema in the international realm, the realm left unregulated by the commonwealth created by the social contract and to which the article turns next.

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[31] Connoly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 29.
[32] Ibid, p. 29.
[33] Ibid., p. 29.
[34] Ibid., p. 27, brackets added.
[35] Ibid., p. 29.
[36] Ibid., p. 29.

Interstate relations in a dangerous ontology

Once order is brought about by the covenant and safeguarded by the Leviathan, danger is relegated to the *outside* of state boundaries, again in the form of others-as-enemies. The relation between anarchy and danger in the international sphere can be traced to the lack of principles which have brought about order inside the Leviathan. *Arche*, meaning principle, dominion and order, enables us to look at an-archy as that condition which still does not conform to the principles of a commonwealth. Thus, danger recreates an *an-archic*, or unprincipled, environment reminiscent of the pre-commonwealth state of nature, where the other-as-enemy is defined as a like-entity, that is, as another Leviathan among many. The outside of the Leviathan remains in the state of nature and offers no security. Beate Jahn has claimed, moreover, that understanding 'the international' as a state of nature 'is the defining claim of IR, its very *raison d'être*'.[37] Based on this logic, realism propagates the notion that survival is the operating concept of 'the international'. As Leo Strauss once noted in this regard, 'in Hobbes there is no question of a total negation of the political; according to his doctrine, the state of nature continues at least in the relationship between the nations'.[38] James Der Derian concurs, noting that 'Hobbes's solution for civil war displaces the disposition for a "warre of every man against every man" to the international arena.'[39] A parallel can be discerned where the state behaves in the international, the outside, in the same fashion as man behaved in the state of nature. The state acts as if it is the object and subject of its responsibility, creating what Der Derian calls 'an ethico-political imperative embedded in the nature of things'.[40]

Carl Schmitt, jurist and political thinker of the inter-war period, has offered a systematic challenge to the proposal that anarchical relations among states can be transcended. To this end, he reflected on the distinguishing features of 'the political' at the level of interstate interaction.[41] Moreover, it is necessary to look at the thought of Schmitt, for he was among the conservative thinkers who had influenced political realists in IR, most notably, Hans Morgenthau.[42] In his monograph *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt provided a clear, but not 'exhaustive', statement of the

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[37] Beate Jahn, 'IR and the State of Nature: The Cultural Origins of a Ruling Ideology', *Review of International Studies* 25: 3 (1999), p. 411.

[38] Strauss, 'Notes to *The Concept of the Political*', p. 90.

[39] Der Derian, 'The Value of Security', p. 99.

[40] Ibid., p. 99.

[41] Transcendence is also challenged by Hedley Bull on the grounds that international society alleviates the need to get rid of anarchy. Despite his analysis against what he termed 'the domestic analogy' Hedley Bull accepts anarchy as 'the central fact of international life and the starting point of theorizing about it'. See Hedley Bull, 'Society and Anarchy in International Relations', in James Der Derian (ed.), *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1995), p. 75.

[42] For an account of Schmitt's influence on Morgenthau, see Jan-Willem Honig, 'Totalitarianism and Realism: Hans Morgenthau's German Years', *Security Studies,* 5: 2 (1995/96), pp. 283–313, and Alfons Soellner, 'German Conservatism in America: Morgenthau's Political Realism', *Telos,* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 161–72. Morgenthau had commented on *The Concept of the Political* in his doctoral thesis. See Hans J. Morgenthau, 'Fragments of an Intellectual Biography', in Kenneth Thompson and R.J. Myers (eds.), *Truth and Tragedy: A Tribute to Hans Morgenthau* (Washington, DC: The New Republic Book Company, 1977), and Hans J. Morgenthau, *La Notion du 'Politique' et la Theorie des Differends Internationaux* (Paris: Sirey, 1933.) The main arguments can be found in English in 'Judicial Settlement', ch. 23, pp. 341–49 and 'The Judicial Function in International Law', ch. 16, pp. 219–27, both in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

distinction that characterizes 'the political', a distinction that had been obscured, he believed, by the predominance of liberal thought and international practice in the years following the First World War. According to Schmitt, '[t]he specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced *is that between friend and enemy*'.[43]

Schmitt can be seen as continuing, yet at the same time refuting, the work of Hobbes. He refutes the Hobbesian *solution* to the problem of the state of nature by reinstating the *position* of the political. Working in the 1920s political climate where belief in law as the arbiter of international politics had become relatively prominent,[44] Schmitt wished to affirm thinking of the international realm as a state of nature. His political theory, exemplary of which is *The Concept of the Political*, is both an affirmation of Hobbes's observations and, at the same time, a challenge to the repercussions of the Hobbesian solution.[45] Hobbes conceived of the state of nature as a 'state of war of all against all'. It was Schmitt's opinion, that international politics were best understood by employing a more nuanced understanding of the enemy, a concept which had been so broadly defined in *Leviathan* to enable transcendence of the state of nature. In the Hobbesian situation of 'war of all against all' every other *is* the enemy. 'War of all against all' translates otherness into enmity in a non-discriminatory way, although, for Hobbesian political philosophy, this non-discrimination was essential, if the solution of a social contract was to succeed. In *Leviathan* there can exist no *decision* as to which otherness leads to enmity and danger. On the contrary, the element of decision is evident only in man's choice to transcend his nature by agreeing 'to lay downe a mans right to any thing'[46] and to create a commonwealth 'to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will'.[47] Thus, the decision in Hobbes is taken when man deems that anarchy is the condition which leads to danger, one which can be overcome by agreeing to a Covenant, whereby men give up their multiplicity of wills.

Schmitt, however, addressed himself to a rather different political situation to that of Hobbes, where the authority of the Weimar Republic appeared threatened by the belief that international law and institutions could better regulate international political life, and where the irrevocable role of the state in the political, he felt, had to be reasserted. For such an assertion to be effective, 'the political' 'must therefore rest on its own ultimate distinctions, to which all action with a specifically political meaning can be traced'.[48] This antithesis of friend/enemy, on which 'the political' rests, 'denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or disassociation'.[49]

This antithesis revokes the notion of transcendence by restricting the occurrence of the state of nature to the *moment* when the political distinction between friend

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[43] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26, emphasis added.
[44] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1981), p. 29.
[45] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, and Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).
[46] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 92.
[47] Ibid., p. 120.
[48] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 26.
[49] Ibid., p. 26.

and enemy is made. For Schmitt, the distinction between friend and enemy is decided only *in the extreme case*, that is, it is an *exception* rather than the norm. The enemy is not omnipresent but can only be decided *as an enemy* if he poses an existential threat. The enemy, Schmitt writes, is 'the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, *existentially something different and alien*, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible'.[50] However, the enemy is not defined as every other one encounters in coexisting; on the contrary, Schmitt's reference to 'enemy' is to the public enemy, decided upon by the state and restricted to another collectivity. 'An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity.'[51] The enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus*, and, therefore, everyday political adversaries cannot be 'enemies'. The political antithesis of friend/enemy is only drawn when a distinct political entity is faced with the possibility of dying and of killing.

By allowing the political to coalesce around the extreme case, Schmitt challenged the possibility of transcending the state of nature in international politics and, hence, called into question the very possibility that the liberal practice of law and the establishment of international institutions could promote peace and prevent war. If the state of nature can be transcended then 'the political' is threatened.[52] The affirmation of the primacy of 'the political' *in the extreme case* eliminates, then, the possibility of transcendence. The impossibility of transcendence is further strengthened by the fact that, although every distinction draws upon other distinctions to reinforce itself, the political distinction remains autonomous. The friend/enemy distinction may be asserted without such recourse to the moral, the aesthetic, the economic, the religious: the state is able to distinguish who is the enemy solely by judging whether the other 'intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed'.[53] Thus, 'the political' has an objective and autonomous nature in the thinking of Schmitt, such that it can distinguish and act with regard to the friend/enemy distinction without needing to refer to other antitheses, such as moral or aesthetic considerations.

With regards to 'morality', moreover, 'the political' is conceived as the moment of decision between friend/enemy, which is exempt from all justifications, where there is 'justification by mere existence'.[54] The existential threat of the enemy makes the political devoid of all other concerns: 'the political' does not need to *justify* its existence by reference to other concerns. It is justified by the mere existence of an existential threat. The enemy raises the question of whether the collectivity, the 'we', wants to take responsibility for its existence. Again, the affirmation of 'the political' animates and validates the responsibility to survive. It is the collectivity's continued survival that justifies, 'by mere existence', the possibility of physical killing. Once the decision is taken, the enemy's presence accentuates the fact that the political entity has a responsibility to survive. Again, it must be noted that survival is not merely

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[50] Ibid., p. 27, emphasis added.
[51] Ibid., p. 28.
[52] Leo Strauss wrote extensively on the consequences of the threat to the political. See Strauss, 'Notes to *The Concept of the Political*', pp. 96–101.
[53] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 27.
[54] Herbert Marcuse, *Negations* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1968), pp. 30–31, cited in Tracy B. Strong, 'Foreword: Dimensions of the New Debate around Carl Schmitt', in Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. xvii. Also, see Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 49.

existential but ethical.[55] Since this existentially threatening moment is not embodied in an omnipresent enemy, as in Hobbes's thought, but rather is the exception to the rule, it cannot be transcended.

It is important, at this stage, to note briefly that in IR Schmitt's thought has legitimized the view that survival is an existential concern. Yet, misreading Schmitt, political realists claimed that the existentially threatening other is that which evacuates 'the political' from any *need* for justification. Schmitt, inadvertently, enabled political realism to assume a stance against 'ethics', largely understood as morality. In thinkers influenced by Schmitt, such as Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger,[56] this presumed non-ethics became itself prescriptive in a prohibitive way: that the enemy is not to be accorded ethical significance.[57] Extrapolating further, the realist conception became that, in international politics, 'the ethical' is a realm best left alone, lest it obscure the political decision of who the enemy is *in the extreme case*. Schmitt reinstated the state of nature by restricting its occurrence in the extreme case, that is, when a collectivity is faced with an existential threat, whence springs its responsibility to survive. For Schmitt, the autonomy of 'the political' is based on the recognition of the existentially threatening enemy, which brings to the fore the collectivity's responsibility to survive and by recourse to which the distinction between friend/enemy is drawn. In realism, however, the argument for the autonomy of the political distinction is taken to prescribe that 'the ethical' should not be allowed to obscure 'the political'. In political realism, then, the autonomy of 'the political', or 'the international', becomes divorced from its ethico-relational justification, namely, the state's responsibility towards the group's survival. To reiterate, Schmitt's refutation of the possibility of transcendence and his reformulation that 'the state of nature' occurs only in an extreme case, perpetuates and refines the ethos of survival as the mode of encountering and being with others at the interstate level. The ethos of survival as the relationality established by the acceptance of the dangerous ontology is discussed in greater detail below.

The ethos of survival: inside and outside

The article has, thus far, used the term *ethos*, tentatively defined as an attitude or mode of relating to the other, to illuminate the operation of an ethos of survival within the Hobbesian and Schmittian ontologies of danger. It is perhaps important to move, at this stage, towards a more coherent and grounded formulation of ethics

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[55] This is also apparent in Schmitt's treatment of the 'internal enemy' as well, see Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 46–7. It is important to note that the 'we' is formed in the *particular* case and time, according to the decision of friend/enemy and does not always include or exclude the same groups or elements. For an engagement with Schmitt's ethical and political thought on the enemy, see Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 75–137.

[56] See note 38 for Schmitt's influence on Morgenthau. On Kissinger see, Stanley Hoffman, 'The Case of Dr. Kissinger', *The New York Review of Books*, 27 (6 December 1979), p. 22.

[57] Morgenthau argues that in the international sphere, morality plays a primarily ideological function in that powerful nation states identify their national interests with universal moral principles. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 51–2. This mirrors Schmitt's concern in the 1920s that liberalism's hegemony served to disguise the workings of power in the language of morality.

as ethos in order to be able to comment further on the possibility of 'an ethical international relations'. The conceptual movement from ethics, traditionally understood in terms of a moral code or a set of principles for ethical action,[58] to ethics taken as a mode of relating, is achieved through a reformulation of Martin Heidegger's usage of 'ethics'.[59] In *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger argues that ethos

means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which the human being dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to the essence of the human being, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear.[60]

Ethos, then, is man's place of dwelling and enables that which is proximate to man to reveal itself.[61] The article uses this conceptual basis to reformulate ethos as the mode, and attitude, with which man relates to what arrives and 'resides in nearness to him'.[62] In this manner, the other, taken as the one in proximity to the self (not to be understood in a solely geographical sense), is related to through an attitude or mode that is affected by nearness, whether this has meant material competition, competition for power, or the possibility of posing an existential threat in the examples given above from Hobbes and Schmitt.

The preceding arguments can now be rethought on this conceptual basis, noting that the dangerous ontology of the state of nature, where proximity to others is theorized as a 'warre of all against all', determines sociality through an overriding imperative: survival. The essence of man, according to Hobbes, is utilized to connect danger and subjectivity and reduces, in this way, proximity to a relation of enmity. It is only when, in contradistinction to ethics as codified morality, ethics is understood as the mode of relating to those residing in proximity to the self, that survival is *revealed* to be the predominant ethos of these Hobbesian and Schmittian ontologies. 'Survival', then, can be seen as a *particular* kind of a relational mode, whose focus is the protection of the self and the surviving of the other. The relation to the other becomes a relation of danger, one to be transcended in concordance with the ethical imperative of self-preservation. As Strauss noted in this regard, '[s]elf-preservation and the striving after peace for the sake of self-preservation are 'necessary', because man fears death with inescapable necessity'.[63]

At the interstate level, Schmitt enabled a discriminatory decision towards survival, one that rests on the extreme case of existential threat. Furthermore, the emphasis on the distinction between friend and enemy as the moment of 'the political' relegates the relational schema, through which others outside the state are encountered, to the state's sovereign control. The ethos of survival provides the state with the locus of responsibility (itself, as contracted to by the state's subjects) and allows the state to

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[58] Charles E. Scott, *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 4.

[59] Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', trans. F.A. Capuzzi, in Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, William McNeill (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 239–76.

[60] Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', p. 269. The discussion, from which his thinking is drawn, is based on Heraclitus's fragment 119, which states that 'A man's character is his daimon', meaning god.

[61] See also the extended discussion of *ethos* in Scott, *The Question of Ethics*, pp. 143–47.

[62] Michel Foucault's thinking on ethics was influenced by Heidegger: '[e]thics is a practice; ethos is a manner of being', he writes, although he re-articulates ethics as *techne tou biou*, or a technology of the self in his later writings. For an account, see Michel Foucault, 'Ethics and Politics: An Interview', and 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: Overview of Work in Progress', both in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 377 and p. 343 respectively.

[63] Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes*, p. 25.

ignore responsibility to any external others, as this would not directly pertain to the survival of the collectivity in question. Of significance to our thinking about ethics is not only the fact that the other is dangerous and conceptually encountered *as* an enemy. What is of greater importance, furthermore, is the linkage between responsibility and survival, where responsible action is understood to be related to the self's (be this a group or an individual) survival. Realism, grounded as it is on the ontology of danger, employs a particular operative 'ethical' schema that can now be revealed as one of survival and self-preservation. Arguably, this ethos is in operation whenever the anarchic system is invoked.

Furthermore, it should be stated, the spacio-temporal transcendence of the state of nature does not amount to a negation of the ethos of survival. Rather, this ethos by which persons are related to each other in the state of nature, now becomes transposed onto the 'inside'. The social contract assigned the management of relations within the commonwealth to the Leviathan, which upholds the vigilant relationality of the inside in order to ensure that an-archy does not return. Hence, the ethos of survival is retained as the operative ethical framework of the state. The Covenant, by which we relinquish the state of nature, transposes the relational schema of survival to the 'we' or the 'within'. Those who subscribe to the Covenant and the commonwealth are not enemies, by virtue of the creation of the Leviathan, who ensures that they are not. Consent to the contract is for Hobbes an ethical relation of the people to their fellow men of 'the inside', an ethical relation based on the responsibility for survival.

Acceptance of the focus on 'survival' as proof of the lack of 'ethical' concern (the existence of an international moral code) obscures the 'self'-relating schema at play. It fails, in other words, to recognize the presence of an implicit hostile relationality to the other, where man is both the subject and object of his own responsibility. This relationality is, what is more, transferred to the international level where states relate as enemies in extreme cases. The article, therefore, calls for the recognition of the ethos of survival as that mode of relating to others-as-enemies, which is operative within the anarchic ontology of danger. As the following section discusses, this has implications for the way international politics is conceptualized and its relation to ethical theorizing.

From 'ethics *and* IR' to 'an ethical international relations'

The illustration of the discursive creation of the ground of danger is not an isolated event of textual interest to historians of ideas alone. Rather, the discursive creation of the dangerous ontology and the perpetuation of its particular ethos can be shown to have implications for ethical theorizing within the discipline of IR. Specifically for the realists, and generally for those who tacitly accept/operate within an ontology of an anarchic realm, a parallel framing of self/other as self/enemy occurs in the case of ethics/IR. At the very least, the unchallenged acceptance of this ontology legitimates, among realists primarily but not exclusively, the widely held belief that international relations and ethics are considered to be distinct and separate fields of study. It enables realist scholars to treat ethics and IR as if constituted by and operating within a dichotomous relationship. In other words, tacit or explicit acceptance of the

ontology of danger effects a 'cross-roads mentality', where IR and ethics are considered to be distinct domains of inquiry, which are brought together, and exist at this juncture, with great difficulty.[64]

The tentativeness of this juncture establishes, not only the distinct nature of these two allegedly discrete fields of inquiry but, also, the fact that international relations, by which I mean the 'reality' of relations between states as actors and agents, are not amenable to ethical thought and action. 'Ethics' is rendered as a domain with fixed meanings, with a specific, knowable, and noble intent, as John D. Caputo once remarked,[65] yet one whose very concerns do not fit the 'reality' from which IR theories derive and to which their prescriptive injunctions must conform. The historical 'colonization' of IR by this largely realist ontology constructs it as a discipline whose prime concern is to ensure that the state (and its represented domestic constituency) survives in a hostile environment consisting of like-minded actors with similar intentions and fears.

The juxtaposition of the 'noble intent' of ethics, understood as a moral code for international action, and the realist 'reminder' as to the certain incompatibility of their successful interaction, establishes a universalist and notably 'liberal' understanding of ethics, one that claims that states as moral agents ought to act according to principles designed for the individual moral agent. Gordon Graham concedes that '[t]he importance of the idea that nations have moral rights, of which the most important is the right to self-government, can hardly be exaggerated. It colours almost all thinking about ethics in international affairs.'[66] This fixity of the meaning of ethics can be readily discerned from the reactions to the problematic and cautionary insertion of 'ethics' into this dangerous ontology. The mainstream, which claims to take an explanatory, descriptive, but not prescriptive approach to relations between states, views ethics as a restraining influence, one that demands that the (allegedly) self-interested actions of states be subjected to a moral or ethical code of action or behaviour. The idea that ethics is a restraining factor in the way states act, as opposed to an enabling, motivating factor for action, is the result of the unproblematized ontology of danger upon which such statements are made. This is why calls for the resurgence of ethics in IR, or for recognition of the normative aspects of the subject matter,[67] are seen by the mainstream as a surprising and tentative event, one that is aware of its transgression into 'dangerous' territory.[68] Scholars wishing to engage in ethical theorizing in IR ought to be aware, we are warned, of the harsh terrain of the discipline's subject matter, one not amenable to ethical *restraint*, and of the danger which we may unleash by being too successful in bringing 'ethics' *to* 'IR'.

The positing of ethics as the noble opponent of IR can be understood through a brief reference to the often-invoked debate between communitarians and

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[64] This resonates with the observations Walker made about ethics and IR in Walker, *Inside/Outside*, p. 50 and ch. 3 in general.

[65] John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics: Contributions to a Poetic of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 3.

[66] Gordon Graham, *Ethics and International Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 5.

[67] See Mervyn Frost, *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

[68] See Graham, *Ethics and International Relations*.

universalists,[69] which frames discussions in moral philosophy and political theory, regarding the specific grounding of morality. Universalists tend to argue for universal codes, often based on some conception of humankind or human existence, itself the legacy of the natural law and natural right tradition, while communitarians insist on grounding moral codes in the particular community.[70] This debate takes on a different tone in mainstream IR which, as a discipline, has *always already* operated within a particularist ethos. Any attempts to change this particularist ethical drive of the state/community towards survival usually come from liberal universalist ethics, which seek to establish agreed-upon universal moral code(s) for state action. Hence, the 'ethics and IR debate' continuously re-enacts itself: 'ethics' constantly reminds 'IR' of the moral code, one which IR shamefully finds it cannot abide, because it would be to its detriment to do so in the anarchic world—out there. To return to *Millennium*'s editorial injunction, it can be said that the Hobbesian ethos of survival has created, and is embodied in, the very *agenda* of realist IR.

Furthermore, the framing of *self/other* into *self/enemy* means that decisions that affect the other are understood to be about the self. International action is therefore always framed in terms of the needs or interests of the 'self' and not in terms of the other. As Connolly argues, in the ontology of danger 'those already in civil society [are encouraged] to treat the laws of nature as injunctions of the self'.[71] The 'laws' or conceptual framework through which we relate to the other are not readily open to interpretation. Rather, they tend to be articulated in terms of relating to the other as an enemy. Retaining a conception of 'ethics' as a moral code with fixed meanings occludes this powerful and prohibitive account of relating to others, this ethos of survival, which permeates realist theorizing about the relations between states.

Concluding remarks

Scholars of IR interested in theorizing 'ethical international relations' must seek to challenge the naturalness of the juncture of 'ethics *and* international relations'.[72] Below and by way of conclusion, I outline two of the repercussions of the failure to acknowledge that the ontology of danger, and its attendant ethos, frames realist thinking about the other(s)—out there—for specific theoretical issues, as well as for practical purposes. First, it blinds IR theorizing to the fact that, within the parameters of such an ontology of danger, a relational schema towards the other is *always already* at play. Analyses of situations which might require action or which might lead to inaction operate within a framework of relating, where the other is dangerous and where 'ethical' action is seen as an activity with the potential to return us to the anarchy that 'we' have *responsibly* transcended. I highlight 'responsibly' in an attempt to show that this ethos of survival does not only underlie the relation to the other, but also the positing of the self as the subject *and* object of responsibility.

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[69] For an overview see Brown, *International Relations Theory*.
[70] Ibid., chapters 2–4.
[71] Connoly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, p. 31.
[72] For a brilliant explication see Walker, *Inside/Outside*, p. 50 and ch. 3 in general.

Second, this operating relational framework encumbers current and future theorizing about relationality. Theorizing for an ethical international relations must initially proceed with disclosing the ethos of survival, with understanding, in other words, *ethics as IR* and *IR as ethics*. To move beyond this schema, or ethos, ethical theorizing must challenge the ground on which survival becomes the prime objective of responsibility. It must be understood, in other words, that the relational schema of the other-as-enemy does not appear in its normative dimensions and has come to be perceived as a pragmatic/prudent approach to world politics. The result of such a naturalization is that IR is portrayed as a discipline where 'ethics' form a secondary concern. If one wished to be concerned about 'ethics', then one speaks of adding the normative back to the agenda of IR. Thus, it becomes obscured *what* are *the* ethics of the agenda of realist IR which is, as was argued above, the agenda of survival. I would finally suggest that this schema must be denaturalized in order to reveal, first, that it has become prohibitive for ethical theorizing and second, to allow for the transcendence of the dichotomous relation of ethics/IR and move us towards 'ethical international theorizing'.