

## ***The Tragedy of Reason and IR's Forgotten Man.*<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

This paper offers insights for a new reading and understanding of the life work of Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), suggesting he is of considerable importance for our understanding of contemporary world politics. His work generally,<sup>2</sup> but especially his monumental *Study of History*<sup>3</sup>, was an intellectual inquiry turned existential quest that attempted to understand the laws, lessons and essence of human history. In this quest, Toynbee was forced into attempting to transcend the limits of his own thinking- or more accurately of a particular way of 'western' thinking. He ventured through what are now well-understood, historiographical, sociological, constructivist, mythopoeic, tragic, and dialogical approaches such that his epistemic journey bears a striking resemblance to IR's own intellectual trajectory. By reading Toynbee in light of these now well-understood discourses, we can reveal his pioneering deployment of epistemologies that were intriguingly ancient, post-enlightenment and 'Other'. This suggests Toynbee would sit comfortably amongst the current IR discourses and thus speaks directly to IR today. Importantly, Toynbee's journey continued on past 'western' approaches and also pre-empted another particular current concern of IR- dialogue with the other. Shortly before his death, Toynbee held a dialogue with an exotic other in the person of Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese Mahayana Buddhist. In this exchange Toynbee remarked upon a Buddhist insight that we suggest may throw light on the problems of incommensurability that might be preventing dialogue within IR.

To illustrate these issues we first need to explicate our insights into the methods and epistemologies used in his study and illustrate how this led very naturally into his 'eastern' journey. Whilst other scholars have noted some of his methodological 'eccentricities', we suggest however, they read him through historiographical geopolitical lenses that close down rather than open up the epistemological possibilities and trajectory in his work, and thus prevent further dialogue. In this paper we will identify a number of approaches that help us understand what Toynbee was trying to do. These include his ancient and quantum science, his grammatical empiricism, his critical and constructivist reflexivity, his heuristic of tragedy and use of mythology, and finally his journey eastwards and engagement with Mahayana Buddhism. We should make clear that we are interested in revealing his epistemology and how this relates to IR.

### **Toynbee's work and reception**

Toynbee worked for government intelligence departments during two world wars and later became Director of Studies for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (later Chatham House). He wrote over ninety books, authored and edited 32 volumes of an Annual Survey of International Affairs, numerous journal and newspaper articles, radio and TV broadcasts. His personal major opus was a forty year 12 volume, *A Study of History*. The public purchased over 200,000 copies, but the academic reception was devastating. A.J.P Taylor accused him of being monstrously irrational, Charles A. Beard called him a

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<sup>1</sup> This paper owes much to the support I received in my PhD supervision by Stefan Rossbach at the University of Kent; of course he might not agree with any of my views and is in no way responsible for them.

<sup>2</sup> Toynbee authored 60 plus monographs alone, and edited much of a thirty-two volume Annual Survey of International Affairs.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 12 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948-1961). In the following we will refer to the *Study* as Toynbee, "Study," Z:ABC. We refer to volume 12 as "Reconsiderations".

'wild metaphysician', and Hugh Trevor-Roper seriously compared Toynbee to Hitler. In IR, E. H. Carr called him a utopian moraliser, Mason said he was an amateur, and Zahn thought he was a prophet- no theorist. Much of the criticism centred on his claimed empiricism and his shift into religion. There were however some more thoughtful reviewers including Eric Voegelin, Lewis Mumford, Pitkin Sorokin and Hans Morgenthau. This paper begins by taking his Study seriously where others obviously did not. We also take serious his 1956 statement that the final four volumes were written from an 'Indian perspective' and follow his injunction to dialogue with the 'east' –in particular with Mahayana Buddhism.

### **Toynbee's methods**

In opposition to his critics who suggested his methods were arbitrary, non-existent, or even a sham<sup>4</sup> we find Toynbee clearly explained his initial three methodological techniques<sup>5</sup> as being Aristotelian.<sup>6</sup> These were: history (looking at particulars), science (developing universals and laws), and poetic fiction (drama and novels that reveal the truths of personal relations). Furthermore we find that his *genus* of societies and civilizations as *species* were also obviously Aristotelian; his concluding tragic reading of history was also informed by Greek drama and his dialogue with Aristotle- in the form of the *Poetics*; and that Toynbee's incorporation of an intuitive method was gained from Plato (and later Bergson<sup>7</sup>). Intuition provided insights (rather than theories) into the wholeness of the cosmos and the subjective nature of time that was prevented rather than assisted by analytical abstraction. Of course 'irrational' intuition was highly suspect in his time, but when we consider the Zen, Sufi and other approaches that Chan, Mandaville identify as triggering insights rather than theories,<sup>8</sup> perhaps the former strangeness of intuition provokes less rational fear in our current times.

### **History Science and Fiction**

In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle regards science as the *art* of conceiving universals from the observation of many similar particulars.<sup>9</sup> In his *Poetics* Aristotle considered history as the study of particulars whilst poetry – and therefore drama and the novel – as the study of universals. Consequently, Aristotle sees poetry as a higher form of enquiry than history, which only teaches or studies particulars. Toynbee challenged Aristotle about history and science. Toynbee points to a key section in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1451b) as the centre of the dispute.<sup>10</sup> Toynbee notes that by "[...] identifying the creations of 'fiction'

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<sup>4</sup> Ian Hall noted, "As his critics recognised, however, his 'empiricism' was at best eccentric and at worst a 'sham'. Citing Maurice Cowling (1980) *Religion and the Public Doctrine in Modern England* I, p20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. In Ian Hall *Challenge and Response: The Lasting Engagement of Arnold J. Toynbee and Martin Wight*. Copy received from Dr Hall.

<sup>5</sup> In the very first volume of the *Study* Toynbee declared that his techniques for studying phenomena were history, science and fiction. Toynbee, "*Study*," 1:441. We suggest that they can be found in the *Poetics* and *Metaphysics*.

<sup>6</sup> "According to the popular view [...] the techniques [...] History [...] Science [...] Fiction [...] have a respectable origin – they can be traced back to Aristotle." Toynbee, "*Study*," 1:441.

<sup>7</sup> He cited extensively Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1926) and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Chan and Peter Mandaville "Introduction: Within International Relations Itself, a new culture Rises Up" in *The Zen of International Relations: IR Theory from East to West*, Eds. Stephen Chan, Peter Mandaville and Roland Bleiker (Hampshire: Palgrave 2001), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, "*Metaphysics*," book 1 981a.

<sup>10</sup> Toynbee, "*Study*," 1:441. Footnote 2. Aristotle writes, "The historian differs from the poet in this, that the historian presents what did happen while the poet presents what might happen. For this reason Poetry is more philosophic and less trivial than History; for poetry presents generalities, History merely particulars. Generalities mean the kind of thing that this or that person is apt or bound to say or do; and

with generalities, Aristotle would appear to be confusing the technique of the drama and the novel with the technique of science, in order to distinguish them both from the technique of 'history' (so called)."<sup>11</sup> The key issue for Toynbee is that he wants 'history' to be recognized as an area of study, or as a technique of observation, that can also reveal generalities. The historian, too, can look for that which is universal in the phenomena he or she is studying. But in this sense the phenomena is subtly different. The historian has also to engage with 'fictions' because there are creative elements to historical writing without it becoming an arbitrary act of the imagination. Toynbee goes on to discuss the nature of fictions in the *Study* and we will pick up that discussion below. The relevant point in this initial discussion is that he comes to the project with Aristotelian techniques or methods. The first two- historiographical empiricism (particulars) and scientific comparison (looking for laws) – are, incidentally, defining concerns of IR's second debate. His reading and use of the third technique – fiction - can be seen as breaking into the 'territory' of the third debate whereby critical and constructivist issues are brought into consciousness. Before we look at his constructivism, however, we need to explicate a little more of his 'science'.

### **Ancient science**

Toynbee's world was constituted through his 'ancient' education. This western intellectual training is commonly known today as the seven liberal arts but originally consisted of the quadrivium<sup>12</sup> and especially the trivium. Whereas the former consisted of *subjects* for study, the latter provided the *method* of studying these subjects and it consisted of Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectics (logic). Rhetoric<sup>13</sup> was the art of persuasion and Dialectics the logic of 'correct' thinking, but as McLuhan's classic work<sup>14</sup> on the trivium points out, Grammar was not a mere set of linguistic rules. Grammar was the art of interpreting not only literary texts but also all phenomena and entailed a fully articulated science of exegesis, or interpretation.<sup>15</sup> Grammar is situated between the names of things and the things themselves. In Plato's dialogue *Cratylus*, Socrates and Cratylus discuss the role of names. Socrates asks how the givers of names had the knowledge to do so, and Cratylus answers that "a power more than human gave things their first names, and the names that were thus given are necessarily their true names," thus McLuhan notes, "with this kind of importance associated with the names of things, and of gods, heroes, and legendary beings, etymology would be a main source of scientific and moral enlightenment."<sup>16</sup> Grammarians also reasoned by analogy and Toynbee especially was 'accused' of this unscientific method - rather than perhaps being properly understood. Grammarians were the interpreters and protectors of knowledge and the social order<sup>17</sup> so we might reasonably suggest

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this is what poetry aims at presenting under the mask of the proper names which it confers on its characters. Particulars mean what Alcibiades did or had done to him."

<sup>11</sup> Toynbee, "Study," 1:442.

<sup>12</sup> The four original subjects were Astronomy, Mathematics, Music and Geometry.

<sup>13</sup> McLuhan, "The Classical Trivium," xi. These involved five dimensions: *inventio* (discovery), *dispositio* (arrangement), *memoria* (memory), *elocutio* (style), and *pronunciatio* (delivery).

<sup>14</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Classical Trivium: The Place of Thomas Nash In The Learning of His Time*, ed. W. Terrence Gordon (California: Ginko Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Gordon's "Introduction" in McLuhan, "The Classical Trivium," xi. The elements of grammar were defined by Varro as *lectio* (reading aloud), *enarratio* (interpretation of texts), *emendatio* (their correction), and *iudicium* [sic] (their evaluation) in Lia Formigari, *A History of Language Philosophies*, translated by Gabriel Poole (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Adams Publishing 2004). 30.

<sup>16</sup> McLuhan, "The Classical Trivium," 15: Citing Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, 1, 678.

<sup>17</sup> Toynbee's concern with 'order' was well recognised and understandable having witnessed two world wars with the prospect of an apocalyptic nuclear third. As McLuhan notes, "the pursuit of psychological

Grammarians were the social scientists of their day. Toynbee's anti-rational, anti-western accusers<sup>18</sup> failed to understand that Toynbee thought and wrote as a non-modern.<sup>19</sup> Toynbee studied the classics not just as pieces of information, but he absorbed and internalised their way of thinking. He studied Latin from age seven, Greek from age ten, both through to his twenty-second year as he finished his studies at Oxford.<sup>20</sup> Using an approach first designed in Antiquity and then re-invented during the Renaissance allowed him to, "see the Western World with the eyes of those fifteenth-century scholars. [...] Seen from this "classical" standpoint, our familiar Western World undergoes a metamorphosis that is startling but instructive."<sup>21</sup> Instead of regarding one's own society as coextensive with the world, the grammatical perspective reveals to the observer that the Western world looks "less large and looks less grand. Its appearance on the scene strikes him as being, at best, an epilogue that makes an anti-climax. At worst it seems an impertinence or even an outrage."<sup>22</sup> In other words, his classical education allowed Toynbee to stand outside his own culture as he adopted what appeared simplistically as an anti-western but was really an anti-hegemonic and intellectually humble outlook that relativizes the significance of any present - in this case the arrogant self-understanding that the modern-west was even a pinnacle let alone the end of history.

### Quantum science

If his ancient science escaped the radar of his reviewers, to make matters more complex, Toynbee also deployed insights from the new sciences of quantum physics and Relativity. Toynbee's comparative civilizations were initially conceived as independent 'things', but quickly reconceived as intra-related quantum fields. This in turn required a departure from the 'rational' linguistic use of is/is-not binary logic to the use of a vocabulary he thought captured the 'contradictory' (non-dual) nature of these 'fields'.<sup>23</sup> Together his ancient grammatical and post-modern quantum 'empiricism' remained outside of the methodological spectrum of his modern 'positivist' peers and 'historiographical' reviewers. Interestingly, he incorporated insights from the emerging new physics using Jan Smut's *Holism and Evolution*.<sup>24</sup> The latter was itself Smut's attempt at a new radical non-dual conceptualisation and vocabulary based upon

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order in the midst of a material and political chaos is the essence of grammatica." McLuhan, "*The Classical Trivium*," xi

<sup>18</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper declared "Toynbee is still the philosophic ally of any conqueror who will destroy the West [...]. Toynbee detests Western civilization because it is basically liberal and rational. Detesting it, he wishes to see it destroyed, and he does not care who destroys it." H. Trevor-Roper "Arnold Toynbee's Millennium" in *Encounter* Vol. 8 No.6 (London: June, 1957), 14-28.

Dutch historian Peter Geyl similarly found Toynbee's "ostentation of detachment from his own heritage [...] prideful", 'sinful', and 'ridiculous.'" Toynbee, "*Reconsiderations*," 584.

<sup>19</sup> Though Kenneth Thompson did note, "Most of his definitions are literary rather than scientific, and much of his terminology has that breadth and vagueness which generally characterizes spiritual interpretations of history." Kenneth Thompson, *Toynbee's Philosophy of World History and Politics* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 216. But McLuhan is pointing out in the 'ancient' world grammatica is science.

<sup>20</sup> "Education at Winchester in the years 1902-7 was nine-tenths classical [...] at the age of sixteen [...]. In order to escape calculus and facilitate] reading Greek and Latin literature more widely...I chose to give up mathematics [...] I have lived to regret this keenly." Arnold Toynbee, *Experiences* (Oxford: OUP, 1970), 11-20

<sup>21</sup> Toynbee, "*Reconsiderations*," 581.

<sup>22</sup> Toynbee, "*Reconsiderations*," 581.

<sup>23</sup> There is a critically important philosophical point contained in his use of mythological language.

"The event can be best described in these mythological images because they are not embarrassed by the contradiction that arises when the statement is translated into logical terms." Toynbee, "*Study*," 1:278.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Christian Smuts, *Holism and Evolution: the original source of the holistic approach to life* Sanford Holst Ed., (California: Sierra Publishing, 1996)

Einstein's theory of Relativity. Smuts saw Relativity as revealing the intra-dependence of physics, mind and life. Toynbee's science was ultimately therefore both ancient and quantum, but significantly not Newtonian. The discovery of quantum reality seemed to imply that the pursuit of the substance, of the ultimate thing, was an illusion. Reality was not what it appeared to be. The substance-based, classical approach to science came to an end once he entered the enigmatic realm of life and the realm of living beings. This approach to reality gave Toynbee's outlook a certain critical edge, which did not shy away from taking on the great iconic 'substance' of the time, the Nation and nationalistic history.

### **Nomological to mythological**

In looking for history's laws, Toynbee looked at 'physical' geographic and even racial causes for the rise (and later fall) of civilizations but he could find no nomological explanations. Arguing that scientific causality was too behaviourist or mechanical for explaining human creativity he then explored what we now consider 'structure and agency' under the heuristic of challenge and response,<sup>25</sup> a theme he found in the world's mythological literature. This was, in modern parlance, a shift from positivist behaviourism to constructivism. Mythological literature allowed him to access those living agents of the past who were long gone because the literature embedded the 'psychological truths' of the human relations of these civilizations.<sup>26</sup> These were not necessarily historical particulars (though they could be) but were more general 'poetic, philosophical truths'. This 'method' was also a mix of Aristotelian influence -as found in the *Metaphysics and Poetics*- and Plato in the use of myth.<sup>27</sup> As mentioned above, utilising mythological vocabulary also allowed him to articulate contradictions that binary language could not.

### **Critical and constructivist**

Toynbee reflexively (and critically) pointed out that despite historians' sincere view that historiography tells the facts- these facts were nothing other than linguistic constructions and their narratives were both located and interested accounts based on an individuals' inescapable presuppositions. These inevitably revealed political and epistemic persuasions (he saw many of his peers as - parochially nationalistic and obsessively specific due to their "excessive mining of the exploding western archives") though not sharing their presuppositions he absolutely included himself in this reflexive interested implication. This 'constructivist' and 'critical' approach was not well received and his revelation of the historians' trade secrets further alienated Toynbee from his 'objective-professional' contemporaries.

As an example, Toynbee explains that we cannot record the history of our 'Western Society' without referring to the 'fictitious' (mythological) nature of the names of the relevant states. As we use names such as Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, we are treating these fictitious persons as though they were human beings in personal relations with each other. He emphasizes, however, that France is no nearer to reality than the 'Gallic Cock', and 'Britain' is no nearer to reality than 'John Bull', and we hardly get closer to reality by writing 'Republique Francais' or 'His Majesty's Government'. Toynbee is fully

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<sup>25</sup> "The environment resolves itself into an omnipresent object confronting the omnipresent power which manifests itself in Life. We may conceive of this object as an obstacle lying across the path of the *Élan Vital* or as an Adversary challenging a living God to halt or do battle." Toynbee, "Study," 1:270.

<sup>26</sup> "Myths as I use them [...] are symbols of psychological phenomena. Being symbols, they are models, and, being models, they are heuristic hypotheses for exploring psychological dramas within a single human soul and in the relations between two souls or more." Toynbee, "Reconsiderations," 251-2.

<sup>27</sup> "In making a final attempt to solve the riddle that has been baffling us, let us follow Plato's lead and try the alternative course. Let us shut our eyes, for the moment, to the formulae of Science in order to open our ears to the language of Mythology." Toynbee, "Study," 1:271.

aware of the fact that language is based on social conventions. Moreover, language constructs reality by simplifying it:

[...] it is hardly possible to write two consecutive lines of historical narrative without introducing fictitious personifications of institutions and ascribing to them anthropomorphically the desires, feelings, thoughts, actions, and in fact all the psychic activities of human beings [...]. In making use of these mythological counters we are misrepresenting reality, yet, however conscious we may be of their falsifying effect, we cannot do without them.<sup>28</sup>

He also advises us that his own labels, types and categories are 'fictions', constructivist symbols – they are necessary but they do not represent absolute certainties for the subject matter to come. It may be useful to understand them as 'indices' of a particular understanding of, and approach to, history, but they will inevitably be replaced. Seventy years later, the constructivist IR theorist Alexander Wendt is encountering the same problem – the problem that 'fictions' are unavoidable in our accounts of reality – a problem that affects both social reality and social science:

Are States People Too? *Social Theory's* claim that states are actors to which we can attribute human qualities is criticized by Cederman and Daase, Suganami, and especially Zehfuss, but their skepticism is probably widely shared among IR scholars. Although the discourse of state personhood pervades IR scholarship, few of us seem willing to say that states really are persons. We treat state personhood as a useful fiction, a convenient metaphor for the actions of individuals, not a description of how the world really is.<sup>29</sup>

Wendt's constructivism is one in which "people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them."<sup>30</sup> In this framework, "actors acquire identities – relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self – by participating in such collective meanings." Therefore, "identities are inherently relational".<sup>31</sup> Toynbee's own search for a 'middle way' leads him to a very similar approach; he also emphasizes the relational aspect of identity. In his *Study of History*, Toynbee explained that "the cause of the genesis of civilizations is not simple but multiple; it is not an entity but a relation."<sup>32</sup> Moreover, these relations are to be found in 'fields' – fields of action for individuals and their interactions. Social relations are always already there as a precondition for any changes in the self-understanding of human beings, "Man [...] is essentially a social animal, in the sense that social life is a condition which the evolution of Man out of Sub-Man presupposes, and without which that evolution could not conceivably have taken place."<sup>33</sup>

### **Bleiker's Gap**

Understanding the gap between language and reality has led to further explorations in how we might 'write' IR. Roland Bleiker's two essays "*The Aesthetic Turn in International Theory*" and "*Forget IR*

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<sup>28</sup> Toynbee, "Study," 1:422.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Social Theory As Cartesian Science: An Auto-Critique From A Quantum Perspective," in Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander Ed., *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his Critics*, (New York, Routledge, 2005), 202.

<sup>30</sup> Wendt, "Anarchy," 396-7.

<sup>31</sup> Wendt, "Anarchy," 397.

<sup>32</sup> Toynbee, "Study" 1:271

<sup>33</sup> Toynbee, "Study," 3:218.

*Theory*” are a good example.<sup>34</sup> In the former Bleiker explores the difference between the mimetic and the aesthetic use of language using the example of Rene Magritte’s painting of a pipe that includes the text ‘this is not a pipe’.<sup>35</sup> In Saussurian terms, Bleiker highlights the gap between the signified and signifier because, obviously, the painting of the pipe is not the pipe but a representation. Bleiker then proceeds to extend this insight to argue that realist representations of IR have forgotten or failed to realise that their own representations are just representations. They have somehow closed the gap between reality and representations as if “aiming to capture world politics as-it-really-is [...]. [By contrast] an aesthetic approach [...] assumes there is always a gap between a form of representation and what is represented.”<sup>36</sup> The gap is crucially significant because it is the very locus of politics, values and interests that inform the ‘representation’. Bleiker, by turning to the aesthetic, attempts to re-open the gap and indeed mine the gap for all the possibilities that are to be found in the multiplicity of potential representations. As we noted above, Toynbee was very aware of the fact that especially in the realm of politics and history, language often poses as ‘reality’. It was impossible, he argued, to write about history without introducing ‘fictions’, which somehow represent reality but never coincide with it. The gap between reality and representation in language was there to stay and in many ways marked the essence of the political, and of course the historical. Toynbee suggested that had the West been more aware of these fictitious terms and recognized Western Christendom (and therefore by extension an Eastern version too), rather than Western Europe it could have avoided the fragmentation into euro-centric parochialisms. Clearly, the fictions of history, although they are fictions, have a very real impact.

### Tragedy

We note at this point that eighty-three years after Toynbee wrote the *Tragedy of Greece (1920)*, IR scholars re-discovered the Greek notion of ‘tragedy’. Mervyn Frost, Chris Brown, Richard Ned Lebow and others contributed to a subsequent debate.<sup>37</sup> In 2003 Ned Lebow published his volume *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, in which he revisits the classic ‘realist’ texts by Thucydides, Clausewitz and Morgenthau and shows how they were guided by ‘tragedy’ as a leitmotif. ‘Tragedy’ is understood here in the Greek sense as an intricate relation between actors, circumstances, actions and their intended and unintended consequences. Lebow is aware, of course, of the great cultural significance of ‘tragedy’ for ancient Greek society, and he points out that the great philosophers including Plato and Aristotle were greatly influenced by the cluster of ideas and experiences that were articulated through the performances of tragedies. Toynbee, who had ‘internalised’ Greek culture through his education, embraced the notion of tragedy very early on in his career. The notion eventually became central to the very manner in which he approached the unfolding of a ‘civilization’, “Civilization. [...] is a tragedy with a

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<sup>34</sup> Roland Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* Vol. 30, No. 3 (2001) 509-533. Roland Bleiker “Forget IR Theory” in *The Zen of International Relations: IR Theory from East to West* Eds. Stephen Chan, Peter Mandaville and Roland Bleiker (Hampshire: Palgrave 2001), 37-66.

<sup>35</sup> “Ceci n’est pas une pipe”

<sup>36</sup> Roland Bleiker, “The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* Vol. 30, No. 3 (2001), 510.

<sup>37</sup> Mervyn Frost, “Tragedy, Ethics and International Relations”, *International Relations* Vol.17 No.4 (2003), 477-495. James Mayall, “Tragedy, Progress and the International Order: A Response to Frost” *International Relations* Vol.17. No.4 (2003), 497-503. Nicholas Rengger, “Tragedy or Scepticism? Defending the Anti-Pelagian Mind in World Politics”, *International Relations* Vol.19. No.3. (2005), 321-328. Richard Ned Lebow, “Tragedy, Politics and Political Science”, *International Relations* Vol.19. No. 3. (2005), 329-336. Chris Brown, “‘Tragic Choices’ and Contemporary International Political Theory”, *International Relations* Vol. 21, No.5, (2007), 5-13. This discussion or renewed interest was likely triggered by Stephen Chan’s essays in the earlier volume *The Zen of International Relations*.

plot, and history is the plot of the tragedy of civilization. [...] each is a variant of a single theme.<sup>38</sup> To understand civilization as a 'tragedy with a plot' entails a number of assumptions and implications, which shape Toynbee's analysis of history and world politics. Clearly Toynbee would be very much at home with Richard Ned Lebow and others in analysing world politics through tragic heuristics, something he did regularly in the Annual Surveys of International Affairs.

### Huntingdon's 'Clash'

Whilst discussing civilizations, we should perhaps also note here, that it is difficult to avoid entirely the public and academic attention paid to this concept after the publication of Samuel Huntington's infamous *The Clash of Civilizations*.<sup>39</sup> The civilization was, of course, initially Toynbee's key unit of analysis, and one could have expected that perhaps the debate would look for inspiration in Toynbee's analysis of history's twenty-one civilizations. There are good reasons, however, why this did not happen,<sup>40</sup> and these reasons confirm us in our decision to bypass the 'Clash' debate. As a result of his work, Toynbee eventually came to acknowledge that civilizations, in fact, are not 'units' at all but 'fields'. They interact and mutually influence each other, giving rise to the emergent properties of 'higher religions'. Toynbee was able to establish this holistic point even without referring to the Buddhist notion of 'dependent co-arising'<sup>41</sup>, one of the key features of its view of the phenomenal world that we will explore later. Toynbee's quest went much further and deeper than the debate sparked by Huntington's book.

Toynbee's holistic view that encompassed quantum 'fields' was also a way of expressing the non-dual nature of reality. His attempt at overcoming the dualism embedded in logical language is a problem that Wendt also grappled with in his recent attempts to build a bridge between positivism and constructivism. While it is well known that positivism in social science relies on the application of the methods of classical physics, Wendt argues interpretivists too "have never doubted the classical assumption that ultimately reality is purely material",<sup>42</sup> even if it is meaning that matters in social life. "Interpretivist work too has at least implicitly been structured by the mind body problem as

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<sup>38</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Tragedy of Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), 6.

<sup>39</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Schuster 1996). His book answered his own question posed earlier in an essay in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. He necessarily concludes in the affirmative that conflict between civilizations would dominate world politics. The answer to this he believes is a world order –some type of federation of civilizations. Having labelled the 'others' in a typically realist way, counter-intuitively and devastatingly the president of Iran (a prime 'other') Mohammed Khatami responded with his *Dialogue of Civilizations*, which subsequently became a UN theme in 2001. For critiques of Huntington see Edward Said's response *The Clash of Ignorance* (*The Nation* 2001, October 22), "Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing". See also Amartya Sen, *Identity and violence: The illusion of destiny* (London: Penguin 2006), 10. Sen views this civilization as "an remarkable use of imagined singularity." Stephen Chan's "Reliving the Boxer uprising: or, the restricted meaning of civilization" in *Meaning and International Relations* Eds. Peter Mandaville and Andrew Williams (London: Routledge 2003), 155-6. Chan deconstructs Huntington's Other pointing out that both his own Western and his 'Other' are constituted by each other, "The point, and irony, is that in - Huntington's generalised world- each civilization constructs an Other and defends itself against this Other [...ironically...]Islam cannot do without the electronic communications invented and developed by its Other. The 'West' cannot do without the oil located within the geology of its Other."

<sup>40</sup> Huntington draws upon Toynbee's early analysis of civilizations but only to confirm their isolated singularities, ignoring Toynbee's conclusions that ultimately they interpenetrated creatively.

<sup>41</sup> Also referred to as 'dependent becoming'.

<sup>42</sup> Wendt, "Social Theory as Cartesian Science," 180.

conventionally (i.e., classically) posed, which asks how the mind relates to a material base.”<sup>43</sup> Wendt noted his own attempt failed as it was built upon an ontological dualism that is underpinned by scientific methods that reduce all truths to a material base. It is notable that Wendt found the same limit points as Toynbee and explored quantum science as a possible foundation for his bridge.<sup>44</sup> Toynbee had perceived the same problem with logical vocabularies and turned to mythological and holistic heuristics. Our comparison with Wendt is more relevant than Huntingdon because it allows us to note how contemporary IR theorising reaches limit points, which invite experimentation with radical ideas – ideas that quite deliberately shake the foundations and habits of traditional ways of approaching reality. Clearly, this is one leitmotif of Toynbee’s lifework and many current scholars.

### **Ethics and Spirituality**

As is well documented, Toynbee’s ultimate concern was with ethics and the role of spirituality and religion, and this he pursued at great academic cost. It led to a host of critical reviews and methodological accusations but also savage personal attacks on his work and person. Simplistic accusations included ‘Christian evangelism’, anti-semitism, and irrationality, but more worryingly he was then paraded as a prophet,<sup>45</sup> and even seriously compared to Hitler.<sup>46</sup> This ‘religiosity’ is also well documented, if again generally less understood.<sup>47</sup> Simply put, for Toynbee, all civilizations had failed to provide a lasting peace and order and indeed survive- the current ones were in due process. Hellenism (as the model) had failed in spite of philosophy and science. The modern west was seemingly also reliant on science and philosophy. Science provided incredible mastery over physical nature. Philosophy provided intellectual mastery over ‘passions’ but can be “detached”. Science and Intellect also had a possible ‘dark side’- through hubris- the evil within. Despite science and philosophy, tragedy and suffering continues. His conclusion was that something was missing. The solution to suffering requires overcoming this ‘evil within’- i.e., self-mastery. In this ethical shift he believed he was therefore following Plato and Socrates (so again methodologically respectable) who both moved from science to ultimately focus on ethics, but significantly Toynbee concluded the required shift was not an intellectual one. His ‘ethical’ epistemology is found in action for others- the *heart inspired by compassion* rather than the *intellect informed by reason*. Spiritual compassion was thus a higher truth than intellectual ethical

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<sup>43</sup> Wendt, “Social Theory as Cartesian Science,” 180.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Social Theory As Cartesian Science: An Auto-Critique From A Quantum Perspective,” in Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander Ed., *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his Critics*, (New York, Routledge, 2005

<sup>45</sup> According to Trevor-Roper, the problem with Toynbee’s work was not only that its ambition exceeded the abilities of any single scholar but that the very ambition itself was evidence of a: “[...] truly monstrous self-adulation, combined with his fundamental obscurantism [they] indeed emotionally repel me [...]. Toynbee is still the philosophic ally of any conqueror who will destroy the West [...]. Toynbee detests Western civilization because it is basically liberal and rational. Detesting it, he wishes to see it destroyed, and he does not care who destroys it. On its ruins he envisages a new society, or rather, the religion only of a new society. The new society itself, as far as he is concerned, can be the nightmare society of 1984, provided that the religion is the religion of Mish-Mash, of which he is the prophet and Messiah. [...] I do not consider it *a priori* inconceivable that Toynbee should regard himself as the Messiah. And in fact, if we examine the autobiographical part of his work in a little more detail, we can hardly help observing the repeated evidence that this is how he does regard himself.” H. Trevor-Roper “Arnold Toynbee’s Millennium” in *Encounter* Vol. 8 No.6 (London: June, 1957), 14-28.

<sup>46</sup> “Hitler, like Toynbee [...] ranged over the centuries and crammed such facts as he found convenient to select into a monstrous system. Did not both Hitler and Toynbee see themselves as the phoenixes of the centuries, Messiahs who [...] opened up a new age.” Hugh Trevor-Roper in Ved Mehta, *Fly and the Fly Bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 109.

<sup>47</sup> Hans Morgenthau was one of the exceptions, he agreed with Toynbee on the need for ‘more than scientific man’ to get back in touch with religiosity the mystery and tragedy.

theory, philosophy or technical science. This compassion was to be found in religion and spirituality. Suffering and compassion were also central to Mahayana Buddhism, and so for Toynbee the Bodhisattva action for others and the Passion of Christ were philosophically equivalent. Whilst Toynbee utilized many approaches- religious and non-western- as apriori potentially valid *epistemologies*, in real terms he never belonged to any single 'church'.<sup>48</sup> His ontology was the mystery and thus the various epistemologies he engaged with might all have something to offer apriori.<sup>49</sup> The rabid response to this 'irrational' 'moralising' religious aspect of his work shows it was particularly difficult for his historian peers to grasp. With a small number of exceptions,<sup>50</sup> they generally failed to note that Toynbee's encyclopaedic analysis of world history inevitably brought him into *ontological dialogue* with civilizations and 'epistemologies' that were very different from the Western civilization within which he lived and worked. Toynbee took these as invitations to think differently and to let them affect the direction of his studies and soul. In terms of understanding his work, and explicating his 'Indian perspective' one of the most significant dialogues, once again overlooked and misunderstood,<sup>51</sup> was with Mahayana Buddhism. Before we engage with this dialogue we can draw some preliminary conclusions about his western methods.

Toynbee's methods were largely Aristotelian and Platonic as he understood them. His science was ancient grammatical and quantum but significantly not modern and grammarians reasoned via analogy rather than analytically. His ontology was emergent holistic rather than analytical reductionist. His historiography was critical and constructivist rather than positivist and the insights gained through tragedy revealed the potential impotence of well-meant science and even philosophy to provide peace and order. Overcoming the evil within required an ethical shift and self-mastery but one that was inspired by compassionate action for others not through detached intellectual reason. His journey through historiographical, sociological, constructivist, critical, tragic and non-foundational 'lenses' intriguingly parallels IR's own intellectual trajectory. In order to fully complete his intellectual trajectory and understand his Indian perspective we now need to journey east.

## **Buddhism**

Stephen Chan has consistently looked to include non-western others in IR, and his essays and dances to trigger new insights would not seem strange or exotic to a Toynbee who engaged with Buddhism on four levels, empirically, philosophically, ethically and personally. Empirically, Toynbee noted its emergence and influence within Indic and Far Eastern civilizations. He noted many parables and stories in Buddhism were also found in Christianity and he thought this had been a Buddhist influence. He also

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<sup>48</sup> He came close to Catholicism in order to 'save his marriage' but quickly pulled back to his intellectual home and eclectic spirituality.

<sup>49</sup> "For each of us, the easiest approach to the mystery of the Universe is, no doubt, his ancestral religion; but this does not mean that he ought to rule out the other approaches that the other religions offer. *If one can enter into these, as well as into one's own, it is gain, not loss.*" Arnold J. Toynbee "A Study of History: What I am Trying to Do" in M.F. Ashley Montague ed., *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews* (Porter Sargent, Boston, 1956), 6-7. (Our emphasis).

<sup>50</sup> For example; Eric Voegelin, "Toynbee's History as a search for truth" in Edward T. Gargan ed., *The Intent of Toynbee's History* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1961), 183. And Lewis Mumford, "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" in M.F. Ashley Montagu ed., *Toynbee and History: Critical Essay and Reviews* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1956), 145. Also Toynbee, "Study," 1:465-67.

<sup>51</sup> "Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism – adapt themselves well enough to Dr. Toynbee's ideal of religious syncretism, but they do so by denying the significance of history and creating a dream world of cosmological and mythological fantasy in which aeons and universes succeed one another in dazzling confusion..." Christopher Dawson, "The Place of Civilizations in History", in *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews* ed., M.F. Ashley Montagu (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1956), 135.

looked at the Indic intra-relationship with Hellenic civilization and thought the latter influence had given rise to the Mahayana (faith) stream from the original (intellectual) Theravada Buddhism. Philosophically he thought the Theravada was a more hardier and early historical manifestation of 'stoic' intellectual withdrawal or detachment from the world. He understood Karma as an ethical theory. Indeed as early as 1938, Toynbee had publically lectured on International Relations at Nottingham using the Buddhist concept of Karma.<sup>52</sup> This analysis suggested, if read superficially and simplistically, that the responsibility for the effects of the then rampant Japanese imperialism might be linked back to the western powers using gunboat diplomacy to force open the previously peacefully co-existing China and Japan as some kind of military mimesis. But this surface reading hides a much more subtle and insightful holistic ontology that Toynbee<sup>53</sup> intuitively and anciently understood and had impacted upon him. The Buddhist 'theory' or 'insight' is that no-thing can exist in isolation, and that all phenomena co-arise. In reductionist terms, parts qua parts so understood are abstractions. The true nature of these parts is the whole. From this perspective, any individual (part) action for any other (part) is action for the co-arising oneness (the whole or God) i.e., for ones truer self. Ethically, he thought that the Buddha's return from the brink of Nirvana (understood as self-annihilation) in order to serve others and assist them to achieve enlightenment was evidence of his true greatness. Indeed this Bodhisattva ethic of action for others he equated with the Passion of Christ. Greatness was in his understanding a transfigured intellectual, one who had gone past the mere intellectualism of higher understanding but had achieved self-mastery and thus transfigured, returned to act compassionately or with love in the world. He thus concluded, "The foundation of the Sangha [Buddhist community] was a greater social achievement than the foundation of the Academy."<sup>54</sup>

On the personal level, the impression and identification with this philosophy of acting in the world for others had been integrated into his intellectual understanding of life. In 1938 under pressure from his Catholic friend and priest Columba Cary-Elwes to explain his 'faith' Toynbee disclosed that his life work and *Study* was his action in the world. Toynbee used Buddhist vocabulary to provide his answer. He suggested that he viewed his work thus, "In so far as he is conscious of having any religious or pastoral mission, this mission is to help his fellow pagan 'intellectuals' ...He thinks he knows the road, because he has travelled over it himself, and to map out this road has been, for some time past, one of *the deliberate aims of his research and writing*."<sup>55</sup> Rather than joining the Catholic Church (as Columba wanted) Toynbee saw this academic mission as a reason not to join any church, more generally referring to his status as a choice between self centered intellectual 'nirvana' (self-enlightenment) or Bodhisattva -working for others. "At present, A.J.T. would make the Bodhisattva choice if he had to choose between these two courses."<sup>56</sup>

The result of his engagement with this 'other' way of thinking therefore led to his statement in 1956 that his final four volumes were written from an 'Indian perspective' and that the 'west' had much to learn from the 'east'; specifically Christianity, Judaism and Islam could learn from Hinduism and

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<sup>52</sup> Bodleian Library, Toynbee Papers, *University College Nottingham Cust. Foundation Lecture 1938*. "British Interests in the Far East," Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 1938, (Nottingham: Citizen Press Ltd).

<sup>53</sup> He does begin to appreciate its analysis in his late dialogue with Ikeda.

<sup>54</sup> Toynbee, "*Study*," 3: 270-272.

<sup>55</sup> Letter Toynbee to Columba 5 August 1938 in C.B. Peper, ed., *An Historian's Conscience: The Correspondence of Arnold J. Toynbee and Columba Cary-Elwes, Monk of Ampleforth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 21. (Our emphasis).

<sup>56</sup> Letter Toynbee to Columba 5 August 1938 in C.B. Peper, ed., *An Historian's Conscience: The Correspondence of Arnold J. Toynbee and Columba Cary-Elwes, Monk of Ampleforth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 21.

Buddhism. Hinduism suggested to him that there were many paths that may contain insights into the mystery and that no one church would hold the key.<sup>57</sup> Buddhism (as well as quantum science) probably confirmed to him the more familiar ancient classical views of the relationship between the soul and the polis as found in Plato's *Republic*. If the Republic was the soul writ large, for Toynbee the civilization was the soul writ larger and the higher religions were the emerging wider wholes. Through his tragic lens he viewed civilizations as external imitations of the City of God. But the error (harmatia) was the lack of inner self-mastery or transfiguration of the heart. As we saw, the result of the Buddhist 'analysis' of this relationship was the Sangha where the individual transforms themselves through action for others, whereas the Ancient analysis resulted in the philosophical Academy.

We now focus on his final Buddhist dialogue, one that Toynbee initiated towards the end of his life. It may throw some serious light on the problems of debate and dialogue facing IR today.

### **The Toynbee Ikeda Dialogue<sup>58</sup> - revealing a two thousand year crisis?**

In 1969, aged 80, Toynbee initiated a dialogue with an 'exotic other' in the person of Daisaku Ikeda a Japanese Mahayana Buddhist. In an explication of Buddhist epistemology, Ikeda introduces Toynbee to the Japanese term Ku, in Sanskrit this is known as Sunyata or in English Emptiness/Openness, it has been misunderstood in the 'west' as the nihilistic void.<sup>59</sup> Toynbee's response was intriguing,

The ancient Greek school of philosophy is the one with which I am most familiar. The Buddhist Santai [three truths] theory seems to me to agree closely with Aristotle's modification of Platonism. I think *the addition of the middle term Ku*, makes the relations between particulars and universals more intelligible. [...] The Buddhist Santai theory seems to me to have some affinity with the modern Western philosopher Hegel's concept of the production of a synthesis through a confrontation between a thesis and an antithesis. At any rate, the Hegelian, like the Buddhist, three-term theory is dynamic. It sees reality on the move in the time dimension. By contrast, *both Plato and Aristotle's two term theory is static*, like the present day Western sociologists' analyses of human affairs in instantaneous cross-sections in which the time dimension is ignored. The dynamic theory that takes account of the time dimension seems to me more likely to correspond to reality.<sup>60</sup>

Though Toynbee did not pursue this further, as we are following his intellectual journey, we use this as an opportunity to look more abstractly at the implications he saw in this epistemic dialogue. The static 'two term' limitations lead us to look at Toynbee's inherited 'starting point' in terms of the dualistic apprehension of reality that he noted western thought seems to embed or deploy. One, which has become entrenched in Western thinking and language, substantially, we suggest, under the influence of Aristotelian thought. Thus, we look at the *why* of Toynbee's struggle to 'use but not-use' dichotomous

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<sup>57</sup> Ved Mehta *Fly and the Fly Bottle: Encounters with British Intellectuals* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 145. Toynbee states, "Since I do not believe in a personal God...I don't have a vested interest in any one religion...temperamentally I am a Hindu. As a Hindu I don't have any difficulty believing in many Gods simultaneously...to Hindus...all roads lead to heaven."

<sup>58</sup> *Choose Life: The Toynbee Ikeda Dialogue*, OUP, (1976) was published posthumously after Toynbee's death. It has since been translated into 27 languages.

<sup>59</sup> Emptiness is but one half of the meaning of Sunyata, initially to instruct us that 'things' are empty of self-existence. Openness is the fuller meaning of reality pointing at open creative dynamic dependent becoming.

<sup>60</sup> A.J. Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, *The Toynbee-Ikeda Dialogue: Man Himself Must Choose* (Kodansha International Ltd. 1982), 277-8. (Our emphasis)

language indices, to see exactly what the limit points were that he had to work within. We will suggest Toynbee might have been battling with a two thousand year crisis, rather than the twenty years crisis of E. H Carr.

The critical point is that rational thought is prized because it is held to be logically established (through the deductive syllogism), hence its certainty or reliability. Rational knowledge is presupposed upon the laws of thought: identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle. It was Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* who initially established these 'laws'. Essay limitations do not permit us to enter any detailed discussion here, but we have argued elsewhere<sup>61</sup> that these laws are arguably established through a commitment to a substance-based<sup>62</sup> ontology in that particular inquiry. According to Buddhist logical thought, (and in its simplistic form, due to essay restrictions) there are four logical spaces that must be evaluated when considering any proposition: true, false, both, neither. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle also notes these four spaces but only seriously considers the first two spaces, true or false. He suggested anyone considering both is an entangled thinker<sup>63</sup>, and anyone who holds the last is incapable of having a conversation about anything. From his analysis that position four, neither, is stuff of nonsense, and option three, both, is contradictory (hence establishing non-contradiction)<sup>64</sup>, it is only the first two that are 'serious' possibilities and this leads inexorably to the excluded middle, X OR NOT-X.<sup>65</sup> This binary propositional logic is at the root of nearly all rational thought, academic theorising, social science, politics and much more. There are, however, paraconsistent logicians today who hold that this is highly questionable, and other Aristotelian scholars who suggest that on one level Aristotle had a predilection for talking about 'things' or substances.<sup>66</sup>

Buddhist logic argues that there are no essences with properties (subjects with predicates) but only co-arising properties. Aristotle himself notes that the subjects in the premises of the syllogism cannot be established scientifically (via the syllogism) but are known or established through Nous. Buddhism argues that an essence is by definition that which cannot change. An essence therefore can never 'logically' be influenced, acted upon, change itself, or interact upon other 'essences'. Additionally it cannot explain its own existence, as it must have always existed and so 'logically' we end up with an absurdity- the static universe; perhaps the two term static position that Toynbee was clearly pointing at in his dialogue with Ikeda. The epistemic result of applying the Buddhist logical analysis is that it triggers the insight that things don't have essences; they are Empty of any self-essence and cannot exist as self-existing isolated entities. But, if this emptiness is viewed *through binary logic*, it correctly has to be viewed as nihilism (is not), whereas its logical meaning is that that no 'thing' can exist in isolation, things are (useful or not) linguistic abstractions so long as we remember there are no fixed essences. The Buddhist analysis triggers an insight into the co-arising relational nature of reality and the limits of propositional language - it does not offer an alternative propositional theory. When grasped through

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<sup>61</sup> Paul Becque unpublished PhD thesis 'Tragedy and the Limits of Reason: Arnold J Toynbee's Search for a Middle Way', University of Kent (2009).

<sup>62</sup> Of course, when Aristotle talks about 'substance' we need to be aware that he is not referring to a physical or material substance but to an essence or principle that manifests as form and matter as captured by the term 'hylomorphism' from the Greek words for matter and form. In his search he draws upon and applies his analytical methods developed in the various works of the *Organon*.

<sup>63</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* Book IV 1005b-1006a.

<sup>64</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* Book IV 1005b-1006a.

<sup>65</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book IV 1011b.

<sup>66</sup> Graham Priest, *Doubt Truth to be a Liar* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), David Charles in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* Ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 54. Studtmann, in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-categories/> (accessed 2/2/09)

propositional binary logic, 'western rationality' is logically forced into seeing Emptiness as: nihilism or no reality, the void, extinction nothingness etc. But as Murti subtly pointed out "no doctrine about reality does not mean a no-Reality doctrine."<sup>67</sup> The result of the Buddhist tetralemma (four logical space analysis) is that we 'perceive' (as an insight) the conceptual limits of reason and propositional language. Emptiness is not a theoretical proposition it is an intellectual experience- a flash of cognition- a eureka type moment. In this emptiness/openness we perhaps find the core principal central to triggering insights (Chan), co-arising predicates or 'relations all the way up and down' (Rorty), representational gaps (Bleiker) and why Wendt's bridge building required 'quantum' non-dual foundations.

Binary debates are thus not resolvable, as Wendt realised, they must end in a Platonic type ontological dualism or a reductionism whereby one tries to reduce the other to itself: for example that mind/ ideas are really material brain. This is perhaps why Wendt realized that "classical physics" which sits at the base of sociology prevented his bridge between positivism and constructivism. His bridging insight might be right as an insight but the language of- is and is not- prevents the static 'rational articulation'. In contrast Buddhism use a logic of "two but not two" in its articulation about reality. It may be useful for IR because binary logic plays out simplistically but alarmingly in political discourse. Bush's "You're either with us or against us" response to 9/11 or Blair's "Disarm or face force" ultimatum to Saddam were simple to deploy, but the reality for many is some type of complex middle – but this both is dismissed as irrational or a contradiction. Even worse we are logically told we have to necessarily choose Either/OR. (excluded middle). i.e., 'take sides.'

Debate as a method is to find the 'contradiction' in the already binary defined 'other'. It is absolutely futile when the debate is about what is 'other'! Debate is merely to assert and then enforce our particular 'static' definitions- it becomes a mimetic game of assertion, denial, counter assertion. Using the grammar of debate seems to rule out dialogue apriori. Incommensurability is thus inevitable, constituted by the language and logic of 'is' and 'is-not' – but if things are dynamically empty of 'self-existence' they can't be incommensurable- as they relationally co-constitute each other. Debate arguably forces us into static polarisation whereas dialogue suggests dynamic co-arising. If we agree with the Buddhists, then ontological dialogue is required but if we don't agree then we continue with incommensurable debates. It appears that the incommensurability of debaters arguing from the respective ism's (is and is not) is therefore structurally embedded; EITHER (here we go again) a theorist has to hold to her position by dismissing/negating the other OR somehow reduce the other position to her own. This rationally well-meant (and propositionally argued) logic often leads however to tragic consequences as Toynbee perceived and the world is currently witnessing in the war on terror.

## Conclusions

The term 'tragedy' occurs in the title of our paper for a number of interrelated reasons. 'Tragedy' was Toynbee's initial approach to the unfolding of civilizations, which he interpreted as 'tragedies with a plot'. 'Tragic' also are the consequences of upholding Western reason – here understood as embodied in Aristotle's laws of thought – in an exclusive manner because it restricts our ability to access the fullness of reality and therefore also our ability to interact with the 'thoughtful others within international relations' (Chan). For Toynbee, the 'tragedy of reason' was a personal experience. By outlining its limitations, and by pointing beyond those limitations, he incurred the wrath of those whose identities, careers and egos depended on their self-understanding as the defenders of scientific rationality and reason. And finally,

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<sup>67</sup> Jaidev Singh, *An Introduction to Madhyamaka Philosophy* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass 1978) p42, Citing Murti.

the fate of Toynbee's own efforts to expose these limitations and to travel beyond them can only be termed 'tragic' as it is difficult to see how his efforts could not have been misunderstood. What is remarkable under the circumstances is the commercial success of the *Study*, showing perhaps that outside the academic world there is a potential and even a mythological or insightful recognition for the kind of work he suggested and performed.

Toynbee's example shows that what is at stake here is not just the contents of academic work but indeed the very meaning and status of 'work' as action. The *Study* was a record of Toynbee's ontological dialogue with history. Toynbee's *Study* is most instructive not as a theory about reality in the conventional sense but, as explained, as the record of an individual's journey and struggle with transfiguration. In Buddhist terms, we can see in these 'therapeutic' texts the co-arising compassionate active structure of reality actualized in an individual's true self in action –in other words, we can see the bodhisattva ideal at work. The typical academic manner of reading texts is very limited as it emphasizes the text's propositional (conventional) contents. As we noted, Bleiker and others have suggested that IR especially needs to develop other ways of reading texts – there may be aesthetic or poetic ways of reading texts and reality that not only do more justice but also are of greater benefit to the readers. What Bleiker alluded to in his paper is what we suggest is Emptiness, i.e. the notion that phenomena are empty of self-nature. The gap between phenomenon and representation reflects precisely this emptiness, and it is there where politics takes place as phenomena compete against each other with their claims that they are what they pretend to be. Academic politics is no exception. But if the truth of emptiness/openness is lost – if the representation removes all traces to emptiness –or attempts closure, the result can only be exclusion: all that which is not 'real', is not. Toynbee's academic reception shows on a small scale the very true and very real political consequences of the issues we have been addressing in this paper.

The 'tragedy of reason' unfolds on a larger scale when a limited approach to reality comes into contact with approaches that do not share the same limitations, the same blind spots. We noted that Aristotle's laws of thought may have been ultimately motivated by an ontology of substance. As a result, the four logical spaces of the tetralemma were reduced to two, thus simplifying the complexity and partly removing the mystery of a dynamic reality. Each problem space has four logical spaces, and – logically! – each of these spaces require analysis before rejection. Aristotle's laws of thought ask us to reject without analysis. In turn, if we do analyse all possibilities in relation to the problem of substance, we find (as Buddha did) that it was impossible for any thing to exist as a result of its own inherent substantial unchanging essence (self-nature). It appears as if 'Aristotle's' laws of thought 'protect' a substance-based approach to reality, but the substance-based approach is not grounded on an argument or evidence; it just happened to be Aristotle's preference in that Metaphysical enquiry. From outside Aristotle's perspective, its restricted access to reality must appear arbitrary. Why should IR possibly deny to itself other ways of accessing the fullness of reality?

Solutions to the problem of social and political order have always been embedded in solutions to the problem of knowledge and vice versa. This is especially obvious today as Toynbee's intellectual problem of having to come to terms with the historical developments and encounters between civilizations have been transformed into political problems in a world marked by the dynamics of globalization. If these encounters are approached from within a problem space that has been artificially reduced to only half of its possibilities, it is extremely likely that differences are perceived and constructed as incommensurabilities – with all the concomitant violence and the destruction that wants to protect (or challenge) such blind spots. In the beginnings of the twenty first century, under the violent realities of Globalization, this dominant rational binary paradigm informs such limited international

theories as the 'end of history', the 'clash of civilizations', the 'war on terror' and is (still) struggling to provide global human solutions. The real terror is arguably the global monologues that talk past one another. And once the dichotomies have become a force in world politics, they inevitably result in a mimetic game of self-assertion and mutual exclusion. From the Middle Way perspective, incommensurability is a notion that only exists at the level of binary conventional truth because for things or ideas to be incommensurable, they need to have self-nature. The notion of dependent co-arising in contrast underlines the holistic oneness of reality.

What else might we learn, then, from our brief reconstruction of Toynbee's quest? It is striking to see how Toynbee's trajectory anticipated many of the issues that were central to the succession of 'great debates' in IR. He was implicated, of course, in the 'first debate' as one of the 'utopians' targeted by Carr. The second debate was 'acted out' between Toynbee and those among his reviewers who questioned his method and who accused him of being 'unscientific'. In the third debate, neo-Marxists and critical theorists emphasized the significance of language – following what Richard Rorty called the 'linguistic turn' – and thereby prepared the way for the fundamental questions raised by 'anti-foundationalists' in the fourth debate. As we noted, Toynbee was very well aware of Bleiker's gap between reality and representation, and any Middle Way thinker would be familiar with the problem of 'foundations'. Like Toynbee, Stephen Chan has consistently argued for non-western voices (and dances!) in IR. If our reading of Toynbee is correct, and if his trajectory continues to cross lines with IR theory debates, where would this place IR theory in the future? It seems obvious that 'great debates' in IR in the future, if they are to lead us beyond what we have seen in the past, ought not to be 'debates' at all but 'dialogues' in the sense advocated by both Toynbee and Ikeda. For Ikeda, 'dialogue' has both ontological and moral value in that it shows dependent co-arising at work. It presupposes the openness that Toynbee exemplified in his encounters with Buddhism. 'Dialogue' presupposes that those engaged in the conversation allow their souls to be ordered by the dynamics of the encounters. Dialogue is not merely about propositional thinking (if at all); it is not about asserting or hypostatizing theories about reality. As Ikeda explains, if 'good' is what allows people to share their mutual respect and humanity, then 'evil' is that which keeps them apart. This turns 'dialogue' into a 'spiritual struggle' against divisiveness and evil.<sup>68</sup>

Ikeda's 'dialogue' is very close to the classic understanding of 'theoria'.<sup>69</sup> In the classic use of the term, *theoria* is a form of contemplation based on the 'perception of beauty regarded as a moral faculty'.<sup>70</sup> *Theoria* entails the articulation of that perception for the explicit purpose of sharing the insight gained with others. The purpose of that sharing, however, is not to persuade others but to invite them, with the guidance provided by *theoria*, to re-enact its underlying experience and perception. Toynbee's *Study* as we have read it in this paper is an excellent example of *theoria*. The *Study* is a 'map' of a path that Toynbee has travelled; it is the record of a journey and struggle with transfiguration which Toynbee invites or encourages others to follow. The purpose of the journey is to invite others to be more aware of the manner in which they take part and contribute to the dependent co-arising of a compassionate, dynamic reality. The *Study* therefore comes much closer to the original idea of *theoria* than the many 'theories' that crowd our academic libraries.

The current subtle discourses around the nature of truth and its linguistic foundations allow us to evaluate Toynbee's work anew. Morgenthau wrote "To restore man to the fullness of his stature and

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<sup>68</sup> <http://daisakuikeda.org/main/philos/buddhist/buddh-04.html>, accessed April 3, 2009, and quoted above.

<sup>69</sup> This link was pointed out and articulated to me by Stefan Rossbach.

<sup>70</sup> Taken from the Oxford English Dictionary.

thus give his civilization a new lease on life requires indeed the teaching of men like Mr Toynbee.”<sup>71</sup>  
Morgenthau reflexively concluded that his

[...] Icarean effort does for our age what the great representative works of the mind have done for others. It presents its spirit and attempts to transcend it in the search for the perennial truths by which all ages must be judged. His achievement belongs to the ages; his failure belongs to his own and hence, is ours as well as his.<sup>72</sup>

Morgenthau perhaps reveals he still understood Toynbee’s *Study* as an intellectual project that “could no longer be done in an age which tries to reduce truth to science.” But the therapeutic nature of Toynbee’s *Study* was found in the act of living and writing it- triggering insights for those who ontologically engaged it in the spirit of open dialogue as he himself had done with history.

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<sup>71</sup> Hans Morgenthau “Toynbee and the Historical Imagination” in M.F. Ashley Montague, Ed., *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews* (Porter Sargent: Boston, 1956), 198.

<sup>72</sup> Hans Morgenthau “Toynbee and the Historical Imagination” in M.F. Ashley Montague, Ed., *Toynbee and History: Critical Essays and Reviews* (Porter Sargent: Boston, 1956), 199.