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Title: Dichotomies in Bull’s Work

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Dichotomies in Bull's Work

Hedley Bull, one of the key figures in the English School (ES henceforth) approach to International Relations, was a master of research design. Bull made a great contribution to the substance of the ES theory. He produced one of the defining texts of the School, *The Anarchical Society* (1995), wrote numerous articles and took an active role in the post-humous publication of Martin Wight's research. Equally important was Bull's contribution to the form of the ES theory. It was Bull who set the conceptual toolkit of the ES in the international system, international society, world society format. Prior to a 1961 paper he wrote for the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, the Committee out of whose discussions held between 1954-1985 the ES mainly grew, the terms system and society were often used without discrimination. Bull introduced and developed the international system and international society distinction which has become an integral, albeit disputed, part of the School's argument. Bull continued to influence the shape of ES research through his subsequent research papers which coined some of the key terms in the theory such as solidarism and pluralism.

Today, we continue to debate the ES within the theoretical framework established in its final form, if not initially created, by Bull. The emphasis in this paper is on Bull's construction of this framework. More specifically, it is on Bull's way of formulating the concepts that make up this framework. As the previous paragraph might have indicated, Bull did not work with concepts that stood alone. All too frequently, he constructed sets of dichotomies in his studies like international system / international society or pluralism / solidarism and examined each one of the concepts found in his dichotomous presentation of the subject matter in relation to the other. Society, for instance, stood in relation to system and made sense only when considered together with it. Such dichotomizations can be registered as one of the patterns that mark Bull's research. In its simplest sense, a dichotomy is a convenient way of organizing the subject under consideration and it is indeed among the oldest methods used by social scientists in the research process. But beyond their use as tools of convenience, the construction of dichotomies raises a number of questions about the status of their constituent parts. Do the constituent parts of a dichotomy oppose each other? Or do they compliment each other?

In the social sciences, there have been two main uses of the strategy of dichotomization. The first strategy, associated with Marxian research, is to employ dichotomies in order to point out to a dialectical potential in the subject matter being studied.

The second, associated with Weberian research, is to employ dichotomies in the form of ideal-types. This paper will seek to identify which one of these broad social science strategies Bull employed in his dichotomies. Did Bull employ his dichotomies with a view to pointing out to the dialectical possibilities in international politics in a Marxian fashion? Or did he employ them as ideal-types in a Weberian fashion? Following a brief overview of the chief dichotomies Bull introduced, the paper will proceed to the discussion of the strategy of dichotomization in the social sciences. It will then try to establish Bull's use of dichotomies under the Weberian tradition of ideal-typical research. Finally, it will look at Bull's international system / international society distinction, that much contested distinction he made, along with his concepts of pluralism and solidarism, under the strategy of constructing ideal-types. In this way, it will try to fend off some of the criticisms directed against these particular distinctions.

I. Bull's Dichotomies: International System / International Society and Pluralism / Solidarism

International System and International Society

The international system / international society distinction was not observed in the early years of the British Committee's meetings. There was also some terminological confusion in these early years. Wight and Butterfield sometimes used "system" to refer to what we now call society and vice versa. Bull raised it for the first time in 1961, shortly after starting to attend the Committee's sessions, and wrote two papers outlining his argument for general discussion by the Committee members. It did not convince everyone in the Committee, however, and did not entirely terminate the practice of using the terms system and society interchangeably (Viguzzi 2005, p.63-7). Nevertheless, Bull maintained his case and continued to develop this distinction in later years. In *The Anarchical Society* (1995), Bull's definitional enterprise takes a final shape according to which an international system is formed "when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions, to cause them to behave – at least in some measure – as parts of a whole" (Bull 1995, p.9). International society entails more than sufficient contact among states in Bull's scheme. It

exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and certain common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another and share in the working of common institutions (Bull 1995, p.13).

Bull's international system / international society distinction has been widely criticized. Many have held it to be too abstract to fit actual cases and thus inapplicable in practical terms regardless of how clear it might be in theory. There have even been calls to purge it from the theory all together. These criticisms will be taken up in more detail in the final section of the paper and followed by an attempt to defend Bull by looking at the construction of the international system / international society distinction through his social science.

Pluralism and Solidarism

Bull not only divided the ES' subject matter into international system / international society but also further divided international society into "pluralist" and "solidarist" versions. The two conceptions of international society were introduced and discussed in specific terms in *The Grotian Conception of International Society* (Bull 1966a). Bull distinguished pluralism and solidarism on the basis of the nature and sources of the common set of rules agreed upon by states. The pluralist conception represented an international society founded upon a set of procedural rules as codified under positive international law. A pluralist international society placed the sovereign rights of states at the forefront of its functioning and chief among its rules was non-intervention in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. (Bull, 1966a).

Bull portrayed the key characteristic of a solidarist international society as the ability to agree on more than procedural rules. He attached the solidarist conception of international society to Grotius and the natural law tradition which entailed universally applicable moral principles. A solidarist international society put greater emphasis on the rights of individuals than a pluralist one and held a less strict interpretation of the rule of non-intervention. If required for the protection of individuals suffering in the hands of a recalcitrant state, the rule of non-intervention could be overlooked in a solidarist international society (Bull 1966a).

In the general terms of his theory, the pluralist and solidarist conceptions of international society embodied Bull's concern with order and with justice respectively. Pluralism was conceived as a way of maintaining order in a multi-cultural world with its minimum rules of co-existence agreeable to all cultural perspectives. Solidarism was conceived as a way of bringing about a more just world with its universal moral code that transcends cultural differences. Initially, Bull was firmly in favor of the pluralist position and his disapproval of the solidarist version was particularly strong. He started to increasingly oscillate between the two conceptions of international society in the later years of his studies. The solidarist project was too ambitious for Bull given how difficult it was for states to forge a consensus on moral issues. By setting such universal moral standards and expecting states to

enforce them, Bull (1966a) thought that solidarism was “set[ting] up the law over and against facts” (p.73) and “imposing upon international society a strain which it cannot bear” (p.70). In doing so, solidarism was also threatening the foundations international order maintained through the society of states. In contrast, pluralism was a more workable arrangement according to Bull (1995). Starting in the early 1980s, Bull started to exhibit an ever greater interest in solidarist ideas such as the advancement of human rights around the world, leaving aside some of his skepticism as to the universal applicability of moral principles. In *Justice in International Relations* (1984), one of his last works, Bull’s position shifted quite visibly from a pluralist toward a solidarist conception of international society and he called on all states to work for a more just world.

Bull’s own position between solidarism and pluralism shifted yet the debate between the advocates of the two perspectives that took place after him in the 1990s has been carried out in very sharp terms. Dunne writes of a “pluralist / solidarist divide” characterizing this particular decade of the ES theory, with those making the case for maintaining the pluralist arrangement on the one hand and those demanding a more solidarist international society with respect to the advancement of human rights in the world on the other presenting their arguments with equal force (Dunne 2005, p.166). For Buzan (2004), the pluralist / solidarist debate has not been a very productive one. It has been confined to the subject of human rights, and proceeded in such a manner that pluralism and solidarism appeared to be almost mutually exclusive versions of international society (p.46). Buzan’s solution for moving the debate forward is to treat pluralism and solidarism as forming a spectrum of international societies on the basis of the thickness of shared norms among states (p.59).

It was of course Bull who set the terms of the pluralism / solidarism debate in nearly zero-sum terms and caused the debate to be as divisive as it has been as the originator of these concepts. Perhaps, what merits further consideration here is the way Bull formed these concepts. We have noted so far that the two important contributions Bull made to the structure of the ES theory, the international system / international society and pluralism / solidarism dichotomies, have courted controversy. The former failed to convince even some of his closest working associates in the British Committee while the latter established sides and divided the scholarly community. It should therefore be a useful exercise to go back and visit how Bull formed these dichotomies, and then reconsider these debates in the light of his strategy of concept formation.

II. Dichotomies in the Social Sciences: Dialectics and Ideal-Types

In simple terms, a dichotomy is “a linguistic or conceptual instrument for organizing our descriptions of the world” (Goldthwait 2005, p.108). Dichotomies introduce logical divisions to the subject under consideration and serve as a tool of clarifying the conceptual toolkit that will be devised by the researcher (van Kirk 1986, p.139). The construction of dichotomies has been one of the oldest methods of approaching an issue in the social sciences and they usually appear in the form of “pairs of opposites” (Sheldon 1922, p.365). What matters most for present purposes is this oppositional aspect of dichotomies. Once the idea of an opposition is proposed, there are a number of interesting questions that follow on the relationship between the sides to that opposition. As Wilson (2003, p.146) asks, “[d]oes one side environ the other, or do they carve up reality such that there is a fairly even division? Is one side the ideal that its other fails to measure up? Or is it an originary and /or future telos or end point?” when two concepts are placed in opposition to each other.

In his attempt to answer these questions, Wilson (2003) went back to Marx and Weber and associated their patterns of dichotomization to the construction of dialectical schemes and to the construction of ideal-types respectively. For Wilson, Marx’s dichotomies contained in them “the constructive tension, the dialectical interplay” (p.152) of the contradictory forces found in such a complex structure as society, and focused on the possibilities of change through these forces. In contrast, Weber’s dichotomies took an either / or shape. According to Wilson,

Weber effectively purges dialectics from the process of conceiving, formulating, and applying dichotomies in favor of a conception of “sides” that views them as formally exclusive (or “vanishing”) rather than empirically interpenetrating and interdependent (Wilson 2003, p.165)

in the course of his ideal-typical research. However, not all agree with Wilson’s description of the effects of Weber’s ideal-types. Gould (1999), for instance, does not see Weber’s dichotomies as either / or propositions that end up establishing mutually exclusive sides. In fact, he finds a very dynamic quality to them. In order to demonstrate how vibrant Weber’s ideal-type concepts are, he applies Reinhard Bendix’s notion of “conflicting imperatives” to one of them, namely to the three ideal-types of authority Weber constructed. Bendix described “conflicting imperatives” as “the interdependent but contradictory goals, priorities, or motivations that underlie many social and political relationships” (quoted in Gould 1999, p.439). Many of Weber’s ideal-type concepts capture these imperatives found in socio-cultural phenomena when combined in a general theory. They have “fundamental components that are mutually reinforcing *and* in tension with each other” according to Gould (1999,

p.441; emphasis in original). Gould would agree with Wilson on one point and that is the absence of the dialectical dimension in Weber. This, however, does not mean that Weber had a stagnant view of social systems. Quite to the contrary, Weber focused on a broader range of forces at play in the functioning of a social system, complementary as well as contradictory ones, as opposed to the dialectical tradition which based its analysis solely on a pre-conceived category of contradiction (Gould 1999, pp.441-2). And this is why Gould (1999) asserts that there is a very dynamic quality to Weber's ideal-typical constructions of the social world.

Marxist and Weberian scholarship differ on many other points. A full comparison cannot be offered here but one point that is worth mentioning is their respective approaches to the purpose of social science theories. For Marx, theorizing was not an activity conducted for its own sake. Social science theories need to be practice-oriented and identify the means through which the existing social order can be transformed. In contrast, Weber saw no such role for social science theories whose purpose it was to understand, not change, society in an objective manner (Wilson 2003). To resort to Ryle's (1964) distinction between "knowing how", "knowing that" and "knowing why" forms of theorizing, Marxist theory would become a "knowing how" theory while Weber's would be a "knowing that / why" theory. Ideal-types were devised with the goal of delivering such "knowing why / that" kind of research by Weber. He considered them as tools of separating facts and values in the research process and thus producing objectively valid, value-free knowledge of the social world (Hearn 1975, pp.533-4). How is an ideal-type concept actually constructed? In the words of Weber, it is constructed through

the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia* (Weber 1949; p.90; emphases in original).

Hence, ideal-types deliberately exaggerate one particular aspect of a given phenomenon. They are not intended as accurate representations of the subject under investigation but simply "pretend to represent reality" during the process of conducting research as Lindbekk (1992, p.290) says. Although they are not completely detached from reality either. Ideal-types are extreme presentations drawn from an observation of past and present cases. As such, no concrete instance can correspond fully to its ideal-typical presentation. It can only approach the ideal version and no more (Gerring and Barresi 2003, p.214). Weber warned on many occasions that ideal-type images could not be construed as

actually existing on the ground. Neither could they be subjected to empirical examination since they are not designed to be verified or falsified with the use of empirical data (in Sadri 1992, pp.19-21).

Nefzger notes that one of the most frequently made mistakes regarding Weber's ideal-types is precisely this urge to put them to the test of empirical data. This is a misunderstanding of ideal-type concepts (Nefzger 1965, p.171). The proper method of employing ideal-types is to employ them for comparative purposes in the process of theory-building. The phenomenon under examination is compared to its ideal-typical form in order to see the degree to which it approaches that form. Once this step is complete, the next step is to identify the specific reasons why the particular phenomenon of interest to us diverges from its ideal-type. This last step of identifying the reasons for deviations from the ideal-type is the crucial one in the progression from a single ideal-type concept toward a general theory. As more and more of these reasons are identified, a general theory can be subsequently built. Ideal-types are thus not final theories, they serve as heuristic devices in the course of forming one (Lopreato and Alston 1970, pp.88-92).

However, starting the theory-building process with a single ideal-type concept always carries the risk of "becoming the captive of it" as Kaplan (1968, p.905) puts it. Many theories built through the use of a single ideal-type, Kaplan points out, suffer from this weakness. According to him, Weber himself was aware of this risk when proposing the ideal-typical mode of research. That is why he produced dichotomies. After constructing an ideal-type, Weber usually went on to introducing an additional ideal-type, an opposite or contrasting one where possible, that would place a one-sided emphasis on another aspect of the given subject. The additional-type would overcome the one-sidedness of the original one. Once two ideal-types were constructed in this oppositional fashion at the initial stages of building a general theory, concrete cases could then be located in between them. In this way, Kaplan believes, it becomes possible to escape the limitations of theorizing through a single ideal-type which is itself a limited concept. An example of Weber's (1947) pursuit of this strategy is his discussion of bureaucratic organization whereby he constructs the two ideal-types of legal-rational and charismatic bureaucracies. Another is the economic organization of societies in which he establishes the capitalistic and pre-capitalistic modes of organization and then associates them with Western and non-Western civilizations respectively (Weber 1958). What is to note here is that the perfect "capitalistic entrepreneur" (p.71) that Weber makes mention of is not an actually existing person in a given Western country; he / she is a utopia created in the spirit of ideal-typical research.

To return to the question posed by Wilson (2003) which opened this section, that of if the parts of a dichotomy split reality in an equal manner or if one represents an end point / a future telos for the other (p.146); we might say that the chief function of ideal-types is to indeed split and then to exaggerate selected aspects of reality. They are “one-dimensionalized” and “reductionist” and do not reflect in themselves the ambiguities and tensions found on the ground as Wilson points out (p.152) (or more properly as he complains given his overall skepticism of the usefulness of ideal-types). What should be remembered at this stage is the heuristic purpose of ideal-types. Since the actual subject being considered will be worked backwards from the ideal-type, those tensions and ambiguities can be factored in later when pursuing ideal-typical research.

As for the second part of Wilson’s question, the question of whether or not one constituent part of a dichotomy constitutes a telos or an end point for the other; we might say that there is a sense in which this is so. Some of Weber’s ideal-types are implicitly teleological. Weber constructed two different types of ideal-types; historical and sociological. The former were drawn from an observation of a particular period in history and usually from a particular society while the latter were intended to be more generally applicable and drawn from a larger pool (*see* Hekman 1983, pp.123-5 for a broader discussion). It is particularly these latter sociological ideal-types that sound teleological, which Weber based on a rational action model so as to render them usable across different times and places. For instance, his legal-rational bureaucracy enlists all the desirable aspects of an efficient system and conveys the sense that a charismatic bureaucracy needs to match it (Weber 1947). But Weber had a more complex theory of human action than simple rational action. He discussed in detail the full range of motivations that guide human behavior like habit or affection in addition to rationality (1978, pp.24-6). Once the existence of these other motivations were taken into account, the task of setting a rational final goal for humans became fruitless. The purpose in setting these sociological / rational action ideal-types was, again, devising heuristic tools for further analysis in scientific research rather than prescribing action.

So far, we have seen that there have been two main patterns of dichotomization in the social sciences; the dialectical tradition and the ideal-type tradition associated with Marx and Weber respectively. We have also seen that Bull for his part constructed two important dichotomies in the ES theory; international system / international society and pluralism / solidarism. Now, we will proceed to establishing Bull’s dichotomies under the Weberian tradition of ideal-type construction.

III. International System / Society and Pluralism / Solidarism as Ideal-Types

As mentioned previously in the paper, Bull's introduction of the international system / international society dichotomy caused a lot of controversy and received many criticisms. The point common to all criticisms of Bull's system / society separation is that it raises the question of where the border between the two really lies (Buzan 1993, p.331). Just how do we mark off an international system from an international society? In theory, an international system exists when states are in sufficient contact and exert sufficient influence on each others' decisions (Bull 1995, p.9). An international society exists when states have common interests, values, rules and participate in common institutions according to Bull (1995, p.13). For James (1993), however, this distinction is redundant since no systemic interaction can obtain among states unless the rules, institutions and interests that Bull attributes to international society are already in existence in the first place. In other words, system and society cannot be differentiated on the basis of the presence or absence of rules and interests. As far as Copeland (2003) is concerned, the system / society distinction is not necessarily but redundant but difficult to measure in empirical terms. Even Watson, one of Bull's closing working associates, posed some questions regarding Bull's system / society distinction (although he adopted it when conducting his own research). Watson maintained that the system / society framework was difficult to apply to concrete cases in international relations. He had in mind the relations between the Ottoman empire and European states in the 19th-century in particular. Even though the Ottomans and Europeans participated in a common institutional structure, the Concert of Europe, and worked to attain common interests, Watson does not see the relations between them as fitting a societal pattern (Watson 2007 [1987], pp.28-9). Bull's criteria for differentiating between a system and a society are thus debatable for many.

Other criticisms focus on the characteristics Bull attributed to his system and society categories. Dunne (2001, p.70) points out that the international system / international society scheme attributes conflict to the system category while cooperation to the society category (and the transnational to the world society category when the entire tripartite scheme of the ES is taken into account). However, this is too narrow a description of society which is characterized not just by cooperation but by competition as well. Likewise, Shaw finds Bull's attribution of cooperation and a normative consensus among states to the international society category problematic. To put it more specifically, the attribution of these qualities to international society is not problematic as such but limited. Because Shaw (1992, p.428) believes that the term society does not mean cooperation only, it also means conflict. He

believes that Bull overlooks this aspect and offers a one-sided definition of international society.

This same line of criticism can in fact be applied to Bull's pluralism / solidarism distinction as well. When discussing the attributes of these societies, Bull does indeed attribute the function of providing order to pluralism and that of providing justice to solidarism. The rights of states become the only concern for a pluralist international society while human rights, for instance, become the business of a solidarist international society according to this scheme. Here, Bull's pattern of attributing one-dimensional qualities to the constituent parts of his dichotomies again presents itself as is the case with international system and society. And it is precisely this aspect of Bull's concepts that reminds one of Weberian ideal-types, together with Bull's overall attraction to Weberian social science.

It is possible to detect Bull's sympathy for Weberian social science from one of his earliest essays, *The Case for a Classical Approach* (1966b). Bull (1996b) attacked positivism in this piece and regarded some of the methods used in positivistic research such as the building of models as something "to be deplored" (p.371). Against positivism, Bull called for "the classical approach" characterized by an "explicit reliance upon the exercise of judgment" (p.361). As Hoffman (1986, p.182) maintains, Bull's "judgment" and many of the other characteristics of the "classical approach" he outlined resound Weber's "understanding". Like Hoffman, Richardson (1990, p.162) finds a strong attraction to Weber's interpretive tradition of research in Bull's work.

Bull must have been particularly attracted to ideal-types' promise of delivering value-free social science. Throughout his studies, Bull has been very critical of scholars who did not separate their own values from their analyses. Bull (2000 [1972] , p.260) acknowledged that it was very difficult for social science theories to be completely value-free but those who did not acknowledge this, as he thought was the case with some American scholars writing during the Cold War, simply infuriated him (1962). He (2000 [1972], p.262) even accused some of them of "political conformism". For Bull, scientists needed to take as detached a stance from politics as possible. Research conducted for the purpose of advancing certain political goals damaged the integrity of the scientific profession. Of the suggestion that social science should be practice-oriented and offer guidelines for action, he said: "I see this as, potentially at least, a menacing development, and would defend a posture of political objectivity or detachment, at least as a goal of our endeavor, if not as something we can expect to fully achieve" (Bull 2000 [1972] , p.260). This remark clearly distances Bull's research purposes from Marxist research purposes which were described earlier in the paper based on Ryle's scheme as a form

of “knowing how” research which tries to change, through the proposition of dialectical concepts in Marxism, as opposed to the “knowing that / why” forms which try to understand. Ideal-typical concepts serve this purpose.

Bull’s approach to formation of concepts can be established under the ideal-typical fashion when we consider his overall attraction to Weberian social science. From here, Bull’s one-sided attribution specific qualities to his concepts start to make more sense. This is what ideal-types do; they exaggerate the selected aspects of a given phenomenon in the process of building a general theory. In the case of pluralism, for instance, the exaggerated aspect is the institution of sovereignty. In the case of solidarism, it becomes human rights which are seen as a challenge the institution of sovereignty. For international system, the exaggerated aspect is the mechanistic / a-social forces that operate in the relations between states.¹ For international society, it becomes the cooperative / contractual aspects of their relations such as shared rules and institutions. Vigezzi (2005, p.7) believes that Bull’s construction of the international system / international society dichotomy in this manner does indeed exemplify the ideal-typical approach to concept formation. And once we remember the qualities of ideal-types, their exaggerated nature and their purpose as heuristic tools of theory construction rather than as concepts to be verified or falsified with empirical data, the criticisms directed against Bull can be fended off.

True, this picture painted by Bull establishes a sense of “sides” as Wilson (2003, p.165) says ideal-types do. In particular, Bull sets the parameters of pluralist and solidarist international society in such a way as to almost invite a posture of side-taking. Yet as stated above, ideal-typical research does not set sides for people to take them. The intention is to stimulate further analysis on the subject so that concrete instances can be placed in between the sides. As a matter of ideal-typical research design, they deliberately inflate one particular dimension of a given phenomenon and act as control concepts at the either end of it. The space within which real events occur is to be determined by factoring in the other dimensions of that phenomenon. Bull makes it clear for example that international society constitutes only one dimension in the broader state / non-state scheme of the ES when he notes that

It is important, however, to retain the sense of the limitations of the anarchical international society. Because international society is no more than one of the basic elements at work in modern international politics, and is always in

¹ For Buzan (1993) and Little (1995), the ES’ understanding of international system resembles that of Waltz. Jackson (1995) does not agree with this. He suggests that the ES has a very humanistic conception of “system”, and we need to read the ideas and beliefs held by statesmen when we read the “system” in the ES. And this is why the system / society distinction needs to be rescinded according to Jackson; they are synonymous terms referring to the human predicament in international politics.

competition with the elements of a state of war and of transnational solidarity or conflict, it is always erroneous to interpret international events as if international society were the sole or the dominant element” (Bull 1995, p.49).

A state of war, transnational solidarity or conflict and international society mentioned in this passage are those “conflicting imperatives” or “the interdependent but contradictory goals, priorities, or motivations that underlie many social and political relationships” (Bendix quoted in Gould 1999, p.439) which Weber tried to put in the form of general theories through the use of ideal-types. This Weberian approach is apparent in Bull’s research practices as well.

Having established the connection between Bullian and Weberian research design, there remains one final point to mention; the problem of “becoming the captive of” an ideal-type raised by Kaplan (1968, p.905). Kaplan traces this problem in Talcott Parsons’ studies on the structure of a society with the use of ideal-type concepts. Parsons starts his work with an idealized image of a perfectly integrated society and then works backwards from it toward building a general theory of social structure. After building the ideal-type of a perfectly integrated, harmonious and cooperative society, he then considers the factors that prevent this. But Kaplan believes that he fails to provide a sufficient account of those factors, does not confront all of them and treats some of the ones he confronted as simply irrelevant. As a result, Parsons produces a theory biased in favor of the ideal-type of an integrated society in lieu of a general theory (Kaplan pp.895-9).

There are similar problems in Bull’s theory of international society. Bull emphasizes that international society is only one element in international politics that competes with a state of war and with transnational forces. However, just like Parsons fails to adequately confront the factors that detract from an integrated society, Bull does not adequately deal with the elements that detract from an international society. His treatment of the transnational element is particularly weak. In cases where the conditions that challenge the ideal-type are not confronted strongly, the ideal-type can start to assume a teleological character as well. Williams (2006), for instance, believes that Bull set out to build his theoretical concepts in a detached manner but ended up offering many “should” propositions even though he does not acknowledge this. In the end, Bull’s approach to international relations suffers from the same general problem Kaplan identifies in ideal-typical research and becomes very much the captive of the international society element.

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