

[This is a rant about International Relations theory which had no place in the text. - Robert Von Stricker Beresford]

A lot of people are currently being taught the history of IR theory, and this is being considered, by the students, not necessarily by the teachers, as the true history of political theory. This how they see it: Thucydides invented the political theory of realism way back when. This was elaborated upon by Machiavelli and Hobbes. Then, The Unmentionable German invented liberalism. Liberalism failed with the League of Nations. This caused a return to realism and, funnily enough, the invention of neo-realism. There has been a reaction to neo-realism in the form of rationalism (worst name for a school of thought ever) and neo-liberalism.

This history is preposterous. Yes, it may detail the history of IR theory, but as a history of political theory, it is about the worst piece of disinformation I can think of. It wasn't intentional, but people believe it anyway. I know this because my students believed it. And, worse, my colleagues *at graduate school* sometimes believed it. Marxism, feminism and all these new “approaches” IR theory accepts cannot be explained by the conventional history of IR theory as taught in universities. Marxism et alia were not responses to “liberalism,” “realism” and such. They were not originally IR ideas, but they were applied to IR as were other political ideologies. IR theory history treats them totally differently. It rewrites history. The nation state is still relevant but even if it weren't any more, that wouldn't be an excuse for the IRists to rewrite history. I saw a “global politics” textbook recently and it introduced the history of theory by referring to *Woodrow Wilson*. The history of theory cannot be explained by referring to 20th century figures, no less than it can be explained by referring to leaders, rather than theorists.