Ian Hall

The International Thought of Martin Wight

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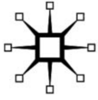

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For Paddy

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courage to join the MLitt programme in International Political Thought and to listen to my meandering disquisitions on aspects of Wight's work.

My parents and my brother Michael are owed more than I can repay with a mere dedication. So this book is for Paddy, because although he will never read it, he endured countless hours of tedium while it was written and displayed through them all good humour and stoicism.

CHAPTER 1

The Enigmatic Martin Wight

Enigma riddle in verse XVI; puzzling problem XVII . . . Gr. *aínigma*, f. base of *ainíssesthai* speak allusively or obscurely.

Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology

Martin Wight was one of the most influential twentieth-century scholars of international relations.[1] He was the author of a seminal study of the nature of *Power Politics* (1946/1978), a historian of Western international theory and a teacher of renown. His few books and many essays continue to fascinate and to provoke. He has attracted admirers—though few have sought to emulate his style—and no lack of critics. He has been portrayed as the intellectual "godfather" of a whole school of thought about international relations, an inventor of the notion of "international society."[2] But doubts persist about his intellectual legacy, about the approach to the subject that he pursued and about the doctrine that he advanced. To many Wight remains, as he appeared to Michael Nicholson over two decades ago, an "enigma."[3]

Wight was an unconventional thinker. He held strong religious convictions—he was an Anglican Christian, albeit of a highly unorthodox kind—that shaped his approach to intellectual life. His deepest concern was with the relationship between politics and morality; he sought, indeed, what he called "a richer conception of politics" than that which he thought prevailed during his lifetime, one "which made power an instrument and not an end, and subordinated national interest to public justice."[4] Wight was conscious, however, that such notions were out of kilter with the "power politics" of the age, in a world in which states "will continue to seek security without reference to justice, and to pursue their vital interests irrespective of common interests . . . ."[5]

The leitmotif of Wight's thought—like that of so many of his contemporaries and like that, perhaps, of the "short" twentieth-century as a whole—was that of "crisis." The "world crisis" of World War I, to their minds, marked the end of old certainties and the advent of a new world of a insecurity; it was, as George Kennan called it, the "great seminal catastrophe" of modern history, sowing the seeds of horrors to come.[6] The twenty years of interwar crisis culminated in a war for nothing less than "Christian civilization" itself.[7] Its epilogue was an "age of terror," that "hard and bitter peace" of the Cold War.[8] As Denis Brogan observed of the twentieth century, "no age has ever been better off for problems to keep it on its toes."[9]

Wight was disturbed by this predicament and was sometimes unsure as to how to respond, as a Christian, as a scholar, or as a citizen. His international thought—his account of the nature of international relations and of the various modes in which they have been interpreted by scholars and by practitioners—reflected both his consternation and his uncertainty. At times, his faith would come to the fore; at others his arguments were opaque. Throughout all his work, however, it is possible to detect the voice of a thinker deeply troubled by the modern world. In one of Wight's best-known essays, "Western Values in International Relations" (1966), he alluded to two passages in Plato's *Republic*. The first was Glaucon's explanation, in book I, of the nature and origins of justice.[10] The second Wight thought the "most profound and piercing . . . for the ordinary man."[11] The passage concerns the plight of the "very small group" in a corrupt city "which remains to keep company with philosophy." In Allan Bloom's translation, Socrates described their situation thus:

> Now the men who have become members of this small band have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession it is. At the same time, they have seen sufficiently the madness of the many, and that no one who minds the business of the cities does virtually anything sound, and that there is no ally with whom one could go to the aid of justice and be preserved. Rather—just like a human being who has fallen in with wild beasts and is neither willing to join them in doing injustice nor sufficient as one man to resist all the savage animals—one would perish before he has been of any use to city or friends and be of profit to himself or others. Taking all this into calculation, he keeps quiet and minds his own business—as a man in a storm, when dust and rain are blown about by the wind, stands aside under a little wall. Seeing others filled full of lawlessness, he is content if somehow he himself can live his life here pure of injustice and unholy deeds, and take his leave from it graciously and cheerfully with fair hope.[12]

In certain moods, acutely conscious of moral and political crisis, Wight was tempted to follow this path, avoiding overt commitment to any cause and expressing himself elusively or obscurely.[13]

Wight was enigmatic, at times, because he wanted to be. He thought that his ideas, informed as they were by his faith, would not be well received in a secular world of "power politics." Although clear in his explanations of others' arguments, in his published works on international relations, and indeed in his lectures, he rarely provided explicit outlines of his own position. There were hints, of course, half-concealed behind a veil of scholarly objectivity. Witness one of the closing sentences of one of his best essays:

> It is tempting to answer the question with which this paper begins by saying that there is no international theory except the kind of rumination about human destiny to which we give the unsatisfactory name of philosophy of history.[14]

Wight was not just "tempted" to answer the question thus: this is exactly what he thought, as this book will try to show. In other writings, notably those on religion and in some of his unpublished papers, this quasi-pretence of authorial distance was dropped, and he said what he thought. By examining both, this book tries to make clear what all too often is not—to decode, in other words, the enigma.

One objective of this book is thus to provide an answer to Michael Nicholson's challenge, made to those—like myself—who find themselves intellectually sympathetic to Wight, to explain what appears to be "a lack of coherence about his thought and some important but curiously unanswered questions."[15] It does so by providing, in the first half of what follows, an examination of Wight's treatment of religion, history, and the crisis of modern politics, and in the second half, a reappraisal of his work on international relations. Wight did not recognize disciplinary boundaries and nor does this book; the underlying premise is that to understand what he thought about international relations, a sense of his whole intellectual endeavour is required.

This book provides an interpretation of Wight's thought for those required to study it, for those perplexed as to its nature, and, above all, for those concerned, as he was, with what Kenneth Thompson has called the "normative foundation of politics."[16] Some of what follows, therefore, is straightforward exegesis and some of it critique. Two developments within International Relations (IR) have made this a worthwhile enterprise: first, the revival, since the 1980s, of normative approaches to that field, and second, the more recent upsurge of interest in its intellectual history. In the past decade

or so, scholars have begun again to explore past thought on international relations, re-examining what Wight portrayed as the "scattered, unsystematic, and mostly inaccessible" insights to be found in the classics of political thought as well as the more coherent writings of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[17] This is, in part, a contribution to that effort.

The remainder of this chapter has two aims: to provide a brief account of Wight's professional life and to offer an equally succinct survey of the various ways in which his thought has been interpreted. It concludes with an overview of the approach adopted in the rest of the book. Some readers may already be familiar with the outline of Wight's career, thanks largely to the efforts of Hedley Bull, who provided a detailed sketch in his introductory essay to *Systems of States*, a collection of Wight's essays published in 1977.[18] Kenneth Thompson, in *Masters of International Thought* (1980), Tim Dunne, in his *Inventing International Society* (1998), and the late Harry Pitt, in the new edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), have added more to the story.[19] What follows owes much to the work of all four, but corrects the odd slip and addresses the occasional omission.

A Life

Robert James Martin Wight was born in Brighton on the November 26, 1913, the second son of a doctor, Edward Wight, and his wife, Margaretta, née Scott.[20] He attended Bradfield College in Berkshire, and won an Open Scholarship to go up to Hertford College, Oxford, in 1931 to read Modern History. One of the smaller and less fashionable colleges in the University, Hertford had two History Fellows of distinction: T. S. R. Boase (1898–1974), later of the Courtauld Institute and later still President of Magdalen College, and C. R. M. F. Cruttwell (1887–1941), Principal of Hertford between 1930 and 1940. Boase was a medievalist and art historian, who during Wight's time at Hertford published a biography of Pope Boniface VIII, and later contributed two volumes to the Oxford History of Art series.[21] Cruttwell's area of expertise was rather different. His two major published works were *A History of the Great War* (1934) and a volume produced under the auspices of Chatham House, *A History of Peaceful Change in the Modern World* (1937).[22] A former soldier and intelligence officer, and failed Conservative candidate for the now-defunct parliamentary seat for Oxford University in 1935, Cruttwell was one of the leading university administrators of the interwar period.[23] Reputed to be a good teacher, Cruttwell's personality—said to be forceful—was not to the liking of all undergraduates. One former student, the novelist Evelyn Waugh, "waged unremitting literary war" on Cruttwell in revenge for slights now forgotten, naming in his stories a series of "shady or

absurd" characters after him.[24] Wight, for his part, felt more affection for the man and once almost wrote to remonstrate with Waugh after reading one such slur in the *Sunday Times*.[25]

Wight did well at Oxford. He impressed his examiners—among them the Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield, who was later to invite him to join his British Committee on the Theory of International Politics—and earned a First Class degree. What is less clear is whether he enjoyed his historical studies. He found the constitutional history of England—at that time and for many years after the core of the Oxford Modern History degree—somewhat dull, and later wrote of his "inarticulate dissatisfaction" with the syllabus, "which seemed to leave all the big questions unanswered."[26] Perhaps because of Cruttwell, he became interested instead in international relations, and after a brief period of postgraduate research in History at Oxford, he applied—unsuccessfully—for a lectureship in the Department of International Politics at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.[27]

At Oxford or perhaps earlier at Bradfield, Wight had become involved with the cause of the League of Nations and was known to be, according to Hedley Bull, a "passionate supporter."[28] Soon after leaving Oxford, however, he changed his position. The sad course and unjust resolution of the Abyssinian crisis of 1935–1936 convinced Wight, as it did for so many others, of the League's impotence in the absence of the Great Powers' support.[29] But unlike E. H. Carr, who abandoned the League to embrace appeasement, Wight instead turned to pacifism, having come under the influence of the charismatic founder of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU), the Reverend Dick Sheppard.[30] In 1936 he published his first article: a combative and typically erudite defence of Christian pacifism in the journal *Theology*.[31] His commitment to this cause was intense, as the tone of the piece revealed, and Wight, for a time, played a significant part in its promotion as the manager of the PPU's famous bookshop on Ludgate Hill.[32]

In the spring of 1937, Wight found more regular employment, joining, presumably on Cruttwell's recommendation, the staff of the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London.[33] At Chatham House, Wight came into contact for the first time with Arnold Toynbee, holder of the Stevenson Chair in International History at the University of London and the Institute's Director of Studies, the first three volumes of whose *A Study of History* he had read during the previous winter.[34] He was immediately captivated, as he recalled to its author some twenty years later:

> At once all my previous reading and experience fell into perspective and pattern, and I saw clearly, instead of in a glass darkly, what historical study was about and the heights that it might scale.[35]

After the war, Wight contributed extensive comments on volume VII of the *Study*, many of which Toynbee simply reproduced verbatim in footnotes and appendices.[36] In 1937 and 1938, however, his duties at Chatham House were more mundane. He made some—mostly uncredited—contributions to a number of projects as the secretary to the Study Groups on South Africa and on the political and strategic interests of the United Kingdom,[37] and carried out surveys of British imperial policy and "Ocean routes: bases and ports," the latter still deposited in the Chatham House archives.[38]

In 1938, having explored to no avail the prospects of a position at the London School of Economics (LSE),[39] Wight left Chatham House to take up the post of Senior History Master at Haileybury, the former Imperial Service College. His teaching had no little effect: two of his pupils, Harry Pitt and Denis Mack-Smith, later became prominent academic historians.[40] The position, however, was eventually made untenable by the war and by his pacifism. In May 1940, toward the end of his second year at the school, he received his call-up papers. Despite the fact that teaching, at that time, was still a "reserved occupation" and that Wight's chronic asthma would have meant that he would have failed the medical examination for military service,[41] he decided to apply to be officially registered as a conscientious objector. Wight justified this stand on the grounds outlined four years previously in his article on "Christian Pacifism." In his application, reprinted in part by Bull and by Dunne, he condemned the war as a "divine judgment on European civilization for corporate sin," and advocated a return to the methods of "Calvary and the catacombs" to defeat the Nazis.[42]

Wight's reasoning, however, did not convince the authorities. His application was initially unsuccessful, and this brought the threat of imprisonment. It was finally accepted, in 1941, on the condition that he gave up teaching.[43] He was "rescued" from this predicament by Margary Perham, Fellow of St Hugh's College, Oxford, and Reader in Colonial Administration, who offered him a job on a project examining colonial constitutions.[44] Wight's tenure of this research position at Nuffield College, from 1941 until early 1946, resulted in no less than three volumes: *The Development of the Legislative Council 1606–1945* (1946), *The Gold Coast Legislative Council* (1947) and a collection of *British Colonial Constitutions* (1952), which includes a substantial introduction by the editor.[45] In parallel, during the war years, Wight composed a series of essays on what he considered a neglected but important aspect of the Christian tradition: the idea of Antichrist. A draft of one was submitted to *Theology*, but though it does not seem to have been rejected by the editors, the essay was never published.[46]

In 1946, after an extended row with Perham over his "low salary and uncertain prospects" at Oxford,[47] Wight returned to Chatham House.[48]

There he wrote perhaps his best-known work, *Power Politics*.[49] Slight though it was in length, the pamphlet was well received, not least by the émigré journalist Sebastien Haffner, who suggested to his editor, David Astor, that Wight be employed as *The Observer's* special correspondent at the inaugural session of the United Nations at Lake Success from September 1946 to January 1947.[50] Astor—who was already aware of his wartime work on African colonial constitutions—agreed. Wight's contributions to *The Observer* from the UN further enhanced his reputation: so much so indeed, that upon his return from the United States, Astor offered "his own editorial chair as an inducement to tempt [Wight] away from academe."[51] Wight, however, refused, and again went back to Chatham House,[52] though he did not break his link with Astor or with *The Observer*. He continued to review for the paper until the late 1960s, and contributed to a book entitled *Attitude to Africa* (1951),[53] which one historian has called, "the manifesto of the liberal Africanist in England in general but also for the *Observer* in particular."[54]

At Chatham House, Wight's work was also appreciated, and by 1947 he had come to be seen as a possible successor to Toynbee as the Institute's Director of Studies. In preparation, the latter proposed to Ivison Macadam that Wight be promoted to a Deputy Directorship with overall responsibility for the *Survey of International Affairs*, an annual study of contemporary international history hitherto the preserve of the uncannily prolific Toynbee.[55] This did not come to pass, but for the next two years they continued to work closely together. Wight produced, during this time, four substantial essays for one of the *Survey* volumes on the prewar and war years, *The World in March 1939*,[56] as well as making his comments on volume VII of Toynbee's *Study*. In these scattered notes, Wight revealed his theological disagreements with Toynbee—differences that ultimately contributed to his revised appraisal of his *Study*—and outlined the basic tenets of his faith.

In the late 1940s, Wight was deeply involved with a number of Christian organizations, including the Student Christian Movement, and with ecumenical efforts in particular. He went as a delegate to the World Council of Churches Round Table Meeting of Christian Politicians, held near Geneva in June 1948, and gave an address on "Our Christian Position in the Face of the Conflict between Russia and the West."[57] Redrafted for publication, this paper, which provides one of the best insights into Wight's beliefs and theological position, later appeared in the *Ecumenical Review* under the more succinct title of "The Church, Russia and the West."[58] He was also present, as a consultant on "The Church and International Disorder" at the first meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam later that year.[59] He returned to Geneva in 1949 to attend the World Student Christian Federation Conference on the Meaning of History and to offer the

representatives of the Young Women's Christian Association some notes "Towards an Understanding of our Present Crisis."[60] These links with the ecumenical movement lasted well into the 1950s, during which time Wight was involved in the WCC's attempts to promote European cooperation.[61]

In 1949, after two years at Chatham House, Wight left to take up a Readership in Charles Manning's Department of International Relations at the LSE.[62] There, as he had done at Haileybury before the war, he swiftly established a reputation as an inspirational teacher, albeit one whose approach placed him outside the intellectual mainstream in the department. Bull later noted that

> Intellectually, [Wight's] . . . commitment to history, and more especially to the search for pattern and design in the grand sweep of universal history, tended to isolate him in a department which was concerned, however tentatively, with the development of International Relations as a social science.[63]

It has become commonplace to suggest that, in terms of publications, Wight's time at the LSE was unproductive. He did, in fact, write a great deal. Although the revised and extended version of *Power Politics* desired by Chatham House was never completed,[64] Wight produced over thirty reviews for *The Observer*, *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *International Affairs*.[65] A substantial essay examining Butterfield's *Christianity and History* and Reinhold Niebuhr's *Faith and History* appeared in *The Frontier* in 1950 and his revised version of the late Harold Laski's *An Introduction to Politics* a year later.[66] He gave many talks—two of which "War and International Politics" and "What Makes a Good Historian?" were published in *The Listener* in 1955.[67] The following year "The Power Struggle within the United Nations" appeared, and in 1960, "Why is there no International Theory?" and "Brutus in Foreign Policy" saw the light of day.[68]

In the 1950s, Wight did not, admittedly, succeed in producing a book. But his involvement in other activities was extensive. He lectured widely, often on religious issues—on "Christianity and Power Politics," for example, written sometime in the 1950s—and on historiography.[69] He attended meetings of the "Liberal Foreign Affairs Group," which brought together politicians like Jo Grimond with journalists, officials, and academics.[70] Wight's close intellectual and personal association with Toynbee and Chatham House also continued; he was a member of the Institute's council from 1952 until 1972, and was asked, in 1954, to edit a *Festschrift* to mark Toynbee's 70th birthday in 1959.[71] The project, sadly, never came to fruition. A year later the idea was mooted by the historian Alan Bullock that Wight succeed

Toynbee in the Stevenson chair.[72] Preferring teaching at the LSE to administration at Chatham House, he declined to put forward his name.[73]

In the academic year 1956–1957, Wight took up a long-standing invitation to spend time as a visiting scholar at the University of Chicago, where he assumed the absent Hans Morgenthau's teaching responsibilities.[74] What this entailed was a series of lectures on international theory to replace those on diplomacy usually given by Morgenthau.[75] These evolved, during the course of that year, into the now famous lectures delivered at the LSE between 1957 and 1960, later reconstructed and published as *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (1991), a text central to the revived "English School of International Relations."[76] At Chicago, the lectures—and Wight himself—were as well appreciated as they were later at the LSE; indeed, they earned him the offer of a full Professorship at the University in May 1957.[77] After some consideration, this offer was rejected—as was, at about the same time, a chair at the Australian National University.[78]

Shortly after his return from the United States, Wight was invited by Herbert Butterfield—his former examiner and now Professor of Modern History at Cambridge—to join his Rockefeller-funded British Committee on the Theory of International Politics. At the first meeting, in January 1959, Wight presented, doubtless by way of provocation, the paper "Why is there no International Theory?" published in the journal *International Relations* the following year. Over the course of the next twelve years, he gave nine further papers to the Committee, three of which, "Have Scientific Developments transformed International Relations?" (1960), "The Communist Theory of International Relations" (1962) and "Interests of States" (1970) remain unpublished.[79] The remainder appeared in *Diplomatic Investigations* (1966),[80] the collection of early Committee papers Wight edited, nominally with Butterfield's help,[81] and in *Systems of States*, published posthumously in 1977.

Wight left the LSE in 1961 to take up a Chair of History in the School of European Studies at the newly created University of Sussex. The decision to leave London and to move back to the study of history was clearly a difficult one. Wight's handwritten list of the "pros" and "cons" may be found in his papers. On the former were the usual considerations—a "new experience" and "professional status and salary"—but there were others too: he wished to "avoid" the "Manning succession crisis" and to "[g]et out of a subject I don't believe in into [a] subject I do believe in." Wight acknowledged that IR might give him "more freedom to do what I want," but in the end the "pros" were too strong.[82] Perhaps the greatest attraction of the new post was the chance to contrive an entirely new curriculum as the Dean of the School of European Studies, arguably the centrepiece of the new university.[83]

The courses taught in the School were modelled, in part, on a proposal for a degree course in "European Greats" that had been rejected by Oxford in 1947.[84] That plan had sought to unite within one syllabus the study of modern history and philosophy with that of literature and language, just as Classical "Greats" unites the study of ancient history with Greek and Latin. This idea was revived and extended at Sussex, which caused much concern amongst those at Oxford who had regretted its rejection twenty-odd years earlier.[85] History, philosophy, economics, politics, sociology, geography, and international relations, as well as modern languages, could all be studied within the framework of the School of European Studies. The aim was both to illustrate the "unity of European history" and to "combine historical and contemporary interest."[86] The common thread was the history of ideas.

Wight outlined the philosophy underlying the curriculum that he helped to create at Sussex in two pieces published in the 1960s: "The Place of Classics in a New University" (1963) and "European Studies" (1964).[87] Wight published little else in the remaining years of his life. The final two pieces of work that he himself wished to make public were an essay, again in *International Relations*, on "International Legitimacy" (1972), and a chapter in the *Festschrift* for Charles Manning, "The Balance of Power and International Order" (1973).[88] Since his sudden and early death, on the July 15, 1972, however, a great deal more of his work has emerged. Some of his British Committee papers were collected by Hedley Bull in *Systems of States* (1977), with a revised version of *Power Politics* coming out a year later.[89] Two talks, "Is the Commonwealth a Non-Hobbesian Institution?" and "An Anatomy of International Thought" have since appeared in British journals and some comments on pacifism were recently included in a history of the LSE Department.[90] In 1991, a reconstructed version of some of his LSE lectures under the title *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, was published, and more lectures have recently emerged in *Four Seminal Thinkers* (2005).[91]

Interpretations

Martin Wight's thought has been subject to three distinct interpretations. The first is that of his contemporaries, friends and former colleagues from Chatham House, the LSE, Sussex and elsewhere who knew both the man and his work. This group have tended to emphasize the centrality of his religious beliefs to his wider thought and what might best be described as his moral vision. The second belongs to his former students at the LSE, that remarkable group that attended Wight's lectures during the 1950s and came later to form the nucleus of the British "discipline" of IR as it emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Though not unaware of his faith, these men—among them Carsten

Holbraad, Alan James, James Mayall, and Brian Porter—have been concerned with Wight the international thinker, with locating his ideas in terms of what might best be called "discourse" of IR, and with developing elements of his approach to the subject. By far the most influential view of his thought, however, came from the Australian Hedley Bull, a former colleague from LSE and fellow member of the British Committee, who did most to bring Wight's unpublished writings into the public eye. Bull's view now predominates in IR: it is Bull's Wight, indeed, that is the "high priest" of the latter-day "English school."[92]

The few contemporary treatments of Wight's work that can be found ranged, as one might expect, from the appreciative to the hostile. The books that derived from his wartime work at Oxford were received well: Kenneth Wheare, for instance, called his *British Colonial Constitutions*

> the most illuminating and original study of Colonial constitutional law since Sir Henry Jenkyns published his *British Rule and Jurisdiction Beyond the Seas* in 1902. Mr Wight's achievement is even greater for the subject with which he deals is vastly more complicated than it was in Jenkyns' time.[93]

Power Politics was not met with such effusive praise, but sold well, and it is clear from the numerous letters from Chatham House asking for a revised and extended version that this "lucid account of the basic problems of the politics of the Powers," as R. R. Oglesby called it, found a considerable readership.[94]

The chapters Wight contributed to the *Survey of International Affairs: The World in March 1939* met a more extensive and varied response. The historian Max Beloff was impressed: "no-one in this country," he declared, "who has written on the pre-history of the Second World War since the documents and memoirs began to appear has shown comparable ability and judgement."[95] G. M. Gathorne-Hardy agreed: "if [Wight's] contribution stood by itself, expanded to an independent book, it would surely attain general recognition as a leading work on the subject." Particularly impressive, he thought, were the "brilliant analyses of National Socialism and the complex personality of the Führer."[96] In the *Times Literary Supplement*, Elizabeth Wiskemann waxed lyrical over Wight's scholarship and range, noting that at times, he "out-Toynbees Toynbee in the vastness of the canvasses he chooses."[97]

Others were less admiring, among them Richard Crossman and A. K. Chesterton. The former labelled Wight a "theological realist" and someone who believed, quite wrongly in Crossman's view, "demonic totalitarianism" to be "the normal political expression of popular emancipation."

He complained too of what he thought of as Wight's "modish over-estimate of Hitler."[98] Chesterton was even more condemnatory: the chapter on Germany, he noted acidly, "might have passed muster as a propaganda tract in the late 30s, but is simply not good enough as a serious record of events."[99]

Critical judgements of Wight's essays on international relations were equally varied. Much praise came from America. In 1959 Kenneth Waltz wrote to him as an intellectual ally, having become ever "more aware of the paucity of people here who take seriously the proposition that political theory in the old style can help me to understand the international politics of the present."[100] Hans Morgenthau was also sympathetic. He judged "Why is there no International Theory?" first published in *International Relations* in 1960, as "a most illuminating and penetrating discussion of the problem."[101] He dissented from Wight only in taking "a more sanguine view of the possibility of international theory," but conceded that his position coincided in "large measure" with that which Wight had put forward.[102] Morgenthau's later review of *Diplomatic Investigations* was even more laudatory: he called it "an outstanding success" and "a healthy corrective for our present academic priorities."[103]

Only after Wight's death, however, was his international thought subjected to extensive examination. In the 1970s and early 1980s, two groups featured prominently in this exercise: contemporaries and friends, on the one hand, and former students, on the other. Their respective interpretations, though they had many affinities, were nevertheless quite distinct. Those who had worked with Wight tended to emphasize the importance of his faith and what Asa Briggs—a colleague at Sussex—called his "strong moral convictions."[104] Charles Manning described him as a "scholar, an internationalist . . . and before all else, a practising Christian," as well as "[a]n ardent historian steeped in the traditions of theological and political thought."[105] Michael Howard confirmed this view a decade later. Wight had been, he wrote

> A deeply committed Christian pacifist . . . supremely concerned with the nature and significance of power in international relations, and brought to his study of the subject a spirit anguished over the tragedy of the human predicament and a mind richly stocked with historical learning.[106]

This image of Wight was sharpened in four of the first five lectures dedicated to his memory. Three of these came from former members of the British Committee: Herbert Butterfield, Michael Howard, and Donald MacKinnon; the other from Elie Kedourie, who had come to know him as a graduate student at the LSE and later as a fellow academic, albeit in the Department of

Government rather than IR. In these lectures, Wight's faith and deep concern for political morality—what Butterfield called the "ethical aspects of our subject"[107]—were very much to the fore. Howard, MacKinnon, and Kedourie all commented upon his rejection of what the first called "liberal humanitarian Christian teaching," his concern for eschatology, and his conviction that the "focus of Christianity . . . [was] . . . the Passion rather than the Sermon on the Mount."[108] MacKinnon pointed to Wight's exploration of the moral "sub-structure" of international relations; Kedourie to his "moral delicacy" and "nicety of judgement."[109]

Former students, though equally admiring, portrayed a subtly different Wight. This was understandable: as his lecture notes demonstrate, he seldom made clear his personal convictions.[110] All were impressed by his learning and erudition. Alan James recalled:

> Certainly he was enormously impressive. But what impressed one about his lectures and tutorials was the enormous range of his knowledge. It was the detailed content of what he had to say which was striking.[111]

John Garnett confirmed this view: "no one," he wrote in 1984, who heard Wight's "schematic review of the historical literature" on international relations, "will ever forget it."[112] Those who were taught by Wight, however, had difficulties in discerning an approach that they could follow, still less the theoretical perspective that he himself espoused. James thought it hard "to see any broad Wightian imprint in the structure of IR teaching at Britain's universities" and argued that "[e]ven his famed division of thinkers into realists, rationalists and revolutionists did not take one very far towards an understanding of the international scene."[113] "His style," James continued, "was unsuitable for assimilation and, to say the least, difficult to copy."[114]

Wight's students sought nevertheless to try to locate his international thought in terms of the "three traditions" of Realism, Rationalism, and Revolutionism that he himself had set out. Most thought of him as a Realist. James declared him "unambiguously" so and called him a "mini-Morgenthau"; Garnett asserted that he was "best described as a Christian pessimist" who "expressed a typically Realist view when he rejected all ideas of progress toward a more peaceful and just international order."[115] In this portrayal, his concern for moral questions was pushed half into the shadows. Some, like Brian Porter, recognized it was there, and though he reinforced the view that Wight was "a Christian pessimist who had no belief in progress," at the same time he acknowledged that interest in the "moral dimension."[116]

The difference between the views of Wight's friends and his former students cannot just be attributed to the first having known the man and the

latter just the teacher. By the 1970s, thinking about international relations in Britain had become "disciplinary." In the middle of that decade the field acquired the two most obvious signs of its academic coming-of-age: a professional association, the British International Studies Association (BISA), and a dedicated journal, the *British Journal* (later the *Review*) *of International Studies*. This emerging "disciplinary" self-consciousness was bolstered by a re-telling of the intellectual history of IR in Britain in categories thought proper to the field. William Olson and Hedley Bull's essays in *The Aberystwyth Papers* (1972) illustrate this tendency: in both the "discipline" progresses from early "idealist" naivety to worldly "realism" and on to the mature "sophistication" of the present day.[117] These general developments coloured the manner in which Wight's thought was interpreted. It became necessary for those in the first generation of academics committed to the discipline of IR, rather than merely to the study of international relations, to locate him in its various "traditions."[118] Hence, the tentative application of the "realist" label to Wight in the recollections of Garnett, James and, to a lesser extent, Porter.

In his two essays on Wight's thought, "Martin Wight and the theory of international relations" and his introduction to *Systems of States*, Hedley Bull challenged this "realist" interpretation. Unlike Wight's contemporaries, who based their portrayals largely upon their recollections of the man, and the students, who viewed Wight's thought through the prism of his lectures on international theory, Bull took a different approach. He too had attended the famed lectures, though as a young lecturer rather than a student, and he had known Wight well. But in preparing his essays, he engaged in some considerable additional research. Bull reread Wight's published work and had access to his unpublished papers; he wrote to many other friends and colleagues soliciting further information.[119] In the end, he succeeded in providing a far fuller account of Wight's thought and career than those extant at the time.

Bull's story had a certain shape. Wight's work, at Chatham House, Haileybury and Oxford, in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as his involvement with the pacifist movement, were cast as a prelude to his time at the LSE in the 1950s, with his sojourn at Sussex as something of an epilogue.[120] The impression was thus conveyed that the international theory lectures and the papers he delivered to the British Committee represented the mature expressions of Wight's thought. Bull contrasted "the view of International Relations Wight took at the age of 33, when *Power Politics* was published, and the view he developed in later life"—the mention of Wight's age giving rhetorical reinforcement to the argument that this "early" writing was immature.[121]

Bull was keen too to play down the influence of Wight's Christianity upon his international thought. In his introduction to *Systems of States*, Bull argued