

# THREE BOUNDARIES TO LOOSEN IN THE GLOBAL STUDY OF WORLD POLITICS



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# U.S. IR

- heavily dominated by quantitative and formal techniques
- emphasis on testing hypothetical generalizations in order to produce covering-laws about political behavior (neopositivist)
- often features the analysis of large data-sets
- generally fairly state-centric or actor-centric
- graduate training in the U.S. is quite provincial
- also, U.S. IR is organizationally a subset of Political Science

# BEYOND IR

- why? “the terrible predicament of here and now” (Abraham Joshua Heschel)
- IR as an “American social science”
  - IR might be a hegemonic point of view
  - IR as job training for State Department/NGOs
- do IR scholars around the globe only or even largely do work that looks like the work dominant in the U.S.? No.
- is U.S. IR scholarship part of the conversation in other countries?  
Yes.
  - is the reverse true? No.

# “WORLD POLITICS”

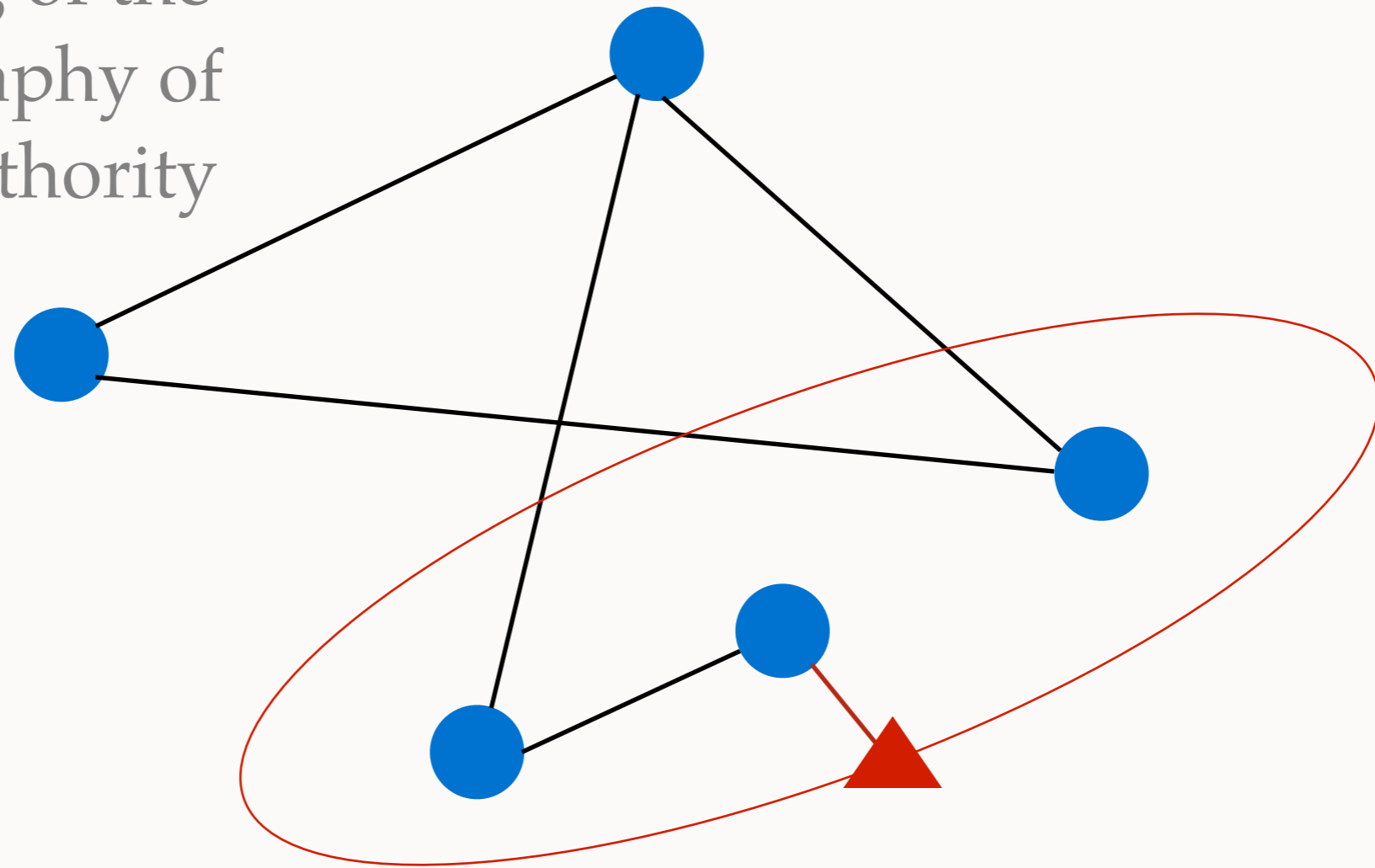
- politics:
  - “slow boring of hard boards”
  - the negotiation of legitimate domination
- world:
  - experiential / phenomenological totality
  - bounded, so the possibility of an outside
- world politics as centrally concerned with *encounter*

# BOUNDARY # 1: ACTOR-REDUCTIONISM

- the tendency to explain social arrangements and outcomes by identifying actor motives and interests
- far more pervasive than “state-centrism”
  - OEP and other rational-choice individualisms
  - ethnonation / “terrorist network”
- specifies actors *in advance* and looks for their choices

# NESTING

1. content matters
2. mapping of the metageography of political authority



# BOUNDARY # 2: "SCIENCE"

- no single unified logic of scientific inquiry
- a broad definition of science:
  - systematic links between premises and conclusions
  - subject to public criticism and improvement
  - focused on producing worldly knowledge
- *lots* of room for variation within this space

# A 2X2 TABLE

wagers	phenomenal	transfactual
mind-world dualism	neopositivism	critical realism
mind-world monism	analyticism	reflexivity



# BOUNDARY # 3: POLITICS AND OUR ROLE IN IT

- traditional U.S. version: academic experts *solve* political questions
  - scholarship = non-political
- antithesis: academic observers *engage in* politics
  - scholarship = political
- this is far too simple a dichotomy

orientation towards global politics

contemplating

enacting

wissenschaft

politik

contemplating

enacting

contemplating

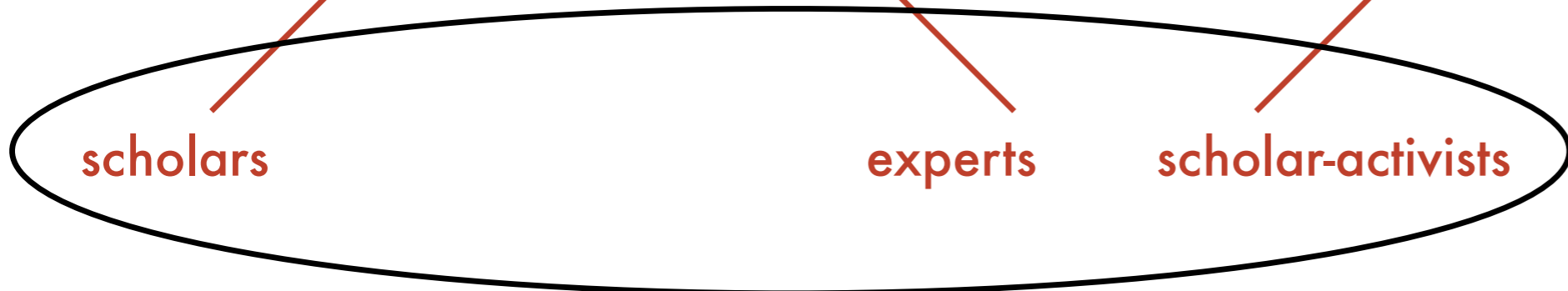
enacting

scholars

experts

scholar-activists

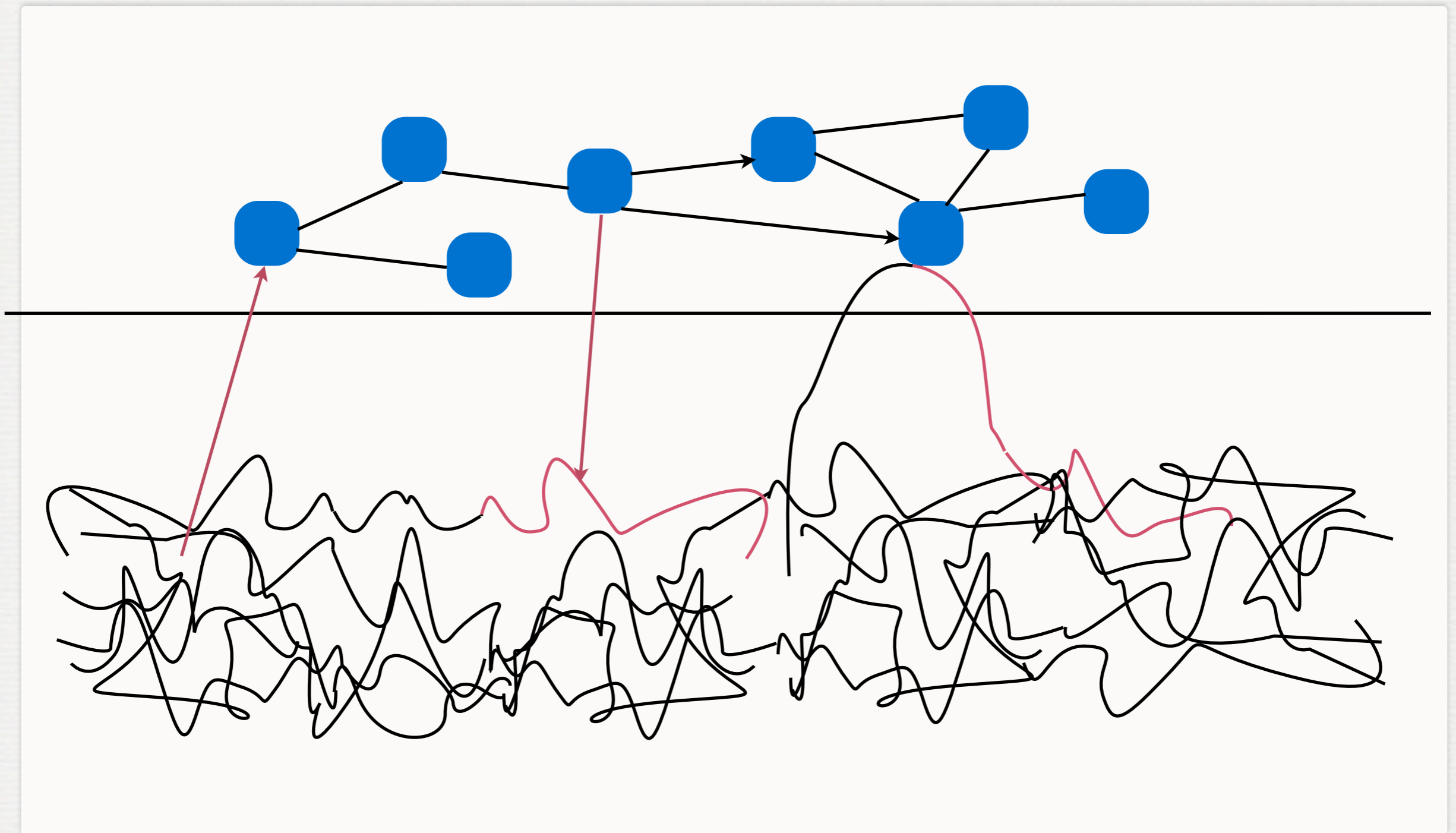
practitioners



# BOUNDARY #3: POLITICS AND OUR ROLE IN IT

- Weber+Dewey with a dash of Wittgenstein: academics *formalize practice*, provisionally separate from politics
  - Weber: value-clarification
  - Dewey: conserve practical insights and make them more broadly applicable
  - Wittgenstein: “getting a clear view” of usage
- scholarship = critical tool-making

# THE ACADEMIC FUNCTION



As we approach the third millennium, our needs are different, and the ways of meeting them must be correspondingly rethought. Now, our concern can no longer be to guarantee the stability and uniformity of Science or the State alone: instead, it must be to provide the elbowroom we need in order to protect diversity and adaptability.

—Stephen Toulmin