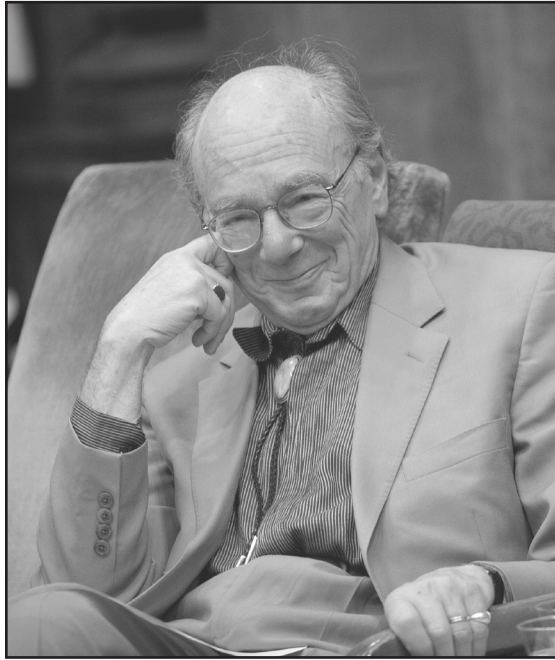

STANLEY HOFFMANN



COURTESY OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY

27 NOVEMBER 1928 · 13 SEPTEMBER 2015

STANLEY HOFFMANN, University Professor at Harvard, a member of the university's Government Department for 58 years, and a founder and long-time director of Harvard's Center for European Studies, died on September 13, 2016 at the age of 86 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is survived by his wife of more than 50 years, Inge Schneier Hoffmann; hundreds of former students; and scores of former colleagues and friends who learned from his knowledge and wisdom and were amused by his wit. During his long life, he was a brilliant writer on world politics, French society, U.S.-French relations, and morality in public affairs; he was an academic star and a public intellectual on two continents, a renowned lecturer, and a mentor to generations of students and colleagues.

Hoffmann was a refugee from the ravages of mid-century Europe, though he discussed this background very little for most of his career. His fame did not derive from his reflection on being a refugee, but his personal history, especially his roots in two cultures (France and the United States) profoundly influenced his thinking. Hoffmann was born in Vienna in November 1928 of an Austrian mother, who happened to be Jewish though not very observant, and an American father, from whom his mother soon separated and whom he hardly knew. Mrs. Hoffmann took them to Nice, France, when Stanley was quite young because, as he once wrote, she preferred Southern France to Austria. In 1936, they moved to Paris so this brilliant young man could receive better schooling. When the Western Front collapsed in the spring of 1940, the Hoffmanns fled to the south of France two days before the entry of the German army into Paris; they had been delayed by Hoffmann's emergency appendicitis operation. It took them three days in someone else's car to travel 100 miles to Tours. As he recalled, "I was part of a nation of pariahs driven out by a mechanized horde of invaders."

The Hoffmanns went to Nice and, for a while, were relatively safe under Vichy control. When the Germans liquidated Vichy in 1943, and the SS arrived in Nice, they left for a small town in the countryside, having watched friends disappear in roundups. They survived, continually fearful of the knock on the door. He later wrote, "It wasn't I who chose to study world politics; world politics forced themselves upon me." As a result, he wrote, he was permanently scarred by "the discovery of the way in which public affairs take over private lives, in which individual fates are flown around like leaves in a storm once History strikes."

Despite or because of these experiences, Stanley Hoffmann became proudly attached to France. He was grateful for the protection of villagers and teachers who had risked their own lives to help protect

him and his mother and had been moved by the fierce patriotism of some around him. Although personally a man of the moderate Left, his hero became and remained

Charles De Gaulle. Hoffmann was naturalized as a French citizen in 1947 and finished at the top of his class at the Institut d'études politiques in 1948. His dissertation there dealt with "political powers of states" between 1815 and 1952, with a section on the Concert of Europe as an embryonic international organization that he declared himself pleased with 40 years later.

Stanley Hoffmann came to the United States in 1951 as a visiting graduate student in the Harvard Government Department and formed a strong attachment to this country. Later, he described himself as both French and American—"passionately French" because he was not born French but lived there during his formative years, yet attracted to the greater informality of American culture and the ability in American academic institutions to cross more easily across disciplines. He became a dual citizen in 1960. He joined the Harvard faculty in 1955, remaining an active member and brilliant teacher until his retirement in 2013.

Hoffmann's renown came from scholarship across several fields and from activism as a public intellectual in a number of widely read publications on both sides of the Atlantic. We describe his intellectual production in familiar categories, convenient for a summary, but we recognize that doing so may obscure his ability brilliantly to cross boundaries and silos of disciplines and subfields.

SCHOLAR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

On both sides of the Atlantic, Hoffmann achieved fame for reflecting on international relations. His analytic skills made him a powerful dissector of theories, all the more remarkable as he did not seek to develop his own theory of international relations. Among his most widely read books was *Contemporary Theory in International Relations* (1960). Here, Hoffmann classified a range of theories, provided selections of each, and then rigorously critiqued them. The book became essential reading for graduate students in the 1960s who were preparing for Ph.D. exams and undertaking dissertations. But Hoffmann was not convinced by any of these theories. He was attracted only by Raymond Aron's "historical sociology" approach, in which one compared large structures of similar periods, built a kind of Weberian ideal type of them, and then explored how specific countries behaved inside each of these systems. It was a kind of "thick description," as Geertz was to call it. With his historical and cultural sensitivity, his use of this approach was intellectually

stimulating, but it was very hard for others with less rich cultural and historical understanding to reproduce.

Theory building in international relations provoked his skepticism. In 1960, he declared that “the most general ‘laws’ of international relations are bound to be fairly trivial generalizations . . . Exclusive emphasis on regularities leads to the rediscovery of platitudes.” In his descriptive work, Hoffmann was, in the categories made famous by Isaiah Berlin, a fox (who knows many different things, some large, some small), not a hedgehog (who knows one big thing). He commented brilliantly on the world around him by mobilizing many analytic frames. He appreciated the Realist premise that nations seek to advance their interests, but he refused to subscribe to the view that a state’s foreign policy can be deduced from its objective position in the world. For Hoffmann, there were always different ways of seeing what your interests might be. What states actually did depended on what its leaders and politics “chose” in some way or another. Thus, observers need to understand leadership and its sources, from ideas and personality to ideology and institutions, interest groups and lobbies, and social movements and circumstances. Human agency matters. Hoffmann detested determinism. Policy was open—a matter of decisions.

In place of international relations theory, Hoffmann’s writing turned to analysis of international relations itself. He notably wrote about U.S. foreign policy, Europe and France, and the world and world order. The titles are very evocative: *Gulliver’s Troubles: Or the Setting of American Foreign Policy* (1968); *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (1978); *Dead Ends: American Foreign Policy in the New Cold War* (1983); *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (1987); *The European Sisyphus: Essays on Europe, 1964-1994* (1995); and *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era* (1998, updated 2000). Hoffmann was very upset with U.S. policy after 9/11, as suggested by the title of his 2004 book with Frederic Bozo, *Gulliver Unbound: America’s Imperial Temptation and the War in Iraq*.

Hoffmann cared deeply about moral issues in international affairs. He described himself as, in part, a realist, who distrusted both theories assuming rational action by states and utopian projects for global reform. But he was also an idealist, dissatisfied with the world as he found it, who declared himself convinced that humanity had to “will a better future and could create it if it so willed.” He saw these two features of his thought as somewhat schizophrenic, but the tension between them is part of what generated the richness and perceptiveness of his writings: he could see, and even believe in, both sides of the realist–idealist coin. His books on these topics include *Duties beyond Borders: On the Limits and*

Possibilities of Ethical International Politics, and *The Ethics and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, written with Robert C. Johansen, James P. Sterba, and Raimo Väyrynen (1996).

If Stanley Hoffmann was a fox in his descriptive work, on ethical issues he was a hedgehog because of his strong commitment to the proposition that an ethical dimension is inherent in cogent interpretation. He kept seeking, in his own words, “a way out of conflicts within the constraints of the Westphalian system.” Although he gave Henry Kissinger a nod as “the best recent example” of a conservative statesman, he emphasized the “extraordinary shortcomings of conservative statecraft.” Particularly telling was the shift in prevalent verb modes between the fox-like Hoffmann of empirical analysis to the hedgehog of ethics: from the cool descriptive language of “is” and the conditional forecasts of what “may” occur, to the language of “must” and “ought.” In his writings on ethics and international affairs over his last 30 years, he showed a deep engagement with the sanctity of human rights and the moral obligations of those with power to defend the rights of the weak.

For Hoffmann, the ethical hedgehog had to be an empirical fox. As he said in a 1988 essay, “the first duty of an ethicist is to be an expert.” Stanley Hoffmann sought an *embodied* idealism—pursuing ideals in full awareness of the fact that, as he once put it, idealists can fall into “the hell of good intentions.” He demonstrated in his writings how awareness of complexity and a passion for ethical improvement can work together, and how, as he wrote, “a state of dissatisfaction is a goad to research.”

Hoffmann never aspired to be a policymaker. He was too much a critic, and too much an outsider, ever to be comfortable setting out and defending policy positions. He was uneasy with the tendency of his colleagues to rush off to policymaking jobs. It undermined their analytical capacity to evaluate, bring truth to power, and advocate for moral concerns. And he was very wary about the use of force as a successful tool of policy. He was an early and vigorous opponent of the Vietnam War and an equally forthright critic of George W. Bush’s 2003 invasion of Iraq. He relished the admiration of others and his reputation as a scholar as well as a commentator on world politics for the *New York Review of Books*, but he never sought either the reality or the image of power. In a way, he had too ironic a turn of mind to be a resolute policymaker, doomed to defend his positions as right even while being uncertain that they were. Yet his criticisms were delivered sharply and courageously, without trimming his words to avoid giving offense.

SCHOLAR OF FRANCE

Hoffmann’s fame in many circles rested on his writings about France.

Indeed, he viewed the study of France as closely linked to the analysis of international relations, since France's destiny was so intertwined with international affairs. At Harvard, he taught for many years a course on French politics and society, befitting the holder of the C. Douglas Dillon Professorship of the Civilization of France. The course was immensely popular: it combined politics with history, literature, movies, and culture. It stressed France, not comparative politics. Hoffmann built a portrait of the France of the medieval period to modernity. He explored national experiences, social structures, the economy, family, and social structure, ideology, and political ideas. Then he discussed the transmission belts of political parties and interests groups, which connect society to the political institutions that aggregate preferences. Hoffmann saw France as deeply reliant on the State and leadership to hold things together in a divided country and break the log-jam of stalemate. He saw a frequently blocked society, able to become a great power in Europe and the World but also stuck at key moments in its history—the multiple crises of the 1930s, the defeat by Germany in 1940, the collapse of the Third Republic, the Vichy Regime, the wars in Indochina and Algeria, the collapse of the Fourth Republic, the ascension of De Gaulle and the Fifth Republic. Hoffmann worried often about the collapse in 1940. He reflected during his whole academic career on Vichy, teaching courses on it and writing articles and book reviews.. He spoke of a comprehensive book, drawing it all together, but he never wrote one. He did respond very quickly in one of his earliest publications to the Poujadist movement in France of the mid-1950s, a kind of brush fire of populist anger and social change, an echo of Vichy and a fore runner of the Le Pen movement of our era. He wrote quite a number of books and essays on France, including some notable essays about De Gaulle.

A famous essay quite characteristic of Hoffman's analytic acuity and intellectual style was "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," which appeared in *In Search of France* (Harvard 1963), co-edited with Charles Kindleberger, Lawrence Wylie, Jesse Pitts, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, and François Goguel. The article explored how France evolved through a series of political conditions: the sharp fragmentation of the Revolutionary period; the eventual "Republican synthesis" that extended through the Third Republic; German conquest and Vichy; and finally, another reconstruction after 1945.

Hoffmann did not like determinism or single variable explanations in domestic politics. He reacted viscerally to "mechanical Marxism." "There is no one-to-one correspondence between class preferences and political outcomes," he would often say. This conclusion may have been partly a reaction to the kind of Marxism he heard in Paris as a graduate

student, which in his ears blurred with a kind of materialist interest-group liberalism he heard in the United States. There were many groups in French society, he thought, with many views. Decisions were made by the well-trained civil service, a group Hoffmann was more likely than his American colleagues to see as neutral articulators of a general will, above particularistic concerns. And as noted above, he admired De Gaulle's leadership. For Hoffmann, De Gaulle embodied the figure who cut through the Gordian knot of contradictions, paralysis, and stalemate. It was De Gaulle who upheld French honor in leading the resistance to German occupation in the 1940s, provided a French voice in the post-war settlements, skillfully slipped the Albatross of Algeria and colonialism, and then rebuilt French institutions while asserting a French role in the world. To accomplish this, he mobilized considerable support at home.

The appreciation of realist concerns but the rejection of their rigidity; the necessity for domestic variables; the importance of social analysis and of agency and contingency; and the ultimate importance of leadership and judgment to prevent stalemate and paralysis—these were characteristics of Hoffmann's writings. In some respect, Hoffmann and Henry Kissinger shared some sensibilities in these regards. They were once close colleagues, as foreign emigrés at Harvard, but they clashed over policy regarding the war in Vietnam. For Hoffmann, Kissinger was too ambitious for power, too conservative, too accepting of authoritarian domination, and too little concerned with morality.

The Franco-American dialogue was an important arena for Hoffmann's energies and creativity. He sought his whole life to make each understand the other. He admired much on each side, and he felt frustrated when the two cultures clashed. His despair in later years at the U.S. turn under the George W. Bush administration took much of the pleasure out of the U.S.-France contestation.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND TEACHING

Among Hoffmann's most enduring legacies are the institutions he built at Harvard. The Center for European Studies is world famous. Less well-known internationally but a powerful influence on its students and teachers for more than 60 years is the Social Studies major. Both the Center and the major reflect Hoffmann's strong interdisciplinary commitments and his dislike of disciplinary hyper-specialization, and both reflect his fondness for the collaborative informality of American intellectual life.

The Center for European Studies emerged in the 1960s out of programs on Europe undertaken by Hoffmann, Kissinger, and others.

Aided by the formation of the German Marshall Fund in Washington, Guido Goldman helped raise money for a Center at Harvard, of which Hoffmann became the first chair. His egalitarian spirit led him to support young faculty and graduate students, fostering study groups, seminars, lectures, and the famous Friday lunches. As a result, the Center for European Studies became a magnet for students of Europe in the greater Boston area and indeed New England.

Somewhat earlier, in the late 1950s, Hoffmann had played a key role in creating the Social Studies major, an honors “concentration” built around the classics of nineteenth-century social science that led to the empirical social research and debates of the twentieth century. In their sophomore year, students read Tocqueville, Marx Weber, Durkheim, and Freud; in their junior year, they applied these theories to specific problems; and in their senior year, they wrote honors theses. An honors major, it was small but prestigious, attracting first-rate students.

TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP

Unlike so many distinguished university professors, Hoffmann loved teaching. He seemed to draw inspiration from his students, perhaps especially from very bright undergraduates. His lectures were legendary, the kind one “must take.” Among his most influential courses were those on French Politics and another on war. Both were very broad in their scope. The course on France covered French history, literature, film, ideas, and politics. Hoffman enjoyed writing film reviews, often published in newsletters. The course on war covered a wide range of theories, from psychology and cultural interpretations of aggression to structural and rationalist ones, mixed with extensive reading on historical cases. Another influential course explored morality in international relations.

Undergraduate enrollment for these courses was very high. Hoffmann cared deeply about Harvard “General Education” requirements and courses, the kind that reached across fields rather than a department or discipline. Especially through the 1970s, many Ph.D. students sought him out as an advisor, although this became less common as he moved away from the organized discipline of political science and it moved away from him. In the last decades of his career, he rarely attended American Political Science Association or International Studies Association annual meetings. His work remained on specialized reading lists on morality in international relations, U.S. foreign policy, or French politics—but mostly disappeared from mainstream international relations reading lists.

But his erudition and wit continued to captivate both graduate and undergraduate students at Harvard. He responded by teaching more

than he was required to and writing new lectures when he could easily have relied on old ones. He was brilliant in big lectures and small tutorials but not as impressive in seminars. He gave his insights rather than seeking to stimulate discussion with provocative, well-chosen questions. He mixed cheer and friendliness with a shy privacy.

Indeed, the “paradox” noted in the title of one his famous essays on France evokes much about Hoffmann. He was shy and private in some ways, social and gracious in others, and a brilliant public speaker before large crowds and lectures. He did not define the discipline of international relations—there was no *École Hoffmann*—but he attracted huge numbers of students at all levels, who felt greatly influenced by and fiercely devoted to him, and he was typically very loyal to them. He was comfortable in two countries but at times sharply critical of each.

Stanley Hoffmann was himself the best spokesman for his views. He stated his own profession of faith as follows: “As scholars and as citizens working in a field in which violence, deceit, injustice, and oppression are on full display, beware of illusions, but never give up hope—by which I do not mean a faith in progress, only the modest belief that it is not impossible.”

Stanley Hoffmann was a refugee; a brilliant author and teacher; a dedicated mentor; and a committed and clear-sighted analyst of world affairs, French politics, and U.S.-French relations. Rest in Peace.

Elected 1981

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