

VALE, COLIN AND IRÈNE VAN DEN ENDE: THE LOSS OF INNOCENCE (International Relations essays in honour of Dirk Kunert). HSRC Publishers, Pretoria, 1994.

Dirk Kunert was the Jan Smuts Professor of International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand. His untimely death in 1991 led to this series of essays by scholars in memory of his contribution to the study of international relations.

Within academia at Wits Kunert was often a controversial figure. His realism and his refusal to be drawn into leftist-radical criticism of international relations and especially the Cold War made him an often lonely figure. Kunert was a political scientist

on events and the hallmark of his work was his efforts to come to grips with the lessons of history. Kunert's own contribution, his inaugural address entitled "Loss of Innocence" is a stimulating analysis and critique of the social sciences and the study of international relations. His scepticism of the intellectual designs of the social sciences (which provide "'non-answers to trivial questions' and anaesthetize political reality") is based on his profound interest in and comprehension of history, philosophy, human culture and the nature of man. Social scientists are guilty of a "mutation of history" and "They fantasize about the chimera of a thoroughly de-politicised world, where conflict will be converted into voluntary free labour and mankind united under one sovereignty, no longer confronting

any enemy". As a realist Kunert's approach is based on the following belief: "By himself the individual can create nothing; he can only wait until he hears God's footsteps resounding through events and then spring forward to grasp the hem of his mantle - that is all".

Kunert's realism prevents him from being carried away by the utopian claims of contemporary social sciences. He is deeply aware of the fallibility of Man and the gap between the utopian dream and the nightmares of reality. But he does not despair. That is why his motto is: "If man can do little, it is at least his moral duty to accomplish what he can".

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