



CLASSICAL REALISM MEETS CRITICAL THEORY

CRISES, MODERNITY, AND THE RETURN OF HUMANITY

Classical Realism meets Critical Theory: Philosophies, Practices, Politics

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Ottawa

20-21 June 2014

Workshop Programme

Day 1

Friday, 20 June 2014

- 9.00-9.15 Arrival
9.15-9.30 Welcome and Introduction - Michael Williams (University of Ottawa)

Session One

Chair: Michael Williams

- 9.30-10.30 Richard Ned Lebow (Dartmouth College/King's College) & David Bohmer Lebow (Phd, Yale; Yale Law Sch) - "Hans Morgenthau and Critical Realism"
10.30-11.30 Sean Molloy (University of Kent) - "E.H. Carr in Frankfurt: *The Twenty Years' Crisis* as an Exercise in Critical Theory"
11.30-12.45 Hartmut Behr (Newcastle University) - "Conditions and Spaces of Critique. Herbert Marcuse, Hans Morgenthau, Eric Voegelin"

12.45-13.30 Lunch

Session Two

Chair: Hartmut Behr

- 13.30-14.30 Timothy W. Luke (Virginia Tech) - "Caught Between Vulgar and Effete Realists: Repositioning Classical Realism and Critical Theory in Statecraft and International Studies"
14.30-15.30 Felix Roesch (Coventry University) - "Unlearning in International Relations. Maruyama, Morgenthau, and Modernity"
15.30-16.00 Coffee break
16.00-17.00 Kamila Stullerova (Aberystwyth University) - "Embracing Ontological Doubt: The Role of 'Reality' in Political Realism"

Day 2

Saturday, 21 June 2013

08.45-9.00 Arrival

Session One

Chair: Timothy Luke

9.00-10.15 Daniel J. Levine (University of Alabama) - "The Apocalyptic Sting, Critical Realism, and the Politics of Jewish Fear"

10.15-11.30 Lene Hansen (University of Copenhagen) - "Student, Monster, Rocker? The *Rolling Stone* featuring the Boston Bomber and the Limits of Representation"

11.30-12.30 Vibeke Schou Tjalve (Danish Institute of International Studies) - "Security in Ocular Democracy: A (Critical) Realist Perspective"

12.30-13.15 Lunch

Session Two

Chair: Lene Hansen

13.15-14.15 Richard Beardsworth (Aberystwyth University) - "Towards a Critical Concept of the Statesperson"

14.15-15.15 Lucian Ashworth (Memorial University) - Commentaries

15.15-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-17.30 Hartmut Behr (Newcastle University) - Concluding Remarks & Further Strategising

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Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa, Canada

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Presenters

- 1) Richard Beardsworth (Aberystwyth University)
- 2) Hartmut Behr (Newcastle University)
- 3) Lene Hansen (University of Copenhagen)
- 4) Richard Ned Lebow (Dartmouth College/Kings College London)
and David Bohmer Lebow (Phd, Yale; Yale Law School)
- 5) Daniel Levine (University of Alabama)
- 6) Timothy W. Luke (Virginia Tech)
- 7) Seán Molloy (University of Kent)
- 8) Vibeke Schou Tjalve (Danish Institute of International Studies)
- 9) Kamila Stullerova (Aberystwyth University)
- 10) Lucian Ashworth (Memorial University)

Workshop Abstracts

Towards a Critical Concept of the Statesperson

Richard Beardsworth

Both in and outside the academic and policy worlds there is growing lament at the lack of political responsibility and leadership regarding global public goods and bads. In the context of this absence the paper brings together elements of Classical Realism, Critical Theory and republican political theory in order to rehearse *a critical* concept of the statesperson that aligns national needs and interests with global moral and political imperatives. Following classical realism the statesperson represents the national interest in an uncertain international order, obligated to both the needs and interests of his or her people and an international environment within which those needs and interests are least undermined. In the original Frankfurt school version, Critical Theory theorizes society in such a way as to foster the emancipation of social actors and/or lessen the scope of domination. Republican political theory emphasizes the political logic of freedom as non-domination and the political virtue of self-restraint. The paper argues that these three different sets of concerns should be brought together in the context of global threats and challenges. For example, if the satisfaction of the needs of peoples is threatened by events of a specifically global nature (traditional, economic and climate change insecurities), and if those threats can only be met through pooling sovereignty with other states or ceding it, in part, to global norms, rules and institutions, it is the political duty of the statesperson to delegate power upwards in order for the citizens of the state to exercise freedom from domination. The politically virtuous statesperson leads the polity,

therefore, by restraining sovereignty in the name of sovereignty. This *critical* concept of the statesperson and state leadership needs to be explicitly rehearsed by international theory—in distinction, on the one hand, to formal understandings of global governance, and, on the other, to divisive politics of nationalism and regionalism.

Conditions and Spaces of Critique. Herbert Marcuse, Hans Morgenthau, Eric Voegelin

Hartmut Behr

Critique in the social sciences and humanities, and in academia in general, seems to be not only ubiquitous, but a driving force for the development and history of political ideas, concepts, and theories. Yet, the conditions of such critique appear largely under-reflected even though critique is constantly being exerted, sometimes fiercely and empoisoned. This research argues that we find important, though implicit thoughts on conditions of critique in the work of Hans J. Morgenthau, i.e. in his idea of the transience of political theory and knowledge (as it communicates from his reference to Karl Mannheim’s concept of “Standortgebundenheit” [the temporal and spatial contingencies of political theory and knowledge]). As important and valuable as this insight and maxim is, it does not seem to provide the possibility for critique to reflect upon its own conditions, limitations, and its own formation. Critique a la Morgenthau hence remains at the level of common sense that is argued (as for example by Eric Voegelin) to lack the potential of self-reflectivity and insightful explication of its own development and construction. What seems to be necessary therefore is to supplement “Standortgebundenheit” with ‘noesis’ (a la Plato, interpreted by Voegelin).

In a second step, the question for conditions of critique, developed leaning towards a Morgenthauian understanding of the time- and space contingency of political theory and a Voegelinian understanding of ‘noesis’, shall be discussed against the background of Critical Theory (especially H. Marcuse) and the notion of ‘negation’ (resembling the Derridean episteme of ‘erasure’). The idea of a dialectically induced negation of arguments (as ‘thesis’ and ‘anti-thesis’) appears as a radical, but necessary step for the question of critique and thus as vital supplement to “Standortgebundenheit” and ‘noesis’.

Student, Monster, Rocker? The *Rolling Stone* featuring the Boston Bomber and the Limits of Representation

Lene Hansen

When *Rolling Stone*’s 2013 August issue hit newsstands on July 19, it met with immediate uproar and massive boycotts as Walmart, 7-Eleven, CVC amongst others refused to carry the issue. Staring straight at the reader, one arm raised, curly hair stylishly dropping leaving his left eye just visible was Dzhokhar Anzorovich “Jahar” Tsarnaev, aka the Boston Bomber. Kept in soft, sandy tones, this photo

was no different from the thousands of young rock star shots that have adorned the pages of *Rolling Stone* since its first issue in 1967. On top of the generic adolescent rock reference, perusing the archives of *Rolling Stone*, some likened it to an iconic 1981 cover featuring Jim Morrison and the header “He is hot, he is sexy and he is dead”. Others pointed to another controversial cover, a 1970 depiction of an equally handsome Charles Manson gazing prophetically into the sky.

This paper takes the controversy surrounding the *Rolling Stone* Boston Bomber cover as the starting point for an analysis of the boundaries of representation and the politics of aesthetics and emotion in the early 21st century. Situating the discussion at the intersection between critical theory and classical realism the two main theorists (re)visited are Adorno and Morgenthau, the former due to his work on the politics and ethics of aesthetic representation, the latter for his lasting contribution to debates over the question of the enemy and politics itself. Two sets of questions will be pursued. First, is there, as Adorno held in the wake of the Nazi Holocaust evils which cannot be artistically represented? Or, is it, as Adorno later suggested possible to represent, but only as Gene Ray has put it in a form that ‘pre-empt the extraction of any aesthetic pleasure or meaning’ and where art enters as a void or absence. Or, have we entered a media environment so saturated by perpetually circulating representations that the question of permissibility has exhausted itself? Second, drawing on Michael C. Williams’s reading of Morgenthau, what does the representation of the Boston Bomber signify for the two themes that are particularly central to the meta-choices that surround security politics: the friend-enemy distinction and the extent to which a public sphere of engagement and mediation of difference can be justified?



Hans Morgenthau and Critical Realism

Richard Ned Lebow and David Bohmer Lebow

Hans Morgenthau’s life and research intersected with those of the founders of the Frankfurt School. They perceived themselves as antagonists, and contemporary critical theorists, to the extent they engage his writings it is to expose their failings. I contend that classical realists and critical theorists share more in common than is generally recognized and that Morgenthau, while hardly a “fellow traveller” was equally committed to theory as a transformative project motivated by not dissimilar normative goals.



The Apocalyptic Sting, Critical Realism, and the Politics of Jewish Fear

Daniel J. Levine

This paper explores Gershom Scholem’s 1926 notion of an ‘apocalyptic sting’ – a messianic political theology encoded within the Hebrew language which, he feared, threatened to overwhelm Zionist, and later Israeli, politics. The paper makes three moves. First, I unpack Scholem’s notion of the

'sting': contingencies peculiar to Hebrew and its modern-day revival would, he feared, overwhelm a worldly, prudent politics in favor of messianic absolutism. The effect would be to blur the distinction between the everyday politics of a Zionist-Israeli 'national home' and prophetic visions of Jewish redemption from exile; practical questions relating to borders, citizenship issues and personal law would become freighted with eschatological significance, while (here following political theorist Eyal Chowers) a notion of 'sundered history' would lead some Zionists to believe that such visions could actually be realized by human hands. Next, I survey attempts by leading Israeli public intellectuals and social scientists -- Yehoshafat Harkabi and Aviezer Ravitzky -- who in ensuing decades recognized the dangers of this 'sting' and sought a response to it. Drawing on themes first evinced by classical and Christian realists like Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr and Herbert Butterfield -- and at times even directly on their work -- these scholars sought to contain Scholem's 'sting' by counseling prudence: emphasizing the flawed world of politics and limits to human agency. Religious ideals and prophetic visions, they held, functioned best as regulative ideals, rather than as literal prescriptions. While logically unimpeachable, I hold, these positions were inadequate to the problem of the messianic sting and sundered history: for they returned Jews back to the same extreme, dislocating fear bound up in the experience of late modernity which had actuated Zionism in the first place -- all while failing to fully acknowledge that fear. Finally, by drawing on the negative dialectics of Frankfurt School social theorist Theodor Adorno and my earlier work on 'sustainable critique,' I suggest the outlines of a critical realism robust enough to meet both the problem of Scholem's apocalyptic sting and the reality of late modern Jewish fear. If citizens and policymakers are to embrace a permanent state of fear, should not critical realism be the work of negating any possible escape from it? What possibilities for compassion, solidarity or reconciliation might such a determined negation open up?

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Caught Between Vulgar and Effete Realists: Repositioning Classical Realism and Critical Theory in Statecraft and International Studies

Timothy W. Luke

Like it or not, classical realism circulates, and arguably, survives as a mode of analysis and practice in "opportunistic vulgarized" forms that ignore the complexities of power, knowledge, and action in different spatial, temporal and operational contexts. So too is critical theory often reduced to a handful of bullet-point phrases as an intellectual movement during the 20th century.

In this analysis, then, I begin to map out -- through a more nuanced critical theory framework how some -- how many academics/media pundits/policymakers openly espouse an "effete" realism to distance themselves from so-called "vulgar" realists. On the one hand, they make this move to distinguish themselves (if only in their own minds) as more sophisticated/learned/correct in their readings, and to develop, on the other hand, what they believe is needed for a new fundamentalist reading of classical realism that will rescue the state from both vulgar realists and structural neorealists as well as idealists, constructivists, and paleoconservative nationalists to arrive at better practices for statecraft and scholarship. Yet, like much of the Frankfurt School, such scholarly

scolding only leads them into an eddy spun up from their own hermetic discussions and obscure networks.

On the whole, then, these intellectual conflicts lead to stalemate and ineffectiveness. Pointing out the quirks and confusions in serving up classical realism in its vulgar and effete flavors is a crucial corrective. And, using an ideology critique analysis rooted in critical theory, then, is essential for strategically repositioning the central ideas of classical Realism and critical theory in statecraft and international studies today. And, insights from contemporary critical theory are central to this project of unveiling how realist myths and machinations might be better put to effective use in policy practices and analysis.



E.H. Carr in Frankfurt: *The Twenty Years' Crisis* as an Exercise in Critical Theory

Seán Molloy

Using the criteria established by Max Horkheimer in 'Traditional and Critical Theory,' this paper engages in the task of reading *The Twenty Years' Crisis* as a text that exhibits the key characteristics of Critical Theory as understood by Horkheimer and his collaborator, Theodor Adorno. The claim of the paper is not Adorno or Horkheimer influenced Carr, but rather that Carr's work can be fruitfully recast as an exemplary text of Critical Theory to rank alongside *Dialectic of Enlightenment* or *The Eclipse of Reason*. Carr has been read as a 'critical theorist' or 'proto-critical theorist' before, e.g., Booth (1991), Linklater (1997) and Babík (2013)- but while these readings have touched upon they have not adequately investigated the profound implications of the parallels between Carr and the first generation of the English School. The implications explored in this paper are twofold: firstly, the epistemological reorientation of Carr's project when he is read as a Critical Theorist, as opposed to a 'hard-nosed Realist' of a positivist bent (Mearsheimer, 2005). Secondly, and developing on the epistemological recasting of Carr's work, the paper investigates the ethical dimensions and political recommendations of *The Twenty Years' Crisis* when viewed as a Critical Theoretical text. Reading Carr in this manner offers the opportunity of reorienting Realism from positivist amorality towards an altogether more interesting and powerful critique of International Relations.



Unlearning in International Relations. Maruyama, Morgenthau, and Modernity

Felix Rösch

Recent re-readings of classical realism in International Relations have demonstrated that in their critique of modernity mid-twentieth century realists put their focus on the development of a (self)critical and skeptical epistemology; a focus that often has been of limited concern to other International Relations theories with their predetermined ontologies. So far, however, this debate on classical realism has shown little engagement with realist approaches to knowledge-construction,

although this has the potential to make the current theoretical debate more accessible for empirical investigations and provide a bridge to critical theory. To this end, this paper argues that mid-twentieth century realists pursued an unlearning approach. Unlearning is being understood as the critique, freeing from, and moving beyond the modern imaginary, which preconditions everyday knowledge and intellectual thought in a dehumanizing way, through a learning process based upon the study of classical texts. To provide evidence to this argument, the works of Maruyama Masao and Hans J. Morgenthau, arguably the most important political thinkers of their time in the East and the West, are being discussed. Focusing on Japanese and German-born American scholars also indicates a spatial reorientation of realism and encourages an understanding of classical realism that is not only restricted to the scholarship of European émigrés.

Security in Ocular Democracy: A (Critical) Realist Perspective

Vibeke Schou Tjalve

This paper takes as its point of departure, that the rediscovery of Classical Realism as a political project tied to the crisis of modernity, and deeply connected to its critical traditions of thought, has been crucial both to acknowledging the nuances and complexities of twentieth century political history and to understanding the formation of IR as a particular field of inquiry within it.

However, the paper also begins from the premise, that while the rediscovery of CR as a mode of critical inquiry has been instrumental in understanding *how we got here*, the time has come to addressing *where we are*. Arguing that CR is ultimately a theory of the crisis of a) modern political leadership and b) the modern democratic public, it proposes a new research agenda, suitable for critical and realist engagement with the security practices of the 21st century. More specifically, the paper uses CR as a lens through which to critically analyze how contemporary security practices reflect a form of democratic politics in which a) leadership has been disaggregated and decentralized and b) oral forms of publicity have been replaced by more ocular or visual modes of communication and interaction. As the paper concludes, CR – if paired with both classical and contemporary critical theories of networked power and visual social media – offers a unique perspective through which to unpack these transformations, and perhaps also, to protest some of their potentially dangerous democratic implications. Only through such application – not through historical or intellectual association – will realism remain in any meaningful sense ‘critical’.

Embracing Ontological Doubt: The Role of 'Reality' in Political Realism

Kamila Stullerova

While the impact of critical theories on contemporary IR (or at least its European version) is immense, theorizing international affairs along the lines of what is known as 'classical realism' is at best sparse. This is intriguing given the striking similarities of the two approaches, especially when it comes to their astute identification of the crises of the 20th century world politics, which the 21st century has only exacerbated. One explanation of this state of affairs might be historical: classical realism once fought for the primacy in IR and bitterly lost to the onslaught of positivism as the more 'scientific' approach in the 1950s and 60s. It thus comes as no surprise that scholars working nowadays on the rehabilitation of classical realism do not try to re-cast the mid-century struggle in terms of scientific contestation as related to the explanation of international affairs. Instead, they largely focus on what makes classical realism unique within the family of post-positivist approaches, emphasizing classical realism's ability to mobilize some of the sensitivities/emphases developed in the post-positivist IR in a more coherent and satisfactory manner than the alternatives (especially post-structuralism). Classical realism's ability to link critique with both judgment and normative commitment is especially praised.

Another explanation of the failure to appreciate classical realism as a potent scientific theory for the present day might be sought in the very way classical realism under-theorizes the role of 'reality'. As pertinently captured in its name, reality is crucial for realism. The verve with which political realists – as the mid-century, 'classical' realists referred to themselves – reject *Realpolitik* is a good indicator that not any engagement with reality is acceptable. This also serves as a pointer for the present study to bring the role of reality out of its theoretical opacity. By reconstructing the role of reality through Stanley Hoffmann's and Judith Shklar's critiques of Morgenthau, this article seeks to contribute to the idea of political realism as a viable theory of scientific explanation. Yet, this aspect of political realism strikes against the lack of space in contemporary IR for scientific explanation of world politics that is intertwined with political-theory-like judgment and normative argument, as is integral to political realism. The value of political realism is precisely in its relentless insistence that the two not be separated, a point that is hard to come to terms with in the current context.

The dominance of positivism has been so stark that even its present critics tend to replicate some of its doctrines. Current preoccupation with ontology is one such unfortunate doctrine. In contrast to most accounts (including the pluralist ones) of IR as social science, political realism is not ontologically marked. It is sceptical about ontological givens – scientific decisions made on the grounds of philosophy of science; political realism bypasses ontology, with which most of its contemporary alternatives (such as critical realism) commence. Instead, the article puts forth, it must turn to 'reality' to be furnished with the 'givens' of its studied place and time. This process requires sophisticated epistemology – understood not as just a methodology but as a process in which methodological thinking meets with normative judgment in order to make sense of which source of knowledge is to be preferred, which power-holder deemed the bearer of agency and authority.

It is in this process that the actual meets the abstract. This is the point which critical IR also aspires to reach, but from the perspective of political realism fails to do as it leans too much towards the abstract, paralleling the ontologically marked scientific approaches to IR in its inability to espouse ontological doubt as a positive political phenomenon. Political realism thrives on this kind of doubt. At the same time, the situated realist analysis cannot do away with the universal knowledge of power, psychology and human values, none of which is foundational yet all of which transcend the realm of immanence. This approach to knowledge formation, the article concludes, rightfully places

political realism along its alternatives within contemporary IR. By re-integrating analysis and judgment it allows us to reorient our very understanding of what it means to do international relations scholarship, challenging the current split between IR as social science and normative international theory. Rather than dying in the 1960s, a resurrected political realism, aware of its 'reality-work', can help us to make sense of international affairs in a manner that is both sensitive to power and power shifts (so important to scientific, positivist IR) as well as to the normative work in knowledge production (crucial to reflectivist, post-positivist IR). What it fails to do is to give us any grand theories, which it deems counterproductive, even dangerous.

Visit the Network's website: <http://research.ncl.ac.uk/classicalrealism/>
