Critical International Relations Theory

Shannon Brincat

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s the discipline of International Relations (IR) was subjected to a radical critique driven, in large part, by the entry of the ideas of the Frankfurt School (FS) into the field – a field dominated until then by unmitigated positivist assumptions. The new school of thought that emerged, Critical International Relations Theory (CIRT), exposed the deep relation between mainstream approaches to IR theory (specifically neorealism, rational-choice, and liberal institutionalism) and the dominant interests they served in world politics: the maintenance of bipolarity (with favour given to American preponderance), possessive individualism, and world capitalism. 'Theory is always *for* someone, and *for* some purpose' (Cox, 1981: 128), this new paradigm claimed – a statement that has since become one of the most quoted in the discipline. With this insight IR theory would never be the same, unable to remain normatively naïve, compelled to give up the

semblance of neutrality and objectivity. In making this intervention, CIRT was a primary catalyst towards the so-called post-positivist and normative-turns in IR theory that are now almost taken for granted. One of the defining legacies of this shift has been how CIRT has since looked beyond positivist (or 'problem-solving')[1] approaches to engage with broader, normative questions regarding the purposes of IR theory and the possibility of advancing emancipation. In this way CIRT remains connected to the original ideas of the FS pursing the question as to why, at the height of humankind's technological progress, we see its very opposite socially – what Marcuse (n.d.) called the 'dehumanization and brutalization' of life. Here, CIRT remains committed to generating the type of knowledge that was of concern to the FS, knowledge to enhance human autonomy across world politics through our collective capacities for self-reflectivity and self-determination (Held, 1980: 255). It is CIRT's self-reflection and understanding

– our ability to reflect on our history and human capacities and to harness these towards making our shared social life rational or self-determining, rather than living under blind fate or domination – that enables it to pursue this emancipatory interest, or as Hoffman expressed it to 'critique existing social order and point to its immanent capacity for change and for the realization of human potential' (1987: 232). During a time of profound economic crises, the rise of right-wing and Islamic extremism, the attacks on reason, the turn away from multilateralism to a dangerous unilateral and highly interventionist world order, and the interlocking environmental crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, this critical approach to world politics is today ever more urgent.

The objective of this chapter is to detail the achievements *and* limits of CIRT[2] in order to identify those areas where further development is required.[3] The first part examines four key themes in which CIRT has contributed to the advancement of IR related to the critique of positivism and the promotion of emancipatory theory, intersubjectivity, cosmopolitanism, and security. This part focuses on some of the key theorists associated with CIRT: Robert W. Cox, Andrew Linklater, Richard Ashley, and Ken Booth, a list that is by no means exhaustive. The second part then explores a number of interlocking problem areas for the future of CIRT including the continuing lack of a genuine transdisciplinary research programme in IR, CIRT's problematic relation to the 'philosophy of history' and Western-centrism, and the limits of its assumed internationalism. The chapter concludes by indicating how, and in which ways, CIRT may help push IR towards a more sophisticated account of intersubjectivity in its social ontology, opening up crucial insights for both the theory and practice for the discipline, and to ground an emancipatory world politics for the future.

PART 1 – THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CIRT

Beyond the Impasse of Realism and Positivism

It is little coincidence that both the discipline of IR and the FS emerged during the crisis of the inter-war period, something reflected in their primary interests that parallel in a fundamental way. IR was premised on the question of the causes of international war, specifically the imperialist and geostrategic rivalries that generated WWI. The early FS, on the other hand, was concerned with why the socialist, world revolution had failed to materialize but instead fell to its opposite: the solidarity of the international working-class shattered by international war. The question of why the working class sided with the national bourgeoisie was the inversion of the question of the cause of international war. Horkheimer had even penned the beginnings of a novel on Chamberlain's willingness to appease Hitler as evidence of the complicity of the ruling classes with fascism as an 'extension of bourgeois domination' – an argument more fully developed in his *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer, 2014). However, whereas early IR became concerned with inventing formal structures to pacify world politics (largely built on Kantian thought and Wilsonianism principles institutionalized in the doomed League of Nations), the FS was focused on concrete social relations, ideology/culture, and psychoanalysis, to explain the devolution of class-consciousness and human reason in the form of the barbarism of international war. As to the penultimate question that guides the discipline of IR to this day – how to end *all* war – CIRT has since put forward an alternative answer to the balance of power (realism) or institutions (liberalism), instead anchoring itself in the possibility for human emancipation. Whilst the concept of emancipation has remained vague both in its description and normative prescription throughout

CIRT, it has been retained as the nomenclature for the vision – however general – of the processual reconstruction of world order away from conditions of enslavement towards the collective, self-direction of humankind.

For CIRT, a world divided into states and trapped in the political economy of global capitalism cannot deliver peace or justice to humanity. And yet, just like Marxist theories of imperialism before it, because CIRT located the causes of war within the very nature of capitalism and the international system of capitalist states, it has remained largely excluded from the disciplinary mainstream – especially so in American scholarship. Opposing theories instead refuted the 'critical turn', obstructing its revolutionary insights and thereby supporting the stabilization of bourgeois international order by making the international system appear natural and self-perpetuating (Krippendorff, 1982: 27). The challenge for CIRT has been to respond in a way that is both *practical* and *normative*. For the reaction of the disciplinary mainstream to the intrusion of 'critical' thought was to re-establish its dominance by attempting to control the contours of debate. The strategy adopted by Robert Keohane, leading theorist of neoliberal institutionalism and former president of both the International Studies Association and the American Political Science Association, was to deliberately narrow the epistemological boundaries of the field by making a cleavage between two distinct camps: the rationalists, all of whom relied on rational-choice theory, and the reflectivists, those who emphasized intersubjectivity, history, interpretation, and the limits of science. For Keohane, it was these critical or 'reflectivist' approaches which had to answer to the methods of the rationalists. That is, they had to make their claims 'testable' by observation or experiment in the Popperian sense, or risk remaining forever on the margins (1989: 173–4). Later, Keohane and others would go so far as to suggest that critical approaches could not make reliable claims and that they even repudiated the endeavour

of social science (see Katzenstein et al., 1998: 678). Yet CIRT was up to this challenge. In part, this was due to the methods of immanent critique utilized by the FS that enabled CIRT to expose the ideology of orthodox IR theories and their assumptions of the rational actor, free market, and state system, against the social realities of that order – the global inequalities, injustices, and exploitation, that precipitated international conflict. This method had the benefit of remaining fixed within the terms of debate amenable to orthodox IR and the existing realities of world politics, without relying on extraneous moral categories for its critique. In this way, CIRT could '*explain* what is wrong with current social reality, *identify* actors to change it, and provide clear norms for criticism and practical *goals* for the future' (Bohman, 1996: 190, emphasis added). It also provided a means to shift IR towards ontological concerns, not only questions pertaining to the basic actors, structures, and their relations in world politics, but engaging with the very *purposes* which IR theory was meant to serve (Cox, 1981: 128; Cox, 1992).

In many ways Cox's famous dictum that pushed the discipline to uncover *who* and *what* purposes it served echoed Horkheimer's much earlier claim that there was 'no theory of society' that did not 'not contain political motivations' (1972a: 222). Yet despite the fact that nearly all other disciplines in the social sciences had long problematized positivism as reductionist, that it reified social reality as something objective and independent, and that it forgot that its facts were products of socially and historically mediated human consciousness, IR lagged behind safe in its naivety. In particular, it was the legitimizing role played by positivist analysis – through its acceptance of the status quo as the objective reality of world politics and the perpetuation of this system under the ahistorical nature of its analysis – that resulted in a pernicious political alliance between orthodox IR theory and those dominant institutions of world politics that thwarted human

emancipation. Yet, until Cox's intervention, this deeply politicized role played by positivism remained largely unquestioned in IR, cloaked under assertions that this approach alone could explain the world as it 'really is'. Wyn Jones observed that the privileging of the epistemology of positivism had the effect of undermining the truth-claims of those who wished to challenge the provenance of prevailing world order, making other ways of knowing *appear* illegitimate (1999: 90, 6). Instead, CIRT sought to replace the obvious attempts to hide normativity in traditional theories of IR by openly elaborating on its own 'concern for the reasonable conditions of life' (Horkheimer, 1972a: 222). It was this explicit emancipatory interest – 'the emancipation of humanity from enslaving conditions' (Horkheimer, 1972b: 245ff.) – that has remained at the core of the research project of CIRT. With basic precepts from the FS including the shared problematization of positivism, the historical materialist understanding of social transformation, and emancipatory politics defined (broadly) as freedom from slavery towards self-direction,[4] it was possible for CIRT to show the contradictions between the principles and the actuality of bourgeois international society: how it 'excluded' ever larger numbers of people from the happiness that had been made possible by the abundance of economic forces. Whereas Horkheimer and the Institute had reflected on this precondition only within the context of the West, the story was no different when Cox examined the international dimensions of capitalist relations between core and periphery, building on Immanuel Wallerstein's work, or when Hoffman examined the logic of world capitalist economy (1987: 242–3). Yet against the overwhelming deferral to positivist assumptions these relations were largely excluded from IR 'proper' in at least two ways. Firstly, it was widely believed such relations were of no interest to IR that was to instead answer a very narrow question, namely, the seeming inevitability of conflict in world politics under the anarchical

structure of the international system. In the absence of a higher power to mediate the conflicts between states, war was deemed insoluble in an anarchical world of tragedy and repetition. This was the so-called 'parsimonious' theory of Neorealism (Waltz, 2010: chapter 3) that was widely believed to explain the prevalence of war in the absence of other relations or variables, though it made no pretence to further claims. Secondly, in more recent years, the two positivist approaches to IR – Neorealism and Neoliberalism – have since effectively conjoined their normative and research agendas, what Waever (1996) called the 'Neo–Neo Synthesis'. In many ways this alliance continues to echo Keohane's epistemological narrowing of the field under which IR theory is reduced to merely testing the level of cooperation that international institutions can play in world politics.

For CIRT however, the corrective was to bring *values* openly into IR. That is, to expose the deep political linkages between orthodox IR and existing power structures, and to reveal the values that these theories purposively advanced but self-denied under a feigned notion of objectivity. This question of knowledge constitutive interests had, of course, been a hallmark of the FS beginning with Horkheimer's *Eclipse of Reason* where he argued that objective reason – the ethical form of reason – had been lost under the dominance of subjective reason. For him, the reasonable nature of one's actions was now irrelevant in late capitalism. Only the ends that served the purposes of the subject (self-advancement and self-preservation) remained within a form of 'reason' prone to conformity, authoritarianism, and the pursuit of self-interest in the market without concern for the effect of one's actions on others (Horkheimer, 2013). Adorno would use similar arguments to show how such 'reason' is used to justify the oppression of humankind as a necessary price of 'self-preservation' under the 'law of nature' – the Hobbesian ideology that remains so well entrenched in IR to this day, whether

in postulates that allege conflict is endemic to the human condition, or the behaviour of states in the anarchical system. For Adorno, such 'reason' had not contributed to the preservation of our species but served its opposite (Cook, 2014: 21), something the expansion of the nuclear threat or climate change has only intensified – the trajectory of universal history under instrumental reason leading from the 'catapult to the atom bomb' (Adorno, 2008: 629). Here, it is interesting to note that Honneth has deliberately situated *The Struggle for Recognition* in opposition to those philosophical anthropologies that assume the 'war of all, against all' in which social conflict is motivated solely by self-preservation (1995: chapter 1). For Honneth, control through fear, the lynchpin of the Hobbesian imaginary, must be replaced with a notion of struggle towards norms recognized and justified by their social utility for all.

Aside from these early articulations of the purposes of knowledge/reason from the First Generation FS, it was Habermas' (1972) notion of 'knowledge constitutive interests' that has been most influential in CIRT. A host of other commentators have reached similar conclusions.[5] Richard Ashley deployed the concept of knowledge constitutive interests in his early work to defend the 'critical-theoretical alternative' to world politics that was developing through CIRT. Just as the motivations of positivism were located in the political and economic needs of bourgeois society that rewarded knowledge that had instrumental or practical applications and neglected that knowledge whose use-value was not immediately instrumental for production purposes, neorealism performed this role at the level of the international. That is, neorealism sought only to expand the 'reach' of control in the international system, not towards the emancipation of humankind, but for the interests of those dominant forces within world politics at a specific point in time. In reducing itself to an instrument of power, such a theory became nothing but 'an apologia for the status quo' (Ashley, 1984: 228).

Neorealism served as the doctrine for 'the new mandarins', as Chomsky labelled them, those agents that infused the foreign policy offices of Western powers – just like Morgenthau's scholar–adviser had helped define the 'National Interest' for Classical Realism and the US Department of State in the former iteration of realist theory. Like Cox, Ashley distinguished neorealism as problem-solving theory that sought to make the system function more smoothly from CIRT with its orientation to understanding and promoting global change (1981: 208). Rather than control, the latter's interest was in pursuing those immanent possibilities towards openness in which dissidence and marginality, plurality and difference, could emerge in IR and thereby enable CIRT to locate and strengthen resistant practices in world politics (Ashley, 1987: 408–11).

Similarly, Linklater held that knowledge does not arise from the subject's neutral engagement with an objective reality but reflects pre-existing social purposes and interests (1996: 279). Redeploying Habermas' schema in the context of theories of IR, Linklater divided approaches according to their primary interest: technical interests (to control nature and society), practical interests (to create orderly communities), and emancipatory interests (to identify and eradicate unnecessary social constraints). Echoing the FS, for Linklater, knowledge is incomplete if it lacks this emancipatory purpose (1996: 281). It is because of this interest that Linklater believes CIRT provides a superior account of world politics in three ways: the relationship between units (states and other actors) and the international system; the cultural dimensions of world politics, and; its vision for new forms of political community (1995: 242). What is most unique about Linklater's critical project has been how he has challenged those theories that underestimate the human capacity to problematize and transform inherited and seemingly natural social conventions – including the self-perpetuation or immutability thesis of realism

that would lock world politics within an endless cycle of periodic war and conflict. Yet for Linklater, not only is all knowledge purpose-driven; all knowledge involves moral commitments. And even though he finds humanity is only at the start of a 'long collective learning process', he has looked to how social learning in the practical–moral sphere can undergo separate logics of change (2011: 18, 32). In the context of world politics, for Linklater (1982) this process involves questioning all boundaries of exclusion\inclusion and the extension of the harm principle – part of an Elysian 'civilising process' – to distant others (Linklater, 2011). On this emancipatory horizon emerge possibilities for the transformation of political community to greater forms of human solidarity and even the beginnings of an institutional form of cosmopolitan community (Linklater, 1996).

Yet the status of the emancipatory interest has remained problematic. It conflated Freudian and Marxist critiques aimed at the unmasking of personal self-deception and of social-political ideology, respectively. The former involved asymmetries between patient and analyst. The latter, given the collapse of working-class solidarity in late capitalism, maintained an insufficiently intersubjective form of emancipation. This problem was compounded by the fact that CIRT, at least in Cox's seminal paper, had expressed its difference from problem-solving theory in a way that both confused and antagonized. It made it appear as if CIRT wilfully dismissed positivist research, was not interested in solving 'real world' problems, and, that it was the only properly 'critical' approach to the field (Booth, 2007: 242ff.). Most disconcerting was that it made it seem as if CIRT's interest in emancipation did not have to be tied to existing realities so that the School was readily dismissed as a redundant form of idealism, a relic from IR's 'First Great Debate'.[6] Yet to understand the 'two-sided' character of the social totality, something Horkheimer insisted on (1972a: 206–207), positivist social science had to be wedded with an emancipatory interest. What

Horkheimer meant by the 'two-sided' social totality was how, on the one hand, the individual accepts as natural the limits prescribed on his/her activity by capitalist society, and on the other, how society can be made the 'possible object of planful decision and rational determination of goals' – that is, to 'conceive' society 'as will and reason' and make it 'their own world' (Horkheimer, 1972a: 206–207). Positivism was not wrong according to the FS, but incomplete. This was not so much a rejection, but a conjoining of the two approaches. Accordingly, Ken Booth has attempted to counter this widely misunderstood tenet of CT, making central to his research project how CIRT *is* interested in 'solving problems', specifically, 'tactical or strategic action for emancipatory purposes' (2007: 244). This connects far more closely with Cox's intention, rather than expression, for reclaiming 'normative choice' in social order – that is, defending emancipation as something practical by transcending world order within the range of what is feasible in existing conditions (1981: 136–7, 130). Neufeld rightly surmises that the turn from positivist theory to its enmeshment with a commitment to human emancipation is central to the purposes of the entire 'critical' project of CIRT (1995). Indeed, the real conditions of contemporary international society were such that a 'community of freedom' envisaged by Horkheimer remained possible and it was this material potential that continues to provide CIRT with its 'content'. It was only in bringing in the full capacities of human reason (the union of science *and* philosophy, positivist *and* emancipatory theory) that the unplanned nature of world order that was made to seem a 'fate beyond man's control' by neorealism and other approaches in IR could be overcome.

The Project of Emancipation

The FS has been consistent in its normative goal of emancipation, however general these descriptions have been, and despite the diverse ways in which each theorist

has pursued the idea. Horkheimer defined emancipation as the 'general interest' in the free development, just resource allocation, and equality in community (see 1972a). Marcuse would come to a negativist conception, the Great Refusal (1964: 256–7), that implored the need to overturn capitalist social relations but in a way that seemed beyond historical possibilities. As we have already seen, Habermas initially sought emancipation through dialogical community and yet would later retreat into the liberal state, with all its inequalities. More recently Honneth has turned to the intersubjective ontology of recognition theory to ground emancipation in concrete, historical conditions – something only recently being taken up in IR relating to questions of cosmopolitan political community (Brincat, 2017). By contrast, what constitutes emancipation in CIRT is a notoriously difficult question to pin down. Some writers reject the term outright (Cox), others deploy it, though with little definition (Wyn Jones, Devetak, Ashley, Neufeld), and others have distinct emancipatory concepts such as community (Linklater) or security (Booth). Whilst too vast to cover all such forms here and despite the many differences between them, common to all conceptions is the rejection of emancipation as some blueprint utopia and its replacement with a processual account of enhancing intersubjective relations.

Linklater has pursued the question of emancipation under his unique conception of the 'triple transformation' of political community (see esp. 1998). This was premised on his Hieroclean notion that whilst distance should be no barrier to ethical concerns, that the differing obligations between 'men' and 'citizens' has been the fault-line cutting across world politics (1982). His early and middle work were steeped in Habermas' theory of communicative action as a means by which a cosmopolitan community could ensure that its social order was built by the participation of all in 'freely chosen moral principles which further the autonomy of all human beings' (Linklater, 1998: 22). This quest for

consensus in a rational political community was premised on extending Habermasian discourse ethics (dialogue, inclusion, no certainty of moral position, and a willingness to learn and seek understanding) to the cosmopolitan sphere in a way that could break with unjustified exclusion whilst remaining attuned to cultural difference. The precise character of the institutionalized structures of participation in dialogic community could vary from place to place, and, in different levels of political life – from the local, to the state, to the region, and ultimately, to the cosmopolitan sphere. As such, for Linklater, it is not a question of *subtracting* but of *adding* layers of political community above and below the state to help humanity 'formulate a common system of rules concerned with managing complex forms of inter-tribal interaction' (1982: 177). Whilst many have pointed out that this presupposes a liberal subject in a formal public sphere, Linklater has developed an international historical sociology capable of pointing to nascent developments within what he calls 'cosmopolitanism harm conventions'[7] that constitute evidence of such a 'move beyond the particularism of the state to a universal society of free beings' (1982: 167). Similarly, he finds the advancement of harm conventions in human history as not only indications of a 'global moral consensus' on the harm principle but something which can be expanded upon in world politics (Linklater, in Brincat et al., 2012: 22–3; Linklater, 2011: 23–4, 34).

In distinction to Linklater, whilst Cox has maintained a Gramscian 'optimism of the will' (1996: 527, 531) he has remained sceptical of emancipation, rejecting the term. Despite this, he does hold an ideal vision for the future, something he previously referred to as 'new multilateralism' and in his later work as 'civilizational coexistence'. This vision hopes for a more participatory society (Cox, 1987: 403) alongside 'social equity; greater diffusion of power among peoples, social classes and genders; maintenance of security in the handling of conflict; and sustainability of the

biosphere' (Cox, 1997: 245). A central concern for Cox has been on a 'plural world' to replace the cultural homogeneity of globalization with cultural diversity. Yet rather than philosophically unpacking these ideals, Cox's work has been more concerned with the conditions necessary for their emergence. Earlier, he emphasized reconstructing civil society and political authority on a global scale from the 'bottom up' (1997: xxvii) and later on a 'supraintersubjectivity' that could bridge the 'distinct and separate subjectivities of different coexisting civilizations' (1995a: 43). Despite these possibilities, the problem remains one of global hegemony – particularly of the United States and core states – and the contradictions of the global economy in the periphery (1983: 172). For Cox, the task is to somehow build counter-hegemony within these conditions that can resist the very 'framework of bourgeois hegemony' (1983: 166), a task that he understands as uniting counter-hegemonic historic blocs from within national contexts through a long-term war of position (1987: 403). Moreover, Cox points to the many different historical ways of strengthening intercivilizational and intercultural relations as a means of entering into the mental framework of the other, a process by which major centres of political power can meet in dialogue (2001: 105) and achieve some common understanding to lead to the 'mutual and pacific recognition of differences among peoples' (1995b: 11).

Of all the theorists of early CIRT, Booth has been the most comfortable with articulating emancipatory themes, insisting on the need for constant reflection on normative commitments (2007: 242–4). In the early 1990s, independent of reading the FS, Booth advanced the idea of security as emancipation (1991a) and a realistic utopianism as central to pushing the subfield of Security Studies towards tactical or strategic action for solving real problems (1991b). In many ways, his critique of 'traditional' Security Studies mirrored those of traditional approaches to IR that we have already discussed. His 'Critical'

Security Studies (or 'Welsh School' developed with Richard Wyn Jones) was interested in 'articulating the forces of domination, such as global capitalism and national security, which constrained individuals' subjectivities and threatened their physical and emotional security' (Walter, 2017). This 'emancipatory realism' (see esp. Booth, 2007: 249–76) sought to redefine security as a strategy necessary for achieving human emancipation by refining our understanding of power but did so on a moralist foundation that was widely criticized as coopting liberal practices in the name of an emancipatory cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, for Booth, 'grand theorising in the interest of the human collective and the natural world on which we all depend is a historic necessity' (Booth, 2012: 68ff.) and to ground the concept of emancipation in concrete terms he has relied on a number of practical moves for its realization. His 'Utopian Realism' was the first articulation of such an attempt, seeing in this combination a way that humankind could practically set goals to mediate the anarchical condition of the international system, so that the international community could become the subject of its own history (Booth, 1991b: 536). More recently, he has relied on what can be described as pragmatic and materialist ethics to realize this emancipatory ideal, citing William Lovett's work that pursued political rights through non-violent struggle as an example (see Booth, 2012: 68ff.).

This attempt at bridging CIRT and realism was also pursued by Ashley who joined the latter's concerns with power and the global hegemonic order to help practically realize the project of emancipation. In particular, Ashley sought to build upon the practical knowledge constitutive interest of classical realism (concerned with *understanding*) through his 'dialectical competence model' towards a better understanding of power (1981: 208–209). This model focused on 'competent international practice', that is, practices of power, statesmanship, and crisis, that could lead to emancipatory

transformations. Ashley's dialectical competence model situated the balance-of-power regime not in the abstract system of neorealism (i.e. 'anarchy' and the self-perpetuation thesis this gave rise to), but within the real social, economic, and environmental, conditions on which this regime depended (see Brincat, 2012). Ashley would later delve deeper into this anarchy problematique within IR using the method of the 'Double Reading' (1988). He found that anarchy was the very compass of imaginable possibility, the background 'reality' which anyone concerned with collaboration or cooperation in world politics *must* respect. Anarchy defined 'the condition of possibility' in world politics (1988: 232). Its unquestioned acceptance however, closed off possibilities for the expansion of, and differentiation in, human community, especially notions of mutuality, solidarity, and cooperation. Yet anarchy was an arbitrary political construction – derived from problematic Hobbesian assumptions – and was exposed as something always in the process of being imposed *and* resisted. The task, in part, was for CIRT to retrieve what Ashley and Walker (1990) called 'dissident' voices – those marginalized by the discipline – to give place to new and potentially liberating practices of 'global political seeing, saying, and being' (Ashley, 1988: 229), and thereby develop alternate ways of mediating political authority and political community.

In addition to these earlier, groundbreaking interventions of leading theorists in the 1980s and 1990s, CIRT has since exploded into a variety of engagements across the discipline that consciously adopt the ideas and methods of the FS. Whilst too vast to canvass here, these range from pursing entirely new approaches to terrorism and security,[8] or problematizing the state,[9] global health,[10] the politics of recognition,[11] on reflexivity and dialectics,[12] environmental politics,[13] and world society and cosmopolitanism,[14] to name but a few key research areas. Two examples of this adoption and expansion of the ideas and methods of the FS

in CIRT will be described in the last section. And yet despite this expansion, CIRT remains at a crossroads in its development as an intellectual and political project through the unresolved presence of an interconnected set of problems related to history and relationality. These must be overcome if this approach is to remain relevant not just to the discipline but to its commitment to emancipation.

PART 2 – OVERCOMING THE LIMITS OF CIRT

CIRT is a building site in IR theory and yet little has been constructed beyond the First Generation FS and Habermasian approaches. Many have noted previously the conspicuous absence of a discussion of colonialism and capitalist exploitation of peoples outside the West in the narrative of the FS (Steinman, 2004), problems that have been transferred and amplified in CIRT. Compounding this problem is that the methods of the FS cannot be merely 'up-scaled' to the level of the globe, given their sociological analysis was primarily located within the state rather than exploring the relations between peoples across states. CIRT must deal with this legacy that restricts its engagement with 'the international', particularly in historical and relational terms. These interrelated problems revolve around the Philosophy of History, Western-centrism, and 'stagism' – those assumptions behind economic development and statehood that are implied in the teleology of CIRT, however weak its notion of emancipatory 'progress' is. These problems are suggestive of a reversion or complicity between liberal-statism and CIRT that seemingly reneges on the latter's commitment to full, human emancipation.[15] After outlining these criticisms, I will advance a way through this impasse by pursuing a refined intersubjective ontology that can inform a radical and critical analysis of social relations in world politics, one far more advanced than those of mainstream IR.

Problems of History and Other Exclusions

Many have pointed out not only the universalism implied in CIRT's interest in emancipation but how its theoretical construction is founded almost solely on Western philosophy and modernist assumptions of development. That is, its notion of reason, dialogue, and self-direction upheld particularly by Horkheimer and the early FS as part of a generalizable interest [*Allgemeinheit*] in emancipation, have been relativized in these critiques, shown to be born from a particular cultural milieu that may not speak adequately to the necessarily universalist aspirations implied by 'emancipation'. CIRT has begun to engage postcolonial, racial, and gendered, forms of oppression, though much interdisciplinary and intersectional work remains. For many, this brings into sharp relief the disconnect between CIRT's commitment to emancipation and its inability to understand both fundamental aspects of the realities of domination in late capitalism, and, the immanent tendencies for social change that have been lost under this myopic focus on specific conditions in the West and within the state. The common thrust of such criticisms suggests an urgent need to deal with the problematic legacy of the Philosophy of History that lingers both within CIRT's notion of progress and emancipatory agency – that is, *who* acts and in which ways such actions can be considered *emancipatory*. If CT 'aims at the emancipatory self-clarification of the political struggles of the age' then how can it ignore the theorization of decolonization (Allen, 2015: xiv), or of gender (True, 2012)? Part of this relates to the language of Western rational-moralism that Forst argues may disfranchise those struggling for emancipation but who 'have the wrong, non-European passport to properly speak the language of "European morality"' (2014: 183). Related is how CIRT's commitment to (European) Enlightenment renders it within the same modernist and developmental framework that

postcolonial theorists, in particular, have shown is unilinear, culturally monist, and fortifies a misplaced faith in notions of 'progress'. A critical sociology of world politics that does not engage with the global situatedness of communities remains limited precisely because it abstracts human community away from its global context – and along with it any potential to properly identify the immanent possibilities for human emancipation *in the world*. If CIRT is to take its role as a group of 'Transformative Intellectuals' seriously and thereby contribute to concrete social movements towards emancipation, then it cannot continue to 'mediate uncritically ideas and social practices that serve to reproduce the status quo' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985: 39–40). Only in forming a 'dynamic unity' with *all* the oppressed can CIRT give expression to the 'concrete historical situation' and act as 'a force within it to stimulate change',[16] and thereby contribute towards a critical cosmopolitanism or rational human association. This does not issue in some demand for unmediated intersectionality that soon falls to fixed notions of identity but for the dialectical analysis of the question of universal history. In other words, how are we to understand the unfolding of collective, human life within the global context and complexity of social relations between human and nature?[17]

CIRT has been criticized in terms of temporality (Hutchings, 2007: 71ff.), its Western and European centrisms (Hobson, 2007: 91ff.), and its misunderstanding of feminism (Tickner, 1997), but perhaps the most productive expression of its limitations was by Neufeld regarding what CIRT can *learn* from these allied, critical approaches (2012: 173). For Neufeld, it is not just that multivocality and pluralism are politically correct affectations, or, I would add, something that can 'add-on' a colonial or gendered mindset to fill gaps in Western epistemology, but are in fact central for a 'non-coercive and non-dominating' (Said, 2001: 367) approach to emancipation. The failure of the

FS to engage with postcolonial theorists of their time – whether CLR James or Fanon, in particular – raises serious questions about the utility of their critique of ideology, instrumental reason, or late capitalism. A closer engagement could have led to a clearer understanding of development, the erosion of working-class solidarity, and the expansion of capitalism and the state, and perhaps even given alternatives to the emancipatory project rather than the late, pessimistic turn of the First Generation. This alternative history is credible given that the birth of postcolonial critique followed the wake of defeat of class struggle in the West, *and*, the revolutionary nationalism in de-colonized states (Eagleton, 1999: 5). The same (potential) epistemological openings remain true of CIRT today. For example, closer engagements with gender can help overcome what Meger (2016) has identified as a tendency in IR (including CIRT) to neglect geographies and materialities of power. For her, a properly critical approach must re-interrogate social structures (patriarchy, political economy, etc.) and global political economic struggles. Without such engagement CIRT risks being what Thompson (2016) has termed 'domesticated', that is, surrendering a concern with domination and alienation to mere 'neo-Idealist' themes.

CONCLUSION

The task, conceived broadly, is to be more attentive to parallel historical processes of emancipation. In CIRT, Martin Weber (esp. 2015) has taken seriously this challenge, attempting to bridge CIRT with postcolonial insights, particularly regarding the nature of development, history, and the subject of world politics. Others have sought to reposition CIRT through a historical rather than philosophical register. For example, Devetak has argued for a longer intellectual heritage than from the 'FS-to-German Idealism'

narrative. For him, a key limit of CIRT is its reliance on moral philosophy and he has attempted instead to foreground CIRT within a secular political historicism (Devetak, 2014). This re-tracing of historical emancipatory processes within CIRT has led to a greater appreciation of plural enlightenments across different societies and eras that made possible the Western Enlightenment that had remained historically unmediated by the FS. As Cox has shown, contact with non-European cultures and 'mutual civilizational borrowings' provided the conditions for successive changes in European thought from which this emancipatory current emerged (1995b: 14). Buck-Morss' analysis of the revolution in Haiti as the 'crucible' for the Enlightenment (2009: 42) further mediates this narrative – pushing our understanding of the Enlightenment away not only from its European moorings but also from its conception as a singular event, disconnected to history and the relations in the world. This revolution took place not in the centres of the West, as assumed in the predicted theories of revolution. For Buck-Morss it therefore challenges our 'moral imagination' in the 'political present', potentially informing new global thinking and global action (Buck-Morss, 2009: x). The hope is that through these historical retracings, new forms of emancipatory knowledge and action can emerge or be reclaimed. As always, the role of the 'critical' theorist remains to provide a 'liberating … influence' in this process of emancipation to help 'create a world which satisfies the needs and powers' of all humanity (Horkheimer, 1972b: 246).

CIRT has left an indelible mark on the discipline of IR, highlighting the limits of positivist analysis, exposing the link between knowledge and interests, and thereby the supportive role played by the disciplinary mainstream in maintaining the interests of the most powerful in world politics. This cultural and ideological critique has been perhaps one of its most groundbreaking contributions. Yet it is in its methods, specifically the dialectical

approaches of immanent critique and normative reconstruction, that it has been most innovative. Even though Adorno may yet be proven right that the moment of its realization may have been missed (1981: 3), the vision of emancipation in CIRT remains as a promissory note for critical scholarship that weds historical possibility with the ethical concerns [*Allgemeinheit*] of humanity as a whole.

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Notes

1   This is Cox's nomenclature but resonates clearly with Horkheimer's notion of 'Traditional Theory'.
2   Similar accounts have been written. See Linklater (1996) and Honneth (2004: 336–60).
3   Whilst CIRT has developed in different ways within German IR, for reasons of length and scope this chapter will concentrate on CIRT in Anglo-American IR.
4   I have explored the similarities and differences between Horkheimer and early CIRT elsewhere, especially in the work of Cox (see Brincat, 2016).
5   For a collection of such views, see Rengger and Thirkell-White (2007) and Brincat et al. (2012).
6   The debate between so-called 'Utopianists' (i.e. liberal internationalists) and Classical Realists (Carr, 1946).
7   For example, the Landmines Test Ban Treaty, protections against transboundary pollution, and refugee conventions (Linklater, 2001).
8   For example, the work of Richard Jackson, Charlotte Heath-Kelly, Harmonie Toros.
9   For example, the work of Kimberly Hutchings.
10 For example, the work of João Nunes.
11 For example, the work of Volker Heinz, Jürgen Haacke, Thomas Lindeman, Erik Ringmar.
12 For example, the work of Shannon Brincat, Matthew Fluck.
13 For example, the work of Martin Weber.
14 For example, the work of Benjamin Herborth. On cosmopolitanism, the work of Anthony Burke has been prominent, as has Jürgen Habermas' model of global governance (see esp. 2006: chapter 8).
15 This is particularly evident in the late work of Habermas but also in parts of Honneth's analysis of the public sphere (see esp. 2014).
16 This is, of course, a riff on Horkheimer's positioning of the work of the Institute (see Horkheimer, 1972a: 215).
17 This is a question adapted from Buck-Morss (2009: 109).

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