after international
relations

Critical realism and the (re)construction of world politics

Heikki Patomäki

After International Relations

After International Relations articulates a systematic critical realist response to a quest for more emancipatory methodologies in international relations. Heikki Patomäki here establishes a way out of the international relations problematic that has puzzled so many great thinkers and scholars for the last two hundred years. *After International Relations* shows how and why theories based on the international problematic have failed; expresses an alternative, critical realist research programme; and illustrates how this research programme can be put to work to enable better research and ethico-political practices.

Developing a critical realist methodology for international relations, peace research and global political economy, this book resolves many of the theoretical aporias of international relations. It explains in detail the way research should be conducted in open systems and pluralistic contexts. It refines the logic of explanatory emancipation beyond the confines of nation states, and responds to the problem of violence. It goes further than any existing text in developing critical theoretical methodologies in international relations, and showing how they can be applied in research and acted upon in ethico-political practice.

The book begins with a critical genealogy of the emergence of the international relations problematic–the irrealist foundations of which were laid down by David Hume and Immanuel Kant. After spelling out the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the critical realist alternative, it explores the future role of critical realism in the construction of non-violent and democratic world politics, which overcomes the Kantian antimonies and dilemmas of the international problematic. It will be of great interest to all those involved in international relations, peace research and international political economy

Heikki Patomäki is Professor of World Politics and Economy at Nottingham Trent University, and also the Research Director of the Network Institute for Global Democratisation. His most recent books include *Democratising Globalisation: The Leverage of the Tobin Tax* and *The Politics of Economic and Monetary Union* (with P.Minkkinen).

Critical realism: interventions

Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier,
Tony Lawson and Alan Norrie

Critical realism is one of the most influential new developments in the philosophy of science and in the social sciences, providing a powerful alternative to positivism and post-modernism. This series will explore the critical realist position in philosophy and across the social sciences.

Routledge studies in critical realism

Edited by Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar,
Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson and Alan Norrie

After International Relations

Critical realism and the
(re)construction of world politics

Heikki Patomäki

London and New York

Contents

Illustrations

Acknowledgements

Introduction

What are international relations? This book argues that all social relations are changeable. They are dependent on transient concepts, practices and processes. What has once emerged can change and even become absent. So it is also with international relations.

There is no closed list of transformative possibilities. *After International Relations* claims that critical realist (CR) social sciences can help determine some of them. Social sciences should proceed in three successive stages. First, in order to explain, researchers have to engage with social meanings and assume a dialogical relationship with relevant actors or traces and evidence of history, including texts and quantified observations. Only with dialogically understood data can social episodes, practices, relations and processes be studied adequately and in sufficient detail.

Mere understanding is not enough. Causally explanatory models can and should rely also on holistic metaphors, historical and other analogies, and various social scientific theories. The best available explanatory model is often different from prevalent understandings. Consequently, in the second stage, explanatory models may not only turn out to be critical of the understandings of the lay actors but also take steps towards explaining them.

The critical moment evokes a need for social scientific re-signification of practices, including edification by means of better causal stories and proposals for concrete alternatives. If a change is argued for, as it often is, realist strategies for transformation have to be spelled out as well. Constant openness to critique and further studies is a condition of validity. In the third, and practical moment, CR explanations should translate into practical action–often transformative. Also, practical-political action should be a learning process, in turn enriching theoretical discourses.

CR has emerged in a particular world historical context. As some constructivists and post-structuralists argue, there are signs of far-reaching transformations of international relations into something more akin to *world politics* (cf. Ruggie 1998:174–75, 195–97; and, more explicitly, Walker 1993:183). *After International Relations* makes a case for CR social sciences which are not content with describing transformations but try to understand, explain and critically assess contemporary practices, relations and processes, and, thereby, contribute to making them more emancipatory and empowering.

International relations

International relations emerged step by step, element by element, in Europe by the early nineteenth century. Christianity was divided; rationalism emerged and capitalism and sovereign states developed side by side. In the context of the expansion of Europe and capitalist world economy, the international institutions and problematic surfaced gradually. Some components of the inter-state order were codified in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, some others in the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. The term 'inter-national' first appeared in 1789 in two important texts. The French Revolution *Declaration of the Rights of Man* pronounced that 'the source of all sovereignty is located in essence in the nation' (Beik 1970:95). This manifesto was certainly more visible than Jeremy Bentham's footnote in *Principles of Morals and Legislation,* and it signalled the end of the inter-dynastic and the beginning of international relations. What is important here, however, is that Bentham's discussion of 'international' in a footnote can be seen as evidence that the notion had started to gain ground already before the events of 1789 (DerDerian 1989:3).

I argue in Chapter 1 that, although Immanuel Kant did not yet use the term 'international', the *international problematic* was articulated systematically by him in the 1780s and 1790s.[1] Kant's metaphysical or political writings would not have been possible without David Hume. With his immediate predecessors and contemporaries, from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke to René Descartes and George Berkeley, Hume laid down the basis for this problem field in the mid-eighteenth century. A few decades later, Kant, a central Enlightenment philosopher, together with his immediate predecessor Jean Jacques Rousseau, articulated these conceptions into an acute social problem of war and peace. Kant thought this problem can and should be overcome by an arrangement of 'league of nations', free trade, rule of law and republicanism. My emphasis on Hume and Kant does not mean that I believe in the great men theory of history of thought. Both Hume and Kant should be understood as participants among many in intellectual debates of their time. Sociologically, they can be seen as intellectuals of emerging social forces.

In this sense, Kant is the beginning of a familiar story. Since the mid-nineteenth century, political realists have criticised Kantian 'idealists' or liberalists for advocating dangerous actions based on Utopianism. The nature of human beings or the world will make all international reforms futile, perverse or even dangerous (of the 'rhetoric of reaction', see Hirschman 1991). Politics is plagued with unintended consequences; life is often tragic. Wise statesmen know how futile or perverse reforms tend to be and, more critically, how dangerous the world so often is. Hence, the real statesmen, with 'politics as their vocation', assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions within the given order of things (Weber 1985 [1919]; see also Smith 1986:15–53). Morgenthau (1946:199) blamed Kant for the general decay in the political thinking of the Western world, and, in effect, for the catastrophes of the twentieth century. He argued that the best way to preserve peace is to prepare for war; balance powers by

making good alliances; and cultivate diplomacy (Morgenthau 1946: Chapters VII and VIII). Order and stability are the core realist values for prudent foreign policy. When some time had passed since the dark days of the world wars, and the twenty years of crises between them, political realists began to recognise that international economic co-operation is possible, but usually only if it accords with the interests of the great powers. A new factor may nonetheless have surfaced. International regimes can be seen as 'intervening variables' between structure and great power interests (Krasner 1982).

Liberals argue, however, that on the basis of late twentieth-century experiences, there is in fact much more room for ideas, reforms and peaceful change than political realists think. The United Nations can—and sometimes does—play an important role in facilitating agreements and co-operation, and managing conflicts (Haas 1986; Rochester 1995). Although built by two great powers, the USA and Britain, ideas and transnational coalitions have shaped the Bretton Woods institutions (Ikenberry 1992). Although it was the dissident movements that eventually broke communist rule in Eastern Europe, the driving force behind the end of the Cold War was the learning process of Mikhail Gorbachov and his inner circle, and, consequendy, the new Soviet foreign policy (Risse-Kappen 1994; Evangelista 1995, 1999). New kinds of important actors have emerged everywhere, from NGOs to multinational corporations. Liberal-minded reformers argue, also, that it is possible to further strengthen international norms, rules and principles, at least under the management of relevant great powers.

Many mainstream liberals maintain, however, that the real hope for a more peaceful world lies in the fact that liberal democracies (or liberal states) do not fight each other. This is the almost only significant *empirical invariance* that has been, allegedly, found thus far, and it seems to confirm the Kantian theory of peace. The advocates of democratic peace theory (Doyle 1995) maintain that since liberal democratic states do not fight each other, a zone of peace has emerged. This would seem to give a recipe for a peaceful world. The zone of democratic peace can be extended. Political realism is applicable only to the relations between the liberal democratic states and the others. In the future, by making all states liberal democratic, preferably prudently, a perpetual peace may well emerge.

What unites Hume, Kant and most contributors to debates within the international problematic is their commitment to positivism. By positivism I mean the set of abstract and closely inter-related ideas that causality is about constant conjunctions ('whenever A, B follows'); that the properties of entities are independent; that their relations are external or non-necessary; that the basic things of the world are therefore atomist, or at least constant in their inner structure; and that being can be defined in terms of our perceptions or knowledge of it. The main discussions in international relations have presupposed the international problematic in the orthodox positivist fashion. Since the 1960s, positivism has assumed the form of 'neo-utilitarianism' in the USA-centric discipline of international relations (Ruggie 1998:9). Neo-litarians represent economics as the exemplary social science and believe in the claim of Gary

Becker (1976) that the rational-choice approach is applicable to all human behaviours (for a systematic CR criticism, see Archer and Tritter 2000). Neo-realists may disagree with the idea of free traders, that there is a natural harmony in the capitalist world economy, but like mainstream economists they believe in positivism and the self-interested instrumental rationality of the states. However, some regime theorists have tried to show that regimes of co-operation can be more just than 'intermediate variables'; also, intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership seem to have a role in establishing new forms of economic or environmental co-operation (Young 1989, 1991)

For more than a decade now, the positivist orthodoxy has been under a sustained challenge from critical theories, feminism and post-modernism. Often, all parties in this debate are ill-defined and misrepresented by the others. Indeed, mis-characterisation would often seem to be the essence of debate. For many post-positivists, positivism is not only epistemologically and ontologically flawed, it is also co-responsible for many of the social ills and political catastrophes of the modern world. Yet, for many positivists (empiricists, scientists, believers in the possibility of applying the rigorous standards of natural sciences also in social sciences) the post-positivist assault amounts to advocating subjectivism, irresponsible relativism and lack of standards, which work against conducting proper research and the effort to make human conditions better.

Post-positivism presupposes positivism—and many of its assumptions. For example, post-positivists think that Hume and his followers have been right about natural sciences and their objects. They mistake mechanics for natural sciences and constant conjunctions for causality. Whereas positivists have tried to reduce being to perceptions and logical sense-relations in language, post-positivists are susceptible to linguistic fallacy, according to which it is 'our language' that constructs being. The linguistic fallacy gives rise to manifold confusions between subject and object. Moreover, the more radical post-positivists have tended to be as sceptical about values as Hume. Only recently have the post-structuralists come up with any ethical notions (Campbell and Shapiro 1999). The more moderate constructivists share the reformism of the Kantian liberals (Ruggie 1998; Wendt 1999). Many of these more radical Kantians maintain, however, that we should continue to imagine and construct more far-reaching institutional alternatives for the future (Falk 1975; Galtung 1996; Held 1995; Holden 2000). However, the clear majority of scholars seem to feel that these ideals and blueprints appear detached from realities (if worth discussing at all). As ever, Kantian moral reason seems cut off from the world of causes and effects.[2]

Since the international problematic is based on irrealist and false understandings, illusions and mystifications, CR can help to overcome the international problematic. However, although it is a central idea of CR that theoretical discourses are located in the world of causes and effects, and are potentially efficacious, the practical effects of CR must be seen as contingent. Asymmetric power relations play a crucial role in sustaining a structure of (contradictory) meanings and related problematic. There is no automatic

correspondence between any particular theoretical discourse and the social worlds they refer to and purport to understand, explain and, sometimes, change. Nonetheless, since actions and practices are dependent on and informed by concepts, theoretical innovations are potentially efficacious in changing realities. Practices can be constituted or guided by misleading or partially false or contradictory understandings. More adequate concepts—if given a chance—should therefore enable and also encourage changes of practices, institutions and deep-seated social relations. It is certainly true that achieving well-founded conceptual changes require no less hard work than practical political activities.

Critical realism

Developments

Critical realism was preceded by realist developments in the philosophy of science in the 1960s and early 1970s (Bunge 1959, 1963; Harré 1961; Harré and Madden 1975; Hesse 1966; Bhaskar 1978 [1975]). In the 1970s, realist ideas were brought also into social sciences; in many cases this was also the original motivation to re-think natural sciences. Harré and Secord published their ground-breaking *The Explanation of Social Behaviour* in 1972. Although this book is sceptical of large-scale sociological theory,[3] it laid the ground for Russell Keat and John Urry's *Social Theory as Science* (1975) and for some of the basic ideas of Anthony Giddens's *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976) and *Central Problems of Social Theory* (1979). These works developed a realist alternative to both positivism and post-positivism. Although it is true that lay meanings are constitutive of social worlds, realist social sciences do not have to give up the inter-related notions of causality, relations and structures. Roy Bhaskar's seminal *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979) built up on the themes of Keat and Urry, and developed an original account of agency and structure on a par with, but also in contrast to, Giddens's (1976, 1979, 1981) theory of structuration.

The term 'critical realism' was coined in the late 1980s (Sylvan and Glassner 1985; Bhaskar 1989:180–92; Isaac 1990; Fay 1990). Why was this movement, which also emerged in the late 1980s, associated so strongly with the works of Roy Bhaskar? Under the influence of Harré, Bhaskar's early books were well written and made their case powerfully. Other early contributors denied the possibility of large-scale social theory, political science or political economy (Harré), or tended to leave realist themes aside in their later works (Keat and Urry) or never articulated any form of realism in full (Giddens). Whereas Keat (1981), for instance, turned to Habermas to find conceptual grounds for social and political critique, Bhaskar outlined an original realist theory of emancipation in *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979:76–91), and developed this theory further in *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (1986:180–223).

Bhaskar also represented CR as the missing methodology of Karl Marx. For many this made Bhaskar suspicious. In the 1980s, the bulk of social theorists

were following Giddens, who was writing a multi-volume critique of 'contemporary historical materialism' (see Giddens 1981, 1985). In some circles of British Marxism, however, Bhaskar became a guru to be followed. In contrast to Bhaskar (1979:83–91), I do not think it is plausible to read either the early or later Marx as a critical realist. However realist Marx may have appeared to be about structures, relations and laws, many of the conditions for CR did not exist in the nineteenth century (about these conditions, see Bhaskar 1991:139–41). The non-realist conceptual resources on which he drew substantially mis-represented Marx.[4] Moreover, according to Manicas's (1987) realist re-interpretation of the history of social sciences, Marx not only lacked an adequate theory of science; he also lacked a theory of state.[5] Certainly, there were very few—if any—signs of epistemological relativism in Marx's often polemical texts.

More than Marx himself, it seems that the early Frankfurt School anticipated CR. For instance, Max Horkheimer's (1989 [1937]) classical essay on 'traditional and critical theory' criticised orthodox Marxism alongside Western positivism and capitalism; revived Kantian critical questions about the presuppositions of our knowledge; made a rudimentary use of reformulated Kantian transcendental arguments and a realist notion of causality; and envisaged a democratic theory of emancipation.[6] These are also central themes of CR. Indeed, Bhaskar (1993:352) himself points out that his favourite twentieth-century Marxist is Theodor Adorno, Horkheimer's long-standing colleague and occasional co-author.

Alas, since the mid-1980s, Bhaskar's so-called Marxism notwithstanding, and in some circles because of it, CR has been associated particularly strongly with his works. *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* was followed by an introductory collection of Bhaskar's papers (*Reclaiming Reality,* 1989) and an attempt to make an intervention in contemporary philosophical debates in the form of a book-length critique of Richard Rorty (*Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom,* 1991). Neither book developed CR much further. Rather, they aimed at making CR better heard and more influential. Bhaskar's dialectical (Bhaskar 1993; 1994) and transcendental turns (Bhaskar 2000) may have had the contrary effect.

Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom (1993) and its somewhat more accessible accompaniment, *Plato etc.: Problems of Philosophy and Their Resolution* (1994) are complex, difficult and, at times, esoteric or pompous works. Bhaskar's philosophical discourse is tacitly assuming new responsibilities and powers in 'dialectical CR'. Whereas the earlier form of CR was a philosophy *for* and *of* science, *Dialectic* is not only about enabling and transforming (critical social) sciences, but also about 'a general theory of dialectic'. *Dialectic* is brilliant in its analysis of Aristotle, G.W.F.Hegel and Marx, among others, yet it seems that it also attempts to develop a general theory of everything, particularly world history, freedom and good society, but also of the constitution of the universe. In another reading, however, one might find that *Dialectic* is a result of a systematic de- and reconstruction of Western metaphysics, which naturally leads to 'an extreme complication, multiplication, explication of "precise and rigorous distinctions"' (Derrida 1988:128).

Plato etc.: The Problems of Philosophy and Their Resolution (1994) is represented as an attempt to popularise *Dialectic,* although it has a slightly different focus and somewhat less speculative appearance. Like *Dialectic,* it has fascinating and very useful discussions on causality, time, space and causality/freedom, taking the notions developed in earlier works further. The emphasis is on a totalising critique of Western philosophy. Not unlike Derrida's criticism of Western logo-centrism, Bhaskar claims that, since Plato, the ontological monovalence[7]–including the absence of notions such as 'absence', depth and change–have generated a philosophical problematic that, from a consistent CR point of view, is nonsensical. Yet this philosophical problematic– also through the structures of positivism, which are causally efficacious in many modern practices–has had far-reaching consequences in the structuration of societies. Bhaskar asserts that 'the net project of *Dialectic* and *Plato etc.* is to attempt an anti-Parmidean revolution, reversing 2500 years of philosophical thought, in which negativity (absence and change), ontology, structure, diversity and agency come to the fore'.[8]

Perhaps quite logically then, *Plato etc.* was followed by Bhaskar's post-colonial turn to the East and, as it seems, partial retreat to mystical thinking. *From East to West,* published in 2000, 'aspires to begin to construct a dialogue, bridge and synthesis' between traditions of both radical libertarian Western thought and mystical Eastern thought. Many fellow critical realists have found the outcome to be a philosophically and historically weak attempt to bring in popular New Age 'philosophies' (e.g. Hostettler and Norrie 2000). Despite the importance of the project, it also seems to contradict many CR theses, including the idea that philosophy must be broadly consistent with the substantive contents and methodologies of the sciences (see Patomäki 2001c, for a discussion of, and comparison to, the somewhat similar attempts by Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida and Johan Galtung to appropriate notions from Buddhism and develop dialogical notions of global philosophies).

While Bhaskar has been either adding new layers and aspects to CR, or testing and exceeding its limits (depending on one's view on his later works), scientific realism has gained ground in analytical philosophy (e.g. Margolis 1986; Searle 1996). CR itself has been cultivated among a group of social, political, legal and economic theorists. These theorists include Margaret Archer (1988, 1995, 2000), Andrew Collier (1994, 1999), Tony Lawson (1997), Alan Norrie (1991, 1993, 2000) and Andrew Sayer (1992, 1995, 2000). Besides introductions to CR, and applications of CR to the problem fields of various disciplines, many of these works have developed original positions on a number of central philosophical and social theoretical issues. It is also significant that there are parallels to CR developments in continental Europe, in particular in France. At times, Derrida (cf. 1998 [1967]:50; 1988:114–54) and Paul Ricoeur (1981:274–96; 1984:78; 1992:300), for instance, seem to have been approaching a position close to CR. However, it is Pierre Bourdieu (e.g. 1977; 1998:1–13), in particular, who has been working, since the 1970s, on a social theory very similar to CR. This compatibility has been increasingly acknowledged by people working on CR social theory (see, for example, May 2000).

Philosophical theses

In this book, I identify CR with three philosophical theses and a related theory of emancipation. The three philosophical theses concern (1) *ontological realism,* (2) *epistemological relativism* and (3) *judgemental rationalism*. Ontological realism means that the world is real and—except for a very small part—independent of the researcher's (my or our) knowledge of it. Bhaskar (1986:7) argues that 'every philosophy, inasmuch as it takes science for its topic, is essentially a realism, or at least has realism for its principle, the pertinent questions being on *how far* and *in what form* this principle is actually implemented'.

CR claims to have taken the principle of realism further than any Western philosophical system thus far. The claim is that the world is not only real but it must also be differentiated, structured, layered and possess causal powers, otherwise our knowledge of it—or our being—would not be possible. Natural science is a matter of the conceptual and practical work of scientists, who create artificial closures in laboratories in order to understand and explain mechanisms, which can be causally efficacious across different factual contexts. With few exceptions, there are no closed systems in nature or society. Therefore, a realist conception of causality does not equate causality with constant conjunctions but with structured *powers* capable of *producing* particular, characteristic *effects* if triggered.

In this regard, natural and social sciences are similar. There are real causal powers both in natural and social systems, whether actualised or not. CR encourages research to focus on identifying and analysing the structures of beings and mechanisms (or complexes), which are causally efficacious. Moreover, it is also a condition of science that scientists and other social actors themselves possess causal powers. A corollary is that, although not all reasons are causally efficacious, and actors can themselves be mistaken about the effective reasons for their actions and practices, some reasons must be efficacious in generating actions.

The idea that reality is layered, and that different, emergent layers (such as biological, human and social) are ontologically irreducible and causally efficacious implies a further ontological notion. *Absence* and *emergence* must also be real. Not everything that is has always existed. Whatever exists can become absent—and already is absent in relation to most fields and spaces most of the time anyway. A parallel of the notions of absence and emergence is that change is not only possible but also ubiquitous. This is one of the senses in which CR is a dialectical system of thought and action.

CR has thus cultivated ontological realism. The second main feature of CR is its epistemological relativism. Epistemological relativism connotes that all beliefs and knowledge claims are socially produced, contextual and fallible. CR knowledge is structured and layered. There are strongly universalising philosophical claims such as those for ontological realism and epistemological relativism; there are rather stable scientific theories; and there are reflective interpretations of social meanings and episodes. However, even the deepest and most universal philosophical theses must be, in principle, open to criticism and change. Openness and transfer inability are essential to any research. The work of scientists is based

on the *pre-existing means of production,* including both the available material facilities and technologies as well as the antecedently established facts and theories, models and paradigms. Models and paradigms must rely on analogies and metaphors. Therefore, a rationally developing science uses both historically transient conceptual resources and *imagination* in a systematic and controlled fashion. However, in the social sciences, laboratory experiments and precise quantitative measurements are impossible. Social sciences are conditioned by the fact that they have to gather all their empirical evidence from open, historical systems. Moreover, social sciences also involve attempts to understand lay meanings. Thus, social scientific models and theories must be more reflectively interpretative undertakings than natural sciences.

Epistemological relativism is consistent with the idea of rational judgements. Judgemental rationalism means that, in spite of interpretative pluralism, it is possible to build well-grounded models and make plausible judgements about their truth. CR gives, in fact, the best available account of the grounds for scientific activities. It explains the nature of the objects we study. It explains what we as researchers do and why—and also why we should aim at amending and revising our theories and models. It is easy to see, for instance, that ontological realism and epistemological relativism are conditions for rational truth-judgements. On the one hand, without independent reality, truth-claims would be meaningless. Truth-claims have to be *about something*. On the other hand, with our theories already mirroring reality, no further research or truth-judgements would be needed. Besides making sense of the rationale for research, CR enables us to acknowledge that claims to truth have both antecedent conditions and consequent effects. Some of these effects can be seen, in a Foucauldian manner, albeit in realist terms, as effects of power.

A theory of emancipation is also an essential component of CR. The core of this theory is the idea that lay meanings are both necessary for social practices and relations, and can be criticised. This pertains to why this particular form of scientific realism is called 'critical'.

In what sense critical?

In what sense is CR 'critical'? Kant's philosophy was called critical, because Kant problematised and analysed the presuppositions of our knowledge. Bhaskar (1986:22) mentions that CR is post-critical in its form. That is, CR relies upon transcendental arguments, yet it analyses historical practices and not universal categories of human mind. CR is critical, first, in this post-Kantian sense. It asks Kantian questions and deploys transcendental arguments. However, in contrast to Kant, CR uses these arguments to establish a realist ontology. Further, in contrast to naïve realism, CR sees beings as relational and changing, and, also, argues that there is no unmediated access to these beings.

The second sense in which CR is 'critical' is related to the distinction between ontology and epistemology. No knowledge simply reproduces reality or 'mirrors' it. Correspondence in this sense would not make any sense (Sayer 2000:42). Any

attempt to describe and explain involves complex mediations; that is, interpretation. CR is a form of reflective philosophy, self-consciously interpretative and relativist. The starting point for Kant's epistemological reflections was an abstract bourgeois individual, an allegedly representative example of the human species, a universal, disembodied mind. For a critical realist, the point of departure is man as an embodied historical being, the existence of which is made possible by antecedent conditions and structures, both natural and social. Men and women have causal powers to change some of these conditions and structures, but, as Marx (1968 [1852]:96) said, 'not just as they please, not under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past'.[9] Adequate theory of knowledge is thus not possible without adequate social ontology. Also in this sense ontology is primary. Ultimately, CR contends that interpretative reflectivism must be grounded on ontological considerations.

Third, CR includes a theory of emancipation; it is also ethico-politically critical. The original version of the CR theory of emancipation was based on the notion of truth. Theories or discourses that are in some important regards false can, nonetheless, be necessary for the reproduction of practices and relations. False understandings and related structures are unduly limiting human possibilities. The basic idea is that we can derive ethico-political judgements from truth-judgements. Hence, as virtuous scholars, we may have a moral obligation to change those practices and relations, which presuppose false theories and discourses. Although truth-judgements are necessary for an emancipatory argument, they are not sufficient. A generalised conception of emancipation strives for human flourishing, and also takes into account other values such as pluralism, justice, democracy, good, virtue, economic efficiency, ecological care and the like.

After international relations

This book is divided into three parts. The first part outlines the international problematic and some attempts to overcome it. It explain why theories based on this problematic have failed, and concludes with CR suggestions about how to tell better stories about world politics. The second part deepens these suggestions and develops them in detail into a CR account of social sciences. It is also my contribution to CR social and political theory. The last section applies CR methodology to the study of world politics. The different applications aim not only at making the methodological discussions more concrete, but suggest–by way of explanatory criticism and concrete Utopias–transformations from international relations towards world politics.

Part I: overcoming international relations

In the first chapter 'How it all started? Can it end? A genealogy of the international problematic', the conventional problematic of international relations (IR) is explicated. I argue that the IR problematic has usually been

mis-identified. Those within the theory/problem-field solution set have since Hume and Kant *reified* the inside/outside–domestic order/inter national anarchy–problematic as natural and unchanging, although it is based on very specific geo-historical practices and related metaphors. It took centuries to establish the practices of capitalism and modern states, and it was only in the nineteenth century that we can really talk about 'international' relations with highly regulated diplomatic practices. The bourgeois conception of man, Hume's positivism, the problem of order and Kant's dichotomies between the Humean world and moral reasons are at the heart of the international problematic that surfaced with the new realities. The post-structuralists have brilliantly exposed the specific and problematical presuppositions of this discourse, yet they have also mis-identified some of the underlying premises and failed to recognise others.

What typically goes unnoticed is the role played by *irrealism* in structuring these debates, often stemming from reactions to Kant and, later, Hegel, Nietzsche and Max Weber. In many respects, the post-structuralist critique is in fact embedded within the same background discourse and is derived from a long philosophical tradition of anti-realism/scepticism. The first chapter thus provides a dialectical comment on the international problematic by situating it in a more adequate way, and by uncovering its presuppositions in a more adequate way. It also suggests, albeit only tentatively, possible historical and theoretical ways to overcome this specific historical problematic. However, before further steps can be taken, the CR alternative has to be articulated.

The discipline of IR was formally founded (at least in the Anglo-American world) during the aftermath of the First World War, in 1918. The idea was to study scientifically the conditions of peace and war, to overcome the problem of war. After the Second World War, with the ascendance of Political Realism in the USA–which also became the centre of research on international politics–the emancipatory task was mostly taken over by Peace Research, which was prominent also in the Nordic countries, Germany, the smaller English-speaking countries such as Australia and Canada, as well as in India and other Third World countries. In the 1950s and 1960s in particular, the project of Peace Research was based on the positivist belief in a science-induced progress; in the USA even more than anywhere else.

Since the 1960s, Hayward R.Alker Jnr has been a key figure in the movement from positivism to more critical and reflectivist approaches both in IR and Peace Research. Alker started as a pluralist, who attempted to develop cuttingedge mathematical and statistical techniques in modelling international political interactions. The second chapter 'Learning from Alker: From quantitative Peace Research to emancipatory humanism' discusses Alker's development in terms of four lessons drawn from his intellectual development.

The first lesson about 'how to collect and analyse "data"' marks not only a movement from quantitative to qualitative but also an ontological shift in understanding *what data is:* Alker started to argue that ultimately *our understanding of the nature of data depends on our social ontology*. According to the ontology of inter-subjectively constituted social entities we have to have multi-perspective

descriptions of social events and characteristics. The second lesson concerns how to analyse and help to solve collective dilemmas. The Prisoner's Dilemma (PD) is a game-theoretical model in which individual utility maximisation appears to be self-defeating, or at least contradictory to some kind of social or collective rationality. Not only systems of subordination have been analysed in terms of this model, but also the 'tragedy of global commons' as well as inter-state insecurity, arms races and crisis bargaining. After a long road towards more conversational and dramaturgical models, Alker eventually came to the conclusion that there are close connections between the world understandings of different research paradigms—with their parallels in the actors' world understandings—and of actors' abilities to resolve PDs (acknowledging that any way of defining the problem and its 'solutions' is based on the adoption of a perspective).

Lesson three is about 'how to broaden and deepen scientifically relevant modelling approaches'. The starting point is that 'we must broaden and deepen the universe of scientifically relevant modelling approaches appropriate for the formal analysis of interpretative and theoretical world histories' (Alker 1996:271). Alker makes a strong plea for more reflective approaches: 'conflict and crisis, as well as the steady state in which violence remains latent, can be partially explicated in terms of dynamics which are approximated by the interactions of artificial systems equipped with the story-building and story-appraising characteristics' (Alker 1996:270). Hence, an adequate analysis of world histories must in fact incorporate the (perhaps ideological?) role of narratives and their interplay. The argument can be summarised in a question:

> Is there some improvement possible in the way scientific historical accounts approach value questions, structural constraints and human choice possibilities that seem to give all great world histories the reflective character and dramatic force of a tragic morality play or the ironic happiness of a Russian fairy tale?'
> (Alker 1996:270)

Indeed, the fourth lesson is about 'how to theorise history?' Alker concludes that world history should be analysed (interpretatively) as an open process, in which choices of actors do make a difference, sometimes also to the intended direction. After having analysed the interplay of power-balancing, collective security and the international socialist transformation through people's wars, he demands more contextually sensitive and historically reflective doctrines of collective security, some less total, more realistic alternatives.

Unlike many post-positivists, including most post-structuralists, Alker has continued to develop more adequate and emancipatory methodologies for the study of peace, conflict and international relations. However, his post-modernist excursions and exercises in 'computational hermeneutics' etc. have led to the criticism that he is ultimately an ontological idealist. There are many passages and claims that would point towards a more realist position, some of them made in explicit reference to CR. However, it is true that the question of realism is left largely unthematised in

Alker's texts, and there are also some noteworthy ambiguities. In conclusion, I maintain that, although Alker's methodological lessons are mostly valid and his attempts to develop better methodologies highly valuable, there is a need to articulate a consistently realist ontology and epistemology

The third chapter 'How to tell better stories about world polities' discusses some key meta-theoretical problems of IR. The levels-of-analysis problem emerged in the early 1960s as part of the positivist project to categorise the explanations of peace, war, co-operation and conflict in terms of locating the main explanatory 'factors' into separate 'levels': individual or sub-state group or bureaucracy; state; and inter-state system. In the 1980s, Richard Ashley and Alexander Wendt brought the agency-structure problem into IR, following Giddens's and Bhaskar's earlier contributions to social theory. In the debates of the 1990s, the levels-of-analysis and agent-structure problems have often—and misleadingly—been conflated.

By analysing a well-known debate between Wendt vs. Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, I make a case for a CR approach to grasp levels and depth, and to resolve—at least tentatively—the agent-structure problem. In particular, I maintain that the levels-of-analysis problem is nothing but an implicit verticalisation of the horizontal inside/outside problem, the essential component of the international problematic. I propose, first, that layers and depth should be analysed more realistically in terms of deep assumptions of background discourses, historical sedimentation of social structures and emergent power of various overlapping (or intra-relational) social systems. Second, that a more adequate account of global spatiality would also enable us to see non-territorially organised practices, including—despite their territorialist pre-conceptions—many of the traditional international institutions, such as diplomacy, international law, balance of power and collective security. Third, that the agent-structure problem can be unpacked by means of analysing the elements of causal complexes responsible for the effects we are interested to explain. And fourth, that social scientific explanation is a form of understanding, based on a double-hermeneutic process.

Moreover, I conclude the third chapter by arguing that any explanation includes a genuinely critical moment, with real emancipatory potential.

Part II: explicating a critical realist methodology

In the previous part, the quest for a CR ontology and epistemology was brought up. In response, the second part explicates the basic elements of a CR methodology for the study of social relations and politics from a globalist perspective. Since the subject matter determines its cognitive possibilities, the fourth chapter 'Critical realist social ontology' starts this part by developing a social ontology by a conceptual analysis of 'action', 'structure' and 'power'. I scrutinise critically the conceptions of Giddens and Bhaskar, and thereby pursue further the fundamental categories of social scientific ontology. Accordingly, I also spell out in detail the notions of *causal complex* and *iconic model,* which form the core of the argument of the rest of the book.

The fifth chapter 'Double hermeneutics of iconic modelling' elucidates in detail the methodology of iconic modelling of causal complexes. By utilising ideas of Rom Harré, Nicholas Reseller, Paul Ricoeur and Andrew Sayer, I explicate a CR methodology for the study of social worlds. The systematic use of imagination—metaphors and analogies—plays an essential role in constructing an adequate iconic model. Instead of deriving propositions from 'a secure starter set', social scientific research should start with a wide, pluralist set of interesting candidates and, step by step, eliminate and refine them until only a contracted range of fully endorsed iconic models is left. This is the *reductive approach* to model building. Iconic models are projective and make references to the real world.

I also argue that, instead of armchair philosophising, research is about encountering, collecting and analysing empirical evidence. Although quantitative data is indispensable and sometimes useful, qualitative evidence is ontologically primary. The process of collecting and analysing evidence is double hermeneutics. Both the accounts of the lay actors and the iconic models of the researcher are situated not only in space but also in time and have a structure of a narrative. In anticipation of the more general emancipatory argument of Chapter 6, I argue, following Ricoeur, that the third moment of mimesis in social scientific research *re-signifies* the human practices when the new narrative of the researcher is restored back to the time of action and practices.

The sixth chapter 'The normative logic of explanatory emancipation' discusses, first, the nature of *truth*. It makes an argument for a *metaphorical* correspondence theory, which is consistent with ontological realism and epistemological relativism, and criticises Bhaskar for not being sufficiently explicit in his refutation of the metaphysical correspondence theory. Following Harré, but developing his notion further, I argue that truth is a regulative metaphor, which has normative force. Truth is a human judgement, which is based on a *metaphor* of correspondence to the way the world really is. It suggests a resemblance between theory-dependent statements, on the one hand, and the essential relations of the area of reality under study, on the other. This conception enables me to both justify and re-fashion Bhaskar's logic of explanatory emancipation. If some of the central beliefs of an ideology are false, and if one possesses an explanation of the reproduction of this ideology, the quest to absent or transform the corresponding practices follows.

Resisting the tendency to reify this logic as 'naturalist', I argue that its force is based on the normative force of the notion of truth. Any truth-judgement must be subject to the limitations and constraints of the condition of epistemological *relativism*. This is particularly important in contexts in which the transformation of politics into violence is more than a mere abstract and remote possibility. A consistently relativist CR must attempt to avoid reproducing—or, for that matter, building—structures of cultural violence. Any critical theory must be willing to analyse the violence inherent in its own categories. When critical explanatory arguments are turned into political praxis, first preference should be given to reciprocal communicative action. Moreover, strategic political action has to be non-violent and remain open to critical communication. I conclude this chapter by making a

case for explicitly normative visions. Positive arguments about concrete Utopias should complement explanatory criticism, and guide transformative actions.

Part III: visions of world politics

After having explicated the fundaments of a CR methodology, in the last section of the book I turn to demonstrating how these ideas can be put to work. Simultaneously, I try to locate the position and task of critical theories in the context of global politics of the turn of the twenty-first century.

Thucydides' *History* is one of the constitutive texts of Political Realism. In this sense, Thucydides is still very much a part of the existing power-political reality. The basic aim of Chapter 7 'Modelling Thucydides' Melos episode' is to try out different possibilities for the iconic modelling of the Melos episode and thereby to illuminate the CR methodology of iconic modelling, suggested and developed in the previous chapters. However, the analysis of the Melos episode allows me to show that, with the help of CR methodology, better, less reificatory, more historical and more systematically evidence-based readings of Thucydides are possible. This example allows me to take part in the theoretical attempts to deconstitute political realism as a discursive, inter-textual practice, possibly also to interfere in the ongoing constitution of the power-political reality–without denouncing the perhaps lasting value of Thucydides' story.

Chapter 8 'A global security community' takes up the IR problematic again for a new, reconstructive discussion, in light of the ideas developed in previous chapters. The international problematic is constituted by a simple argument, according to which the lack of a world state implies that international relations are 'anarchic'. The Kantians think that the solution to this problematic is to establish a supra-national law and order. The CR notion of causality supports Karl Deutsch's historical and empirical claim that the existence of the state is *not* a necessary or a sufficient condition for peace, *nor* is the non-existence of the state a necessary or a sufficient condition for the prevalence of the acute threat of political violence. Deutsch has also argued, on the basis of suggestions of a study of a number of historical cases, that the imposition of a unified system of enforcement of norms may well decrease rather than increase the chances of peace. A pluralist security community is one in which there is a real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other, but will settle their conflicts in some peaceful way, by means of *peaceful changes*. This helps to reveal the reifications of the IR problematic, create the basis for a more fruitful problematic and develop a vision for the role of emancipatory research of world politics.

History is always open. Past struggles can always be re-opened in new present contexts that may be more favourable to the possibilities which were previously suppressed; new combinations of the existing elements of social contexts can be invented and innovated; new social forces can emerge; and also genuinely novel elements may be innovated and fed into the processes of present and near-future political struggles. The social forces constituted by the IR problematic oppose the emergence of global public political spaces or are tempted to impose