

# Rethinking Conflict Studies

Towards a Critical Realist Approach

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‘In my effort to understand the psychology of violent men, I often find myself turning to mythic and tragic literature. Only the Greek tragedies and those of Shakespeare, the horrors described in Thucydides and the Bible, map with fidelity the universe of human violence that I have seen in the prisons. It is only through thinking in terms of that literature that I have managed to find a way to mediate between ordinary sanity and humanity on the one hand, and unimaginable horror and monstrosity on the other. Compared to the tragedies I see and hear of daily, the abstractions of the “social sciences” seem like pale imitations of reality, like the shadows in Plato’s cave’

James Gilligan (1996: 57-58)

‘Everything is contained (constellationally) within ontology (including epistemology and ethics)—or rather its referent, being (including knowledge and values)’

Roy Bhaskar (1997: 142)

## **ABSTRACT**

The study of intra-state conflict has increased exponentially during the post-Cold War period. This has given rise to a variety of competing approaches, which have (i) adopted differing methodological and social theoretical orientations, and (ii) produced contradictory accounts of the causes and nature of violent conflict. This project intervenes in the debates which have resulted from this situation, and develops a critical realist approach to conflict studies. In doing so it rethinks the discipline from the philosophical ground up, by extending the ontological and epistemological insights which are provided by critical realism into more concrete reflections about methodological and social theoretical issues. In addition to engaging in reflection about philosophical, methodological, and social theoretical issues, however, the project also incorporates the insights of two largely neglected literatures into conflict studies. These are, first, the insights of the gender-studies literature, and second, the insights of decolonial/postcolonial forms of thought. It claims that the discipline is strengthened by incorporating the insights of these literatures, and that the critical realist framework provides us with the philosophical basis which is required in order to do so.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>CMP</b>	Critical Methodological Pluralism
<b>CPE</b>	Cultural Political Economy
<b>CR</b>	Critical Realism
<b>CS</b>	Conflict Studies
<b>ELF</b>	Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization Index
<b>IR</b>	International Relations
<b>ISS</b>	International Security Studies
<b>MMR</b>	Mixed-Methods Research
<b>PDM</b>	Philosophical Discourse of Modernity
<b>SEPM</b>	Synchronic Emergent Powers Materialism
<b>TMSA</b>	Transformational Model of Social Activity

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If it is true – as this project claims it is – that science consists of the social production of knowledge by means of knowledge, it deserves emphasis that this applies especially to the current project. Despite the individuating tendencies of the academic enterprise, I am deeply indebted to a wide range of people and institutions for making its completion possible. In particular, I am grateful to the Department of Politics, History and International Relations at Loughborough University, for making one of their studentships available to me. Without this financial support, none of the research that is contained within this project would have been possible. In addition to this, however, I am extremely grateful to both of my supervisors. Rob Dover and Ian Fraser have provided invaluable support throughout the duration of this project, and have proven themselves to be more tolerant towards my idiosyncrasies than could be reasonably expected of anyone.

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of intra-state conflict – particularly in those areas of the world which are now often referred to as the ‘Global South’<sup>1</sup> – has increased exponentially during the post-Cold War period. This amounts to an important break with the past – as the study of ‘primitive’ wars was long considered a marginal concern – and hence raises an important question: how are we to account for the sudden increase of interest in a topic which was previously left ‘to military professionals, historians, or anthropologists with antiquarian interests’ (Richards, 2005: 1)? A number of developments, all of which are centred predominantly on the Global North, suggest plausible answers. The first of these revolves around the idea that – with the threat of nuclear war receding, and more peaceful forms of social interaction taking hold at an inter-state level – our attention has simply shifted towards problems which had previously appeared to be of lesser importance (Kalyvas, 2010: xi). This seems quite likely, as the end of the Cold War has indeed opened up space for concerns – like ‘environmental’ and ‘human’ security – which were not considered part of the mainstream before.

It should be noted, however, that this answer is also limiting in an important way. This is the case because it fails to place the aforementioned shift into a much more *immediate* geopolitical context. A context, that is, which includes the increasing ‘securitization’ of Southern populations during the post-Cold War period. This process took off in earnest after the ‘war on terror’ had been declared (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006), and describes, among other things, the now common idea that flows of Southern migrants pose a potential threat to the security of states and people in the Global North (Huysmans, 2006). Importantly, however, it

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<sup>1</sup> Although I have no great liking for the ‘Global South/North’ distinction, I will, for pragmatic reasons, adopt these terms throughout the project. No matter how crude a grouping they suggest, I consider them preferable to terms such as ‘First/Third World’ or ‘Developed/Developing countries’. As David Slater notes, these terms ‘are replete with sedimented meaning, while in contrast the North-South distinction [...] is less burdened with those deeply rooted associations of Occidental or First World primacy’ (2004: 9-10).



also includes the much broader idea that ‘underdevelopment’<sup>2</sup> (in the Global South) is *itself* a potential source of insecurity (for the Global North). Such ideas have, unsurprisingly, resulted in a (state-led) shift of our social scientific attention towards the Global South, and hence provide us with an alternative explanation for the aforementioned change of focus as well. Drawing attention to such ideas allows us, after all, to place the increasing prominence of Conflict Studies (CS) – here understood simply as the discipline which is concerned with intra-state forms of conflict – into a context which includes the securitization, or even ‘weaponization’ (Price, 2011), of knowledge production about Southern locales and peoples. This adds an important explanatory layer to the idea that our attention has simply shifted towards less pressing problems, and does so by drawing on a more immediate geopolitical logic than is contained within the first explanation.

It should be noted, however, that *neither* of these explanations is in fact capable of providing an adequate explanation for the rise of CS. This is the case because these explanations fail to provide us with a sufficiently *broad* contextualization of this phenomenon. A contextualization, that is, which takes into consideration what is perhaps the most analytically pertinent feature of the immediate post-Cold War period: the enormous faith which many actors in the Global North now placed in the superiority of liberal approaches to analysis and social organization. The ‘West’ had, after all, just won a decisive victory against the various ideological opponents which it had faced, and Fukuyama’s (in)famous ‘end of history’ (2012 [1993]) was supposed to be closing in. Such events are clearly of key importance, as they allow us to situate the rise of CS within the post-Cold War presumption that Northern ways of life had proven themselves to be superior. Indeed, more specifically, it allows us to contextualize the aforementioned surge of interest in ‘primitive’ wars by situating it within the

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<sup>2</sup> Especially extremes of poverty, so-called failed states, quasi-states, etc. See especially Jackson (1993) and Rotberg (2003).

much broader rise of ‘neo-modernization’ sentiments throughout the Global North. Such sentiments, as David Blaney and Naeem Inayatullah (2002) have shown, were increasingly re-imagined in a *global* manner, and – importantly – featured ideas about the expansion of a liberal/modernist zone of peace to states in the Global South in a prominent manner. If we are to come to terms with the rise of CS – as well the aforementioned securitization of ‘underdevelopment’ – it is therefore essential that we situate them both within the modernist triumphalism which characterized the immediate post-Cold War period.

It should be noted, however, that this situation makes for an important contrast with an altogether different context. This is the context of critically-oriented scholarly work, which has – especially throughout the last few decades – engaged in a sustained assault on/deconstruction of exactly those categories and presumptions which have been central to the post-Cold War resurgence of modernist sentiments. This assault/deconstruction has been multi-faceted in nature, but has commonly involved a systematic questioning of modern *philosophy, science, and forms of social organization*. Instead of experiencing the aforementioned ‘end of history’, therefore, significant parts of the Northern academic enterprise appear to be experiencing something akin to what Chabal (2012) has termed an ‘end of conceit’. This means, in short, that ‘conceited’ assumptions about the supposed superiority of modern ways of thinking/organizing social life are increasingly being questioned. This process has followed a relatively autonomous internal/intellectual logic but has, more recently, been reinforced by events *outside* of academic settings as well. This applies, for instance, to the financial crisis which erupted in 2008, and which continues to wreak havoc across various Northern states. It also applies, however, to the problems which Northern actors encountered while attempting to build effective (and ‘modern’) states/economies in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Such challenges have contributed to the idea

that modernization may not, in fact, be the universal solution which many had presumed it to be during the immediate post-Cold War period. Indeed, it might plausibly be argued that the states and policy-makers which claim to embody the spirit of this philosophical tradition are now beginning to experience something of the crisis of confidence which had already been apparent in critically-oriented academic settings for some decades.<sup>3</sup>

If this is indeed the case, however, what does it entail for the future direction and success of CS? Is it to embrace the more defeatist strains of postmodernism, which systematize – at an intellectual level – the sense of disorientation which appears to be on the rise throughout the Global North? Should it give up on liberal/modernist hopes for a more peaceful world? Or should it, instead, seek to re-assert the unambiguous superiority and/or universal relevance of the modernist approaches which have dominated CS throughout the post-Cold War period? Such questions rely, of course, on a misleading dualism. A dualism, that is, which presents us with a false choice. This is the case because there are in fact numerous alternatives available to us. One such alternative is provided by the approach to the philosophy of science which is most commonly referred to as critical realism (CR), and is closely associated with the (controversial) work of Roy Bhaskar (1998, 2008, 2009, 2011a, 2011b).<sup>4</sup> This approach has developed important critiques of both modernist and postmodernist positions, and – while it is by no means the only approach to adopt such an ‘inclusive’ orientation – the current project aims to show that it has developed the most sophisticated philosophical framework which is

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<sup>3</sup> As Porter has written: ‘Against the predators who struck on 9/11, Atlanticists believed that American power could remake the world in its own image. Its wars of liberation would inspire the spread of democratic freedom and alter the condition of the Arab-Islamic world. Reformers would rise up and banish the furies of extremism that had spawned *jihad*. Instead, the US and its allies became tied down in wars of attrition in foreign lands. The balance of opinion turned against the utopian vision. In the cultural counter-revolution, it is now a sense of the exotic separateness of others that reigns’ (2009: 191-192).

<sup>4</sup> The version of CR which I employ throughout this project is perhaps best described as ‘basic CR’. That is to say, I employ both the transcendental realist and critical naturalist arguments which were developed in Bhaskar’s earlier work – and which were enriched/corrected by the contributions of various other authors - without making use of his later dialectical or spiritual works. In addition to this, it should be noted that my interest in this project concerns the manner in which CR can be used for explanatory work. I will therefore not engage with discussion about CR and critique, or so-called ‘explanatory critiques’.

currently available to us. Indeed, at a more substantive level, the project aims to show that CR (i) provides us with an important opportunity to ‘rethink’ the various debates and controversies which have divided the CS literature, and (ii) provides CS with a more coherent/sophisticated philosophical framework than has been available to it previously. This framework allows us to develop a critique of its liberal/modernist tendencies, while avoiding the problems, dualisms, and oppositions which result from the adoption of various other critical approaches. Indeed, it allows us to both de- and re-construct CS at a *philosophical*, *methodological*, and *social-theoretical* level, while incorporating the (largely neglected) insights of the *gender-studies* and *decolonial/postcolonial* literatures into our analyses.

In advancing this orientation the project will position the CR approach as an alternative to the CS approaches which have been used throughout the post-Cold War period. An alternative, that is, which overcomes the various weaknesses which are inherent to these CS approaches. In particular, however, the project will position CR as an alternative to perhaps the two most influential approaches which emerged in the post-Cold War period. These are, first, the *positivist* approach which is adopted by authors like Collier (2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2010), Fearon (2004a, 2004b), Laitin (2007), and Sambanis (2004), and second, the *complexity sciences* approach which is adopted by Duffield (2001) and Keen (2005a, 2005b). These approaches are, from a CR perspective, incapable of providing CS with an analytical framework which is either *methodologically* or *social-theoretically* satisfactory. In order to show that this is the case, however, it is necessary for the project to engage in a range of *philosophical* explorations first. This is the case because it is at this philosophical level that the problems associated with these approaches originate. If we are to develop an approach to CS which overcomes these problems – as well as the problems which result from various other approaches – it is therefore essential that the philosophical ground is cleared first.

It is this which the first part of the project aims to engage in. It should be noted, however, that this part of the project serves a second purpose as well. This is the purpose of situating and clarifying the basic tenets of the CR philosophical framework. This kind of work remains of key importance, as – despite the increasing amounts of work which either describes or make use of CR – the level of understanding which is required in order to skip to a discussion of more substantive issues still cannot be presumed to exist universally. Indeed, even authors who have explicitly engaged with the tenets of CR have often misunderstood significant parts of it.<sup>5</sup> This is apparent, for instance, in the work of a number of its recent critics, whose discussions range from the moderately misleading (Jackson, 2011; Cruickshank, 2010) to the essentially misinformed (Blyth, 2010; Schmidt, 2010).<sup>6</sup> Such examples illustrate that there is a clear need for this project to engage in some preparatory and justificatory work *before* moving on to discuss the various ways in which CR can be usefully applied to the study of intra-state conflict. It is this kind of work, therefore, which the first part of the project will engage in.

This part – which is termed ‘philosophical underlabouring’ – contains two chapters, both of which are of key importance if we are to adequately situate and evaluate CR’s contributions. The *first* of these describes the main features of the philosophical ‘problem field’ (Patomäki and Wight, 2000: 219) which CR intervenes in. That is to say, it describes the various philosophical debates and problems which CR aims to resolve. This involves, first of all, the development of an acceptable definition for one of the most important terms which is used

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<sup>5</sup> This cannot be blamed entirely on these authors, as such misunderstandings result in part from the internal characteristics of CR (both as a body of thought and as an intellectual movement) as well. There can be little doubt, for instance, that – despite the availability of more accessible introductions to CR (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 2000; Danermark [et al], 2002) – Bhaskar’s work poses something of a challenge as a result of its complexity and its (neologism-infused) obscurity. This has undoubtedly been one of the most important causes of the continued misunderstandings, and – along with the somewhat crude manner in which some proponents of CR have employed its tenets – has resulted in reducing the effectiveness of CR’s interventions.

<sup>6</sup> As Buch-Hansen has argued, Blyth and Schmidt’s comments are ‘quite entertaining’ but ‘not very illuminating’, as their chapters are ‘replete with wild arguments, bold statements and prejudices against critical realism’ (2011: 134). It is clear, therefore, that these authors ‘make their arguments on the basis of a highly limited understanding of even the basic features of critical realist philosophy’ (ibid).

throughout this project: the notion of ‘positivism’. This approach forms an important part of the modern philosophical tradition – what Habermas (1987) has termed the ‘philosophical discourse of modernity’ (PDM) – and is therefore central to the debates which are at the heart of this project. In addition to developing a definition of positivism, however, this chapter will also discuss the main ways in which this approach, and the philosophical tradition of which it is a part, have been undermined by a wide range of ‘critical’ approaches.

These approaches vary widely in terms of the kinds of critiques which they have developed, but, as the *second* chapter will show, have a number of important features in common as well. This is the case because they have left a number of the most fundamental (and problematic) positivist assumptions intact. They remain, therefore, within the same problem field, and result in a number of problems, dualisms and contradictions which the CR framework is able to avoid. Indeed, this chapter intends to show that it is only when we adopt the CR framework that it is possible to (i) complete the various ‘incomplete critiques’ (Bhaskar, 2009: 3) of positivism which are discussed in the first chapter, and (ii) step out of the aforementioned problem field. In addition to illustrating that this is the case, however, the second chapter also aims to show that CR is not what it is often presumed or understood to be. This involves, first of all, the clearing up of various misunderstandings, by setting out the basic tenets of CR. In addition to this, however, it also involves a defence of these tenets against a number of their detractors. These sections aim to show, among other things, that CR provides us with a very distinctive form of realism. A form of realism, that is, which incorporates the various insights of approaches which are critical of modernist forms of thought, while avoiding the relativism and anti-scientism which characterizes the more defeatist strands of postmodernism. This orientation results, concretely, in an philosophical approach which reclaims an anti-positivist approach to science, and embraces (i) *ontological realism* (the idea that the world exists, very

largely, independently of our knowing it), (ii) *epistemic relativism* (the idea that the world can only be known in terms of those discourses which are available to us), and (iii) *judgmental rationalism* (the idea that we *can* – at least over time/in principle - judge between competing claims in order to establish which are more adequate at an explanatory level). This has become known – entirely tongue in cheek – as the ‘holy trinity’ of CR, and results in an approach to science which is (i) *inclusive/heterodox* (as a result of it incorporating the insights of a wide variety of approaches), (ii) *modest* (as a result of it acknowledging the various challenges which are inherent to knowledge production), and (iii) *serious* (as a result of its emphasis on developing a philosophical framework which allows for unity between theory and praxis).

Once the philosophical ground has been cleared in these first two chapters, however, the project will continue by discussing the various ways in which the CR framework can be made use of in order to rethink the central features of CS. This second part of the project – termed ‘interventions’ – aims to develop a number of (CR-based) interventions into existing CS debates. These interventions are preceded, however, by the *third* chapter. This chapter develops an in-depth review of the post-Cold War CS literature, and is divided into two main sections. The first of these sections discusses the *methodological* approaches which authors working within CS have adopted in order to come to terms with the causes and nature of intra-state conflict. As will be shown, CS has been characterized by a number of key divides. These include, in particular, the divides between (i) positivist, hermeneutic and complexity sciences approaches, (ii) nomothetic and idiographic approaches, (iii) quantitative and qualitative methods, (iv) methodological individualism and its various critics, (v) objectivist and subjectivist approaches to research, and (vi) empiricism and theoretical reflexivity. In addition to discussing these methodological issues, however, the second section of this chapter will also provide an overview of the most important *social theoretical* divides which currently

characterize the CS literature. In particular, this section will review ongoing debates between (i) proponents of materialist and idealist approaches, (ii) proponents of rationalist and affective models of personhood, and (iii) modernist understandings of ‘development’ as pacifying and a range of critical (predominantly Marxian and Weberian) approaches.

Once this review of the CS literature has been completed, however, the project will engage in the first of its reconstructive interventions. This intervention takes place in the *fourth* chapter, and (i) engages in a critical discussion of the various methodological approaches which have been adopted throughout the CS literature, and (ii) provides CS with a new methodological approach which is rooted in the CR framework. This approach is termed a Critical Methodological Pluralist (CMP) approach, and aims to provide a resolution to the various methodological debates which are discussed in the third chapter. These debates, it shows, can be traced back to the *Methodenstreit* of the late nineteenth century social sciences, and can be resolved once we step out of the philosophical problem field which caused them to occur in the first place. This is, of course, what the second chapter set out to do, and the fourth chapter will therefore aim to simply draw out the main methodological implications of the CR framework. In doing so it argues especially against positivist approaches to CS, and takes issue with Duffield’s (2001) claim that it is necessary to draw on the complexity sciences in order to avoid mechanistic/linear models of cause and effect. Once this intervention into methodological issues has been completed, however, the *fifth* chapter will attempt to shed some light on the social theoretical divides which have characterized the CS literature. In particular, it will intervene in the aforementioned debates between materialist/ideational and rationalist/affective approaches. In doing so it will argue that CS should aim to transcend these divides, and that it should adopt much more heterodox and interdisciplinary approach than it has in the past. Indeed, this chapter aims to show that – rather than simply choosing



one side over the other – CS should end the continual back-and-forth between materialist/idealist and rationalist/affective approaches. This means, importantly, that it must resist all forms of reductionism and instrumentalism, and that it should recognize the important analytical contributions which different sides of these debates have made. This would allow it to move from the *thin* accounts of power, identity, personhood, subject-formation, etc. which characterize most modernist forms of science to the much *thicker* accounts which are in fact required in order to do justice to the complexity and fluidity of the human and social worlds.

In order to systematize this analytical orientation the chapter will argue in favour of adopting a Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach to CS. This approach draws on both historical materialism and post-structuralism/constructivism, and aims to combine the insights of both political economy and cultural studies. Indeed, it attempts to find ways of coherently combining all of the traditional fields of the human and social sciences (from economics, to politics, psychology, etc). In doing so the project has a distinct philosophical advantage over authors who have attempted to engage in similar types of activities in the recent past (see for instance Best and Paterson, 2009; Ryner, 2006; Babe, 2009). This is the case, concretely, because the CPE approach which this project develops is rooted in the CR philosophical framework. As will be shown, it is exactly the fact that CR steps out of the aforementioned problem field which allows us to develop a philosophically-coherent CPE approach. Indeed, more concretely, it is this philosophical framework which allows the fifth chapter to overcome the analytical problems which result from (i) liberal/modernist approaches to understanding both human personhood and the social world, and (ii) the complexity sciences approach which has been adopted by Mark Duffield (2001) and David Keen (2005a, 2005b).

Once these philosophical (CR), methodological (CMP), and social theoretical (CPE) foundations have been laid, however, the project will move on to the last of its three parts. This final part – which is termed ‘incorporations’ – aims simply to incorporate the insights of two largely neglected literatures into CS reflections. In the *sixth* chapter, for instance, the project will argue that the gender and war literature – which has very largely remained a specialist literature – must be brought in from the intellectual cold. Indeed, this chapter will claim that a distinction between ‘CS’ and ‘gendered CS’ is untenable, and that the gender-studies literature provides us with a number of important intellectual resources. These resources should therefore be incorporated into CS reflections about conflict in a much more systematic manner, and the chapter will show that the CR, CMP, and CPE approaches provide us with important ways of doing so. Indeed, it will show that these approaches provide us with a more coherent and sophisticated analytical framework than is provided by the ‘post-positivist’ approaches which many gender-studies authors have adopted in the recent past.

The same conclusion applies, however, to the postcolonial/decolonial literature which is discussed in the *seventh* (and final) chapter of this project as well. This literature, though it has developed a number of important insights, has largely remained within the aforementioned philosophical problem field. As the chapter will show, however, this does not mean that its concerns and claims can be safely disregarded. Rather, these should be incorporated into CS, as doing so would allow enquiries into the causes and nature of intra-state conflict to overcome a number of common analytical presuppositions which are rooted in what is often (euphemistically) referred to as the ‘colonial encounter’. In particular, this would allow such enquiries to overcome the negative effects of the neo-modernization impulse which has characterized large swathes of post-Cold War CS literature. This impulse has affected both explicitly modernist approaches and a range of more critical

(especially Marxian and Weberian) approaches, and should arguably be abandoned. This is the case, concretely, because doing so would allow us to develop an approach to CS which is much more suited for what we might term *the end of 'the end of history'*. That is to say, abandoning the neo-modernization impulse would allow us to develop an approach to CS which transcends various 'conceited' assumptions about the supposed superiority of modern ways of thinking and organizing social life. Importantly, however, this project will argue that abandoning this neo-modernization impulse is not just *necessary*, but that it is also possible *without abandoning (or dismissing) the notion of science*.

Before illustrating that all of this is in fact the case, however, it is necessary to briefly set out the specific contributions which this project aims to make. The first of these intended contributions is the development of a new (and more coherent/sophisticated) approach to CS which is rooted in the philosophical tenets of CR. Indeed, more specifically, this project aims – by drawing on the philosophical insights which the CR approach provides – to develop a new approach to studying both the *causes* and the *nature* of *intra-state* conflict. The literature on these topics has, as we have seen, increased exponentially during the post-Cold War period. Importantly, however, it has also remained almost entirely self-contained. That is to say, the literature on *intra-state* conflict – generally grouped together under labels such as 'conflict studies' or 'peace studies' – has remained very largely divorced from the literature on *inter-state* conflict. The latter of these is more commonly studied within the disciplinary confines of International Security Studies (ISS), and has been characterized by much clearer linkages with the International Relations (IR) literature. This is of significant importance, as both IR and ISS have witnessed significant efforts by proponents of CR to apply its insights to debates in these fields (see particularly Wight, 2006; Patomäki, 2003, 2008; Kurki, 2008; Joseph and Wight, 2010). This has not, however, occurred throughout CS, and – because

doing so is the central aim of this project – should count as its *primary* intended contribution. As part of this intended contribution, however, this project will (i) *intervene* in both the methodological and social theoretical debates which have divided CS scholarship during the post-Cold War period, and (ii) *incorporate* the insights of two important (but largely neglected) literatures into its reflections.

In doing so, however, the project aims to make a number of contributions which are of *secondary* importance as well. These concern particularly the contributions which it aims to make to CR as a movement in the philosophy of science, and revolve around the fact that it aims to make *creative use* of its framework. That is to say, this project aims not just to (passively) *apply* CR, but also to (actively) *extend* its framework into (i) the areas of methodological and social theoretical reflection, and (ii) the aforementioned thematic areas. This provides readers with useful illustrations of the practical potential which is possessed by the CR framework, and – importantly – means that this project should be read as developing *a* CR approach to CS, rather than *the* CR approach to CS. This is the case because the methodological and social theoretical positions which it develops throughout the next few chapters *do not follow logically from the CR philosophical framework which it employs*. Rather, multiple substantive approaches remain possible, even among proponents of the same CR framework. While the project will attempt to clearly stipulate the links between CR and the arguments which it develops, therefore, it is undoubtedly idiosyncratic in its execution. Before such idiosyncrasies become apparent in later chapters, however, it is necessary to engage in the kind of philosophical underlabouring which will allow this project to rebuild CS from the ground up. It is this, therefore, which the first two chapters will do.

**PART I:**  
**PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERLABOURING**

**CHAPTER I:**  
**SKETCHING THE PROBLEM FIELD**

## 1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this project aims to contextualize – both historically and intellectually - the critical realist (CR) approach which will be employed throughout this project. It will do this, concretely, by (i) providing an operational definition of the term ‘positivism’, and (ii) discussing the main problems associated with this approach, as identified by various ‘critical’ alternatives. The chapter will argue that, although these alternatives have made numerous important intellectual contributions, they have not succeeded in developing a ‘complete’ critique of positivism (Bhaskar, 2009: 3). This is the case, in short, because they have left a number of its most fundamental (and problematic) assumptions intact, and therefore remain within the same philosophical ‘problem field’ (Patomäki and Wight, 2000: 219). This problem field is characterized by a number of intractable analytical problems, dualisms and oppositions which – as the second chapter intends to show – are resolved by CR. Indeed, this second chapter aims to show that it is only the CR framework which allows us to transcend the problem field within which both the ‘philosophical discourse of modernity’ (PDM) (Habermas, 1987) and its various ‘critical’ antagonists are located.

Before discussing the nature of this problem field, however, it is worth re-stating that the first part of this project engages with *philosophical* questions, not *methodological* or *social theoretical* issues. Although these issues will be discussed as well, in chapters IV and V respectively, the first two chapters engage in the ‘philosophical underlabouring’ which is required in order to progress to a discussion of these issues only. This involves, in particular, the discussion of a variety of meta-theoretical issues, related to the nature of being (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology). Such ethereal issues may seem far removed from the practical

concerns of scientists, or the grim realities of violent conflict, but – for better or for worse – there is simply no escaping them. As one popular introduction to the aforementioned issues has argued, philosophy refers to ‘a skin, not a sweater’ (Furlong and Marsh, 2010:184). This means, as well, that the alternative to serious philosophical reflection is ‘not *no* philosophy, but *bad* philosophy’ (Collier, 1994:16). Indeed, as the next two chapters will show, it is such ‘bad philosophy’ which underpins the various problems and dualisms inherent to most thinking about science. This has, in turn, had very real consequences for the study of intra-state conflict, as it has stunted the methodological and social theoretical development of CS in a number of important ways. If the project is to develop an approach to CS which overcomes these *methodological* and *social theoretical* problems it is therefore of key importance that it attempts to resolve the *philosophical* issues which have underpinned them first.

Before attempting to offer a resolution of this kind, however, it is necessary to provide a sketch of the philosophical problem field which CR intervenes in. In order to avoid the conceptual confusion which has so often characterized discussions in the philosophy of the science it is important to begin this sketch by defining exactly what it is that ‘critical’ approaches have aimed to problematize and/or transcend when they talk about positivism. This is made all the more important because the meaning of the term ‘positivism’ is in fact a matter of significant controversy and confusion. The first section of this chapter will therefore describe the specific definition of positivism which will be adopted throughout this project. It should be noted, however, that such a definitional statement is *necessarily/unavoidably* problematic, as various groups with competing/contradictory philosophical orientations have in fact adopted the positivist label. The definition which follows is therefore not intended as exhaustive in a *historical* manner but, instead, is included for the sake of the clarity and coherence of the project as a whole. This means, importantly, that the positivism which is



described is not necessarily the *explicit* positivism of the (varied) schools of thought which have made use of this term in order to describe their work. Rather, it describes the most dominant doctrine – at least of those doctrines which relate to the nature and aims of science – which currently exists within capitalist societies.

## 1.2 The Positivist Approach

If we are to come to terms with the nature of this doctrine, however, it is essential that we situate it both historically and geographically. This means, concretely, that it is necessary to situate both the tenets and rise of the positivist approach within the *Enlightenment period* and *Europe*. This is the case because its particular orientation to the philosophy of science is rooted in one of the main aims which is now associated with this time and place: the development of absolutely secure/indubitable/unassailable, and completely independent, foundations for the development of objective and universally-applicable knowledge. This aim is clearly reflected in the positions which positivism adopts, and, importantly, ensures that it is best understood as a *foundationalist* approach. This feature is, indeed, central to the PDM as a whole, as it underpins the emancipatory role which Enlightenment thought is often understood to have played. The role, that is, of liberating the rational and free-thinking/autonomous/self-determining (or ‘humanistic’<sup>7</sup>) individual from the authority of theology/the church, the fatuousness of common sense, and the backwardness of ‘pre-modern’ socio-political conditions (Aschcroft [et al], 1998: 219-220; Bhambra, 2009:35).

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<sup>7</sup> As Aschcroft [et al] (1998: 219-220) show, ‘[t]he status of the human individual was one of the key features of Enlightenment philosophy. Descartes’ declaration that ‘I think, therefore I am’ confirmed the centrality of the autonomous human individual, a founding precept of humanism, a precept that effectively separated the subject from the object, thought from reality, or the self from the other. The individual, autonomous ‘I’ was one that operated in the world according to this separation and was no longer to be seen as merely operated upon by divine will or cosmic forces. The individual self was separate from the world and could employ intellect and imagination in understanding and representing the world. The autonomous human consciousness was seen to be the source of action and meaning rather than their product’.

Such goals were to be accomplished in a number of different ways, but have relied particularly on the idea that knowledge-claims are only ever justified if they are, or can be, borne out by means of (direct) *experience*. This proposition has – at the level of philosophy of science – been systematized as an *empiricist* epistemological position, and involves the claim that *empirical verification* is the single most important hallmark of ‘real’ science. Indeed, proponents of the positivist approach have argued that it is only the strict empiricism which they adopt that is capable of providing science with the indubitable/unassailable, and absolutely independent, foundations which Enlightenment thought had sought to develop. Positivism therefore denounces the non-empirical – as being merely ‘metaphysical’ – and its proponents have attempted to banish this category from the philosophy of science. This serves an important function, as it provides positivism with a criterion for differentiating *legitimate* (modern) claims to knowledge from *illegitimate* (pre-modern, theological, commonsensical) claims to knowledge, thereby allowing it to clearly demarcate science from non-science.

It should be noted, however, that this is not the only way in which positivist authors have attempted to provide these kinds of foundations and demarcations. While all adherents of the positivist approach accept the contention that empirical verification is central to legitimate forms of scientific enquiry, many have favored the adoption of a number of additional criteria as well. The most important among these are concerned with the *methods* which should be used by ‘real’ scientific enquiry. There are, as Colin Wight (2006: 19) has shown, a number of versions of this argument, but the most prominent among these has stressed the need for scientists to express themselves in the ‘universal’ and ‘transparent’ language of mathematics. This is considered important as mathematics is argued to provide scientists with a medium which allows them to extend their ‘powers of deductive reasoning far beyond that of purely verbal methods’ (Sayer, 2010: 118). Indeed, it is argued that it is only when scientists achieve

the level of precision which is commonly associated with mathematical reasoning that they can aspire to the kind of secure knowledge which Enlightenment thought had always aimed to achieve.<sup>8</sup> Such arguments have often been complemented, however, by a third criterion for demarcating science/legitimate knowledge claims from non-science/illegitimate knowledge claims as well. This criterion involves the idea that *induction* is the mode of inference which is characteristic of ‘real’ science, and aligns it with the ability to move from the *particular* (a limited number of observations) to the *universal* (a ‘covering’ law). Indeed, more plainly, these claims align science with its ability to provide accurate *generalizations* by moving from *empirical information* (the particular) to the formation of a *scientific theory* (the universal). Such claims have had a powerful impact on the philosophy of science, and have filtered into a number of related propositions as well. These propositions are now closely associated with the positivist approach, and include, in particular, the claims that (i) genuine science requires a symmetry of *explanation* and *prediction*, and (ii) the maturity of a scientific discipline can be measured by its level of predictive success (ibid: 88).

These ideas have provided a powerful disciplining influence on *what* counts as genuine science, and *who* has been allowed to claim possession of genuinely scientific knowledge. It is only when the aforementioned criteria are fulfilled, after all, that we are entitled to claim the epistemic authority which accompanies scientific practice. This excludes – exactly as it was intended to – the *common sense* of ordinary people, and the *faith* or *theology* associated with the clergy, and paves the way for a more ‘Enlightened’ future which is rooted in the authority of scientists. Such modernist visions have derived significant support from the dramatic advances which have been made by the natural, ‘hard’ or experimental sciences. Indeed, more specifically, they have derived significant support from the level of success

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<sup>8</sup> While this argument is not usually made in such an explicit manner by practicing scientists, it should be noted that it is these sorts of sentiments which underpin – historically speaking – the penchant for quantitative methods which is still typical of much positivist work.

achieved by *physics*, which appears to fulfill all of the aforementioned criteria for a ‘real’ and ‘mature’ scientific discipline: it is empirically-oriented, it has embraced the medium of mathematics, it has uncovered numerous covering laws, and it seems capable of making accurate predictions. Physics therefore appears to deliver on the promise of both the positivist approach and the PDM more generally, and underpins the common idea that the practices of science can indeed provide us with the (absolute) truth. Indeed, its success seems to suggest that by *knowing* (and hence ‘disenchanted’ or ‘desacralizing’) the natural world, humankind may come to *dominate it, free itself from it, and use it for its material benefit*. Such ideas are now closely associated with the PDM as a whole (Habermas, 1987; Latour, 1993), and have been extended to other disciplines as well.

This kind of extension is, in fact, a central feature of the positivist approach, which has traditionally adopted a belief in the unity of the sciences. This proposition is referred to as *naturalism*, and involves the claim that ‘the same methodologies and epistemologies apply to all realms of enquiry’ (Smith, 1996: 16). In some cases this has taken the form of a so-called *reductionist* naturalism, which adopts the view that a fully-developed science of matter would be able to reduce all phenomena – whether natural, social, or otherwise – to one set of ultimate governing principles. These principles are usually understood in terms of the laws of *physics* – generally understood as the ‘mother of all the sciences’ – and the discovery of such ‘rock bottom’ explanations would therefore result in an elimination of the rationale for disciplines like psychology and sociology. This kind of naturalism presupposes an *ontological monism*, which claims that there exists only one – entirely undifferentiated – type of substance, which is matter (Hartwig, 2007: 317). Even when this claim has been rejected, however, the positivist belief in the unity of science has resulted in efforts to replicate its apparent success outside of the natural sciences.

This has involved the application of its most characteristic scientific tools – empiricism, quantification, inductivism, etc. – to a new range of phenomena, ranging from psychological disorders to war. In addition to this, however, it has also involved a search for psychological and sociological covering laws to match the covering laws which have been discovered by the hard/experimental sciences. Such covering laws have been conceptualized in a number of different ways. The most important among these, however, models them on the positivist understanding of (especially Newtonian) physics. This approach argues that covering laws are unearthed by uncovering invariant empirical regularities ('whenever A then B'), and propounds a belief in the possibility of uncovering the universal principles which govern the world. This includes, importantly, the *social* world, which – 'much as the physical world operates according to gravity and other laws of nature' (Macionis and Plummer, 2008: 14) – should be understood as being governed by various invariable laws as well. This approach is associated especially with the work of Auguste Comte – commonly considered the first self-conscious social scientist – who believed that it should be possible to develop a kind of *social* physics to rival the physics of the natural world (ibid). This social physics would study society, and – in time – would be able to reveal the principles which govern its operations.

These kinds of claims have never been uncontroversial, however, and – as the next section will show – the positivist approach has historically been under consistent attack by various 'critical' alternatives. While it is true, therefore, that critically-oriented enquiry has experienced something of a renaissance during the last few decades, it should also be noted that European (or 'Global Northern') history has never been as intellectually homogenous as some of its critics have made it out to be. Indeed, many of the critiques of positivism/modernity which are currently in vogue are prefigured by, and draw on, Enlightenment-era critiques of foundationalism, empiricism, universalism, monism, naturalism, etc. Whatever

period they emerged from, however, it should be noted that these critical approaches have all been engaged in challenging the ‘schoolroom image of science’ (Hollis, 1994: 3) which positivism has come to represent. This challenge has involved a wide variety of arguments, and contains widely differing *areas* and *degrees* of critique. While some have focused on distinguishing the messy/uneven reality of science from its more idealized portrayals, for instance, others have posed philosophical questions about the suitability of positivist methods for the study of psychological and/or social realities. Such enquiries have more recently been joined, however, by a more radical questioning of the epistemic authority which the ‘priestly class’ of the modern era – scientists – has claimed for itself. These critiques have sought, in particular, to question claims about the distinction which positivism makes between legitimate (scientific) knowledge and theological/commonsensical knowledge, and thereby seeks to undermine or abolish one of the central features of the PDM.

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, however, the current project aims to show that – despite the important intellectual contributions which these approaches have made – their critiques of positivism remain incomplete. This is the case because they have left a number of its most fundamental (and problematic) assumptions intact, and therefore remain within the same philosophical problem field. This results in a number of important problems, dualisms, and oppositions, and prevents these approaches from developing an alternative (non-/anti-positivist) understanding of science. If the current section has described the first (modernist) element of the aforementioned problem field, however, the next section will describe the second (critical) element. In providing this description, it will not limit itself to any particular discipline. Rather, it will draw on discussions which have been taking place throughout a broad range of fields, ranging from the philosophy of science to sociology, anthropology, and IR. This allows it to provide a broad overview of the most important problems which are now

associated with the PDM/positivism. While such an overview is, of course, inevitably incomplete<sup>9</sup>, it serves the important purpose of setting out the main features of the debates which CR intervenes in.

### 1.3 Positivism and its Discontents

These debates are often complex and/or obscure in nature, and the challenges which ‘critical’ approaches have in fact posed are therefore frequently misunderstood. If we are to come to terms with the arguments which they have made it is therefore essential that these are clearly described and contextualized. This context involves, in particular, a broad challenge to the *foundationalism* which is inherent to the positivist approach: almost without exception, critical approaches have adopted a much more skeptical attitude towards the idea that scientists can in fact develop the kind of objective/truthful, universally-applicable, and generalizable knowledge which Enlightenment thought had aimed to develop. While, for some, this has involved the development of less idealized notions of scientific enquiry, for others it has involved a more radical rejection of the idea that secure foundations are in fact available to us. This position is referred to as *anti-foundationalism*, and has, in recent decades, resulted in the ever greater impetus towards judgmental relativism which is now associated with postmodernism (Danermark [et al], 2002: 8).

Within this broader context, however, it is undoubtedly the positivist adoption of an *empiricist* position which has received the most critical attention (Smith, 1996:17). Indeed, virtually all of the approaches with which this chapter is concerned have, to varying degrees, subscribed to

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<sup>9</sup> I have chosen, for instance, to omit a discussion of the philosophical tradition of pragmatism. This choice was made because pragmatism has not featured within the discussions taking place throughout CS. For realist critiques of this tradition see especially: Bhaskar (2010) and Kurki (2007, particularly chapter five)

the idea that the kind of ‘pure unvarnished perception talked of by empiricists is simply impossible’ (ibid: 20). The observer’s consciousness, these approaches have argued, mediates between the world and our understanding of it. Empiricism’s ‘spectator conception of experience’ is therefore understood as (i) failing to ‘distinguish epistemically significant from insignificant experience’, and (ii) reducing experience to a ‘succession of impressions cast by nature: the more impressions, the more experience, the more knowledge’ (Collier, 1994: 75). As the relationship between experience and the amount and/or quality of knowledge we acquire seems less straightforward than this, most critical approaches have favored perspectives which bring the synthesizing activities which are inherent to human consciousness back into the analytical picture.

This has, importantly, resulted in a very different understanding of *theory* than is favoured by the positivist approach. As we have seen, this approach argues that science should move, inductively, from *experience* to *theory*. Theory is, therefore, understood as ‘little more than a language for registering statistical correlations between observed variables’ (Hay, 2000: 43), and remains an entirely *passive* phenomenon. This conceptualization is rejected by critical approaches, who have argued that such a relationship between theory and perception is, quite simply, impossible. What – from a positivist perspective – might be referred to as simply ‘the empirical evidence’ can by no means be assumed to speak for itself. Indeed, some critical approaches – this tendency is most closely associated with ‘epistemological radicalism’ of post-structuralism and postmodernism (Pätomaki and Wight, 2000: 214) – have sought to essentially *invert* the relationship between theory (or, more broadly, discourse/text/narrative) and perception.<sup>10</sup> Julie Graham, for instance, writes that ‘theory cannot be validated on the basis of its correspondence to the ‘real world’ [...] The criteria for validating some thoughts

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<sup>10</sup> Such perspectives have their historical roots in Nietzschean perspectivism. Nietzsche disputed ‘that knowledge is free from individual interests. He emphasized that the act of knowing is rooted in our affective constitution, or, in a better known phrase, that logos is entwined with eros’ (Danermark [et al], 2002: 8)



rather than others are internal to a theory' (quoted in Sayer, 2000: 69). Such claims have been made by Michel Foucault as well, who seems – at least at times – to imply that it is not by reference to an independently-existing world that the status of a claim is determined. Rather, this process is understood to occur *within* theory/discourse/text/narrative itself. This is the case, from a Foucaultian perspective, because power and knowledge are implicated in one another, or even reducible to each other<sup>11</sup>, and the 'regimes of truth' which result from this relationship are characterized by *internal* criteria for deciding the status of knowledge claims (Foucault, 1984: 73, see also Reyna and Schiller, 1998: 337). As such ideas have gained in influence, 'they have contributed to a growing consensus that the concept of truth tells us little more than that a given person or group of people for some non-cognitive reason prefers to believe that x.' (Groff, 2007: 4). Indeed, as power and knowledge have increasingly become equated 'the concepts of truth and reality' have ceased to have any 'genuine denotative meaning. They are simply words that philosophers (and others) use in order to impose their wills on others' (ibid).

Even when these more radical claims have not been accepted, however, the role of theory/discourse/text/narrative has been increasingly problematized. As Edward Said argued more than twenty-five years ago, discourse itself has become 'an object of philological attention', and is now often understood as being opaque rather than transparent (1989: 206). Indeed, words are no longer considered 'a transparent medium through which Being' shines, but, instead, are claimed to 'neutralize and inhibit any attempt at representing reality mimetically' (ibid). Such arguments are central especially to post-structural approaches, which, as Marieke

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<sup>11</sup> Among interpreters of Foucault's work there seems to exist a difference of opinion concerning this issue. Mills, for instance, argues that, for Foucault, it is never a matter of emancipating truth from power 'but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time' (Foucault in Mills, 2003: 75). Dreyfus and Rabinow, however, argue that Foucault should not be read as arguing that science is 'a mere product of power' (1983: 177). Rather, they portray him as a critic of 'those "pseudosciences" or "near sciences" – fundamentally the human sciences – which he has chosen as his object of study' (ibid).

de Goede argues, seek to collapse ‘the epistemological distinction between the realms of the ‘ideal’ and the ‘material’ on the grounds that reality outside language is not *knowable*’ (2006: 115). Such claims are a prominent feature, for instance, of Derrida’s work, who famously argued that ‘there is nothing outside of the text’ (in Morton, 2003: 18). This statement is *not* to be read as denying that there exists a world of material objects, but, rather, refers to the idea that ‘there is no essential difference between language and the world’ (ibid). Both ‘language’ and ‘the world’ are, after all, simply ‘privileged signs that are part of a larger, irreducible system of linguistic and non-linguistic ‘marks’’ (ibid). Such claims undermine the dualism of ‘theory’ and ‘world’ which these approaches have argued is inherent to positivism, and – importantly – seek to replace this dualism with a relationship of *identity* (‘the-same-ness’).

It should be noted, however, that the emphasis on discourse is not exclusive to post-structural or postmodern approaches. Indeed, a similar orientation is adopted by approaches which claim that the world should be understood in terms of Wittgensteinian ‘language games’. Peter Winch (2007), for instance, has famously denied that science can in fact test hypotheses against the facts of an independent world. He argued, instead, that our ideas ‘of what belongs to the realm of reality’ are ‘given for us in the language that we use. The concepts we have settle for us the form of the experience we have of the world’ (ibid: 15). These concepts, as Hollis points out, ‘come complete with criteria for deciding the truth of statements describing a realm of reality [...] Prediction and causal explanation are [therefore] indeed proper activities for natural sciences, since that form of life includes ideas of reality which make them appropriate rules of method. But natural science is a ‘game’, and only one game among others’ (1994: 155-156). Other cultures may, indeed, choose to simply disregard our ‘scientific’ language game, and explaining illness by means of witchcraft or the influenza virus should therefore be considered equally valid (Winch, 1964).

Even when these kinds of radical claims have been rejected, however, the increasing problematization of theory/discourse/text/narrative has resulted in significant attention being paid to the ways in which it affects/organizes our understanding of the world. This has involved, in particular, a focus on the ways in which *binary oppositions* function in the way we think. Drawing on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (2013) and Jacques Derrida (1998), post-structuralist approaches have shown that ‘the process of making meaning (signification) is structured in terms of how signs *differ* from other signs’ (Morton, 2003: 26). That is to say, these approaches have shown that the concepts we use are always defined in relation to *what they are not*: self/other, here/there, east/west, etc. This has allowed these approaches to explore the binaries which inform positivism, and has resulted in critiques of the oppositions which it employs: from modernity/tradition, to knower/known, science/theology, science/common sense, and theory/world. Such oppositions, it is argued, suppress the ‘ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories, so that any overlapping region that may appear [...] becomes impossible’ (Ashcroft [et al], 1998: 23). Positivism is therefore held responsible for overstating the difference between these notions, and – in contrast with the notion of *identity* (‘the-same-ness’) which post-structuralism proposes – is understood to provide us with a *dualistic* approach to the philosophy of science.

In addition to overstating difference in this manner, however, it is also claimed that positivism employs many of the aforementioned oppositions in a *hierarchical* manner, by systematically favouring science/modernity over tradition, theology, common sense, etc. Such claims are part of a broader group of arguments, developed by approaches which have applied the aforementioned insight into the binary makeup of discourse/signification to a range of substantive issues. These issues include, in particular, the relationship between men and women (as theorized by gender-studies) and the relationship between the Global North and

the Global South (as theorized by decolonial/postcolonial approaches). Such relations are not just informed by various binary oppositions – like masculinity/femininity and modernity/tradition – but, it is argued, also represent important hierarchies: the male/masculine is systematically favoured over the female/feminine (Carver, 2006), and the modern is systematically favoured over the traditional/primitive (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010). When such analyses have been applied to the hierarchized binaries which *positivism* employs, however, it has often resulted in extremely unfavourable views of the nature of science. This is the case because the aforementioned approaches have often understood science as representing the *dominant* side of the binary. The side, that is, which represents male and/or Global Northern supremacy, and remains engaged in the domination/exploitation of women and the Global South (McCall, 2005; Gandhi, 1998; Bhambra, 2011: 653-654).

Such claims flow from a number of related, and increasingly influential, ideas. The first of these is most closely associated with postmodern approaches to feminism, and involves the claim that science systematically favours stereotypically *masculine* qualities (Sylvester, 2001). That is to say, these approaches have argued that science favours ‘hard’ qualities – like certainty, reason and logic – while dismissing ‘softer’ (and more ‘feminine’) qualities – like empathy, creativity and intuition – as imprecise/un-rigorous. This has the effect of sidelining knowledge claims which are rooted in such ‘feminine’ qualities, and entails that scientific knowledge is little more than a tool of male/masculinist domination. This claim is, however, only a single part of a much *broader* critique of science-derived epistemic authority. This critique has sought to draw attention to the fact that science allows its practitioners – mostly (white, heterosexual) men, located in the Global North – to make knowledge claims which, *irrespective of the context they are made in*, are recognized as authoritative. Knowledge claims, that is, which are capable of overruling, delegitimizing or disregarding the merely

‘commonsensical’ or ‘traditional’ claims of women and ‘underdeveloped’ populations, and replacing these claims with the ‘objective’ and ‘universal’ truths which only modern science can provide.<sup>12</sup> This is considered problematic as it provides scientists with a level of epistemic authority which many critical approaches have felt they are not in fact entitled to. Rather than providing us with objective and universal truths, these approaches have argued that scientific/modernist pronouncements are in fact as *subjective* and *particular* as any other claims. The only difference between the particularity/subjectivity of ‘scientific’ statements and the particularity/subjectivity of ‘non-scientific’ statements, it is claimed, is the fact that ‘science’ can depend on the greater *power* which men/the modern world possess (McCall, 2005: 1776). This has allowed them to claim that its systems of knowledge, and its approaches to knowledge-production, are universal (or even ‘natural’), while assigning the claims of ‘non-scientists’ to the dustbin of history. As Tony Lawson has argued, however, the ‘values, experiences, objectives, and common-sense interpretations of dominant groups may be merely that; there is nothing especially natural or necessarily universal about them’ (1999: 25).

Many critical approaches have therefore sought, instead, to revalorize various types of ‘subjugated knowledges’. This notion derives from the work of Michel Foucault, and refers to ‘knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, [and] knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity’ (2003: 7). These may not stand up to positivist scrutiny, but – it is argued – nonetheless contain various types of important (and even emancipatory) insights. Indeed, while some critical approaches have

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<sup>12</sup> As for instance Slater has argued, the modernist presumption of Northern supremacy ‘goes together with a silencing of the non-Western other. There is incorporation, inclusion, coercion but only infrequently an acknowledgement that the ideas of colonized people should be known’ (2004: 223). Post-colonialism, instead, poses ‘a series of questions concerning the location and differential impact of the *agents* of knowledge’, ‘consider[s] the thematic silences present in influential Western discourses’ and ‘challenges the pervasive tendency to ignore the contributions of African, Asian and Latin American intellectuals and their counter-representations of West/non-West relations’ (ibid).

sought simply to *qualify* the scientific knowledge/non-scientific knowledge binary which informs positivism – and others have sought to include the formerly excluded into processes of scientific knowledge production in order to (i) overcome the positivist neglect of the *identity* of the scientist, and (ii) create a more representative form of enquiry (Haraway, 1988; Peterson, 1992; Carver, 2006) – others have sought to *invert* or *collapse* it. Such strategies are characteristic of especially the *hermeneutic* tradition (Gadamer, 2013; Winch, 2007), and have often resulted in a kind of ‘interpretive fundamentalism’ (Hartwig, 2007: 232), which claims that common sense/theological knowledge is either to be *favoured* over scientific knowledge, or that the distinction should simply be *abandoned*.<sup>13</sup>

Whichever strategy has been favoured, however, it deserves emphasis that the more radical claims amount to a complete inversion of modernist hopes. This is the case for two main reasons. The first of these concerns the fact that such radical claims undermine the idea that positivist science can in fact provide us with the secure, universal, and objective knowledge which is required in order to justify the (epistemic) authority of the PDM. In addition to this, however, these claims also undermine the modernist idea that emancipation is dependent on the development of scientific knowledge. This is the case because many of the aforementioned approaches have sought to replace the Enlightenment understanding of science as a tool of emancipation with an understanding of science as a tool of (male, Global Northern/modernist, etc.) domination and exploitation. If a more emancipated future is to be achieved at all, therefore, it now appears to be dependent on the *subversion* of scientific claims by various types of subjugated knowledges.<sup>14</sup> Such claims are not, however, easily

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<sup>13</sup> This strategy has been especially prominent within anthropology, where the damage that has been done by modernist science has, to many, seemed particularly large (Gardner and Lewis, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> As Reyna and Schiller have shown, such claims reflect much older (but largely forgotten) discussions between what they term a ‘Smithsonian’ and a ‘Rousseauian’ tradition. Whereas the first of these traditions (named after Adam Smith) has embraced the idea that ‘knowledge is power’, the Rousseauian tradition (named, of course, after

reconcilable with the apparent successes of the natural sciences, and other critical approaches have therefore at times been dismissive towards the approaches which have made them. Whatever level of critique they have favoured, however, it should be noted that all of the critical approaches which have been discussed so far result in an understanding of science which is firmly at odds with empiricism, and places human consciousness, human identities and human interests centre-stage. This is not, however, the only way in which empiricism has been problematized by these approaches. Indeed, as the following few sections will show, the critiques which these approaches have developed are in fact much broader in nature.

Perhaps the primary criticism which they have put forth, however, concerns the idea that what is not empirical (or ‘metaphysical’) may nonetheless be important. Such claims have been applied to a number of issues, but one of the key areas of focus has been the issue of *causation* (Kurki, 2007). This is an important element of the critique of empiricism as, ‘strictly speaking, empiricism does not allow us to talk about causes since these are unobservable’ (Smith, 1996: 19). The best that positivism can do, therefore, is talk about events which are *conjoined*, while eschewing notions of *connection* altogether. This idea has a long historical lineage, but is especially associated with the skeptical form of empiricism which was developed by David Hume (2009). Hume contended that, since empirical knowledge is the only legitimate means of providing us with access to the world, we cannot presume to actually know anything about *natural necessity*. All we can know by means of empirical information, he argued, is an experienced union of events. He concluded, however, that this was sufficient, and that we may proceed to understand a cause as ‘[a]n object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all objects resembling the former are placed in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects that resemble the latter’ (ibid:

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau) has consistently argued that ‘that power creates knowledge and knowledge [...] can be used to help develop and maintain worse societies’ (1998: 336).

274-275). This formulation – though it does not deny the existence of natural necessity as such – does shift our focus from *causation* to *correlation*, and positivist authors have therefore often limited themselves to *prediction* rather than *explanation* (Kurki, 2007: 47). Even our predictions may turn out to be deceptive, however, as a result of the adoption of an empiricist epistemological position. This is the case for two main reasons. The *first* of these concerns the fact that correlations may lead us in misleading directions with regard to the search for causal relationships. Indeed, as is common knowledge, it is quite possible ‘to get the best predictive results on the basis of a spurious correlation. As the rate of inflation has correlated more strongly with the incidence of Scottish dysentery than the money supply, [for instance,] the former would have proved a better predictor of inflation than the latter’ (Sayer, 2010: 90). Although an ‘explanation’ of the rate of inflation by means of the incidence of Scottish dysentery is of course entirely at odds with our intuitions about the ways in which causation operates, such explanations are perfectly compatible with the adoption of a strict empiricist approach. Against Hume, therefore, empirical regularity does *not* in fact seem sufficient for the establishment of causal relationships.

Such problems are only reinforced, however, by the *second* reason that our predictions may turn out to be deceptive. This reason is rooted in the problem of empirical verification itself, and is referred to as the problem of induction. This problem was most famously described (again) by David Hume, who argued that inductive reasoning – as employed when positivists attempt to make predictions/generalize on the basis of limited numbers of empirical observations – is circular in nature. We might argue, for instance, that past regularities - say, the sun rising every morning - allow us to legitimately predict that the sun will rise again the next morning. As Hume pointed out, however, this requires that we commit to the ‘uniformity’ principle (Bhaskar, 2008: 32). That is to say, we must assume that the natural



world will behave in the same manner tomorrow as it has in the past. This assumption *itself* makes use of inductive logic, however, and we cannot (without circularity) use inductive logic to prove the legitimacy of using inductive logic. This analysis result in a situation which suggests that – in order to achieve certainty with regard to prediction/generalization – it is necessary to eliminate the limited nature of our sample; or, in other words, this *it demands that we empirically verify every instance of the manifestation of the postulated law* (Jackson, 2011: 12). Now, it is important to note that no scientist, natural, social or otherwise, either *can* provide or *has* ever provided this kind of conclusive empirical verification of a postulated covering law. If the Humean critique of inductive reasoning is correct, therefore, we run the risk of invalidating the most commonly accepted statements about the ways in which the world operates. Take, for instance, the principle of universal gravitation. Newton did not, of course, come to his conclusions by examining the behavior of every single body in the entire universe but, rather, made an inductive inference on the basis of a *limited* sample, and claimed that the principle applied to *all* bodies (Okasha, 2002: 22). If the problem of induction is real, however, positivist scientists cannot claim with any credibility that the principle of universal gravitation (i) does in fact apply to all bodies everywhere, and (ii) that it will continue to do so in the future. As much of the sciences depend on making exactly these kinds of inductive inferences, however, the problem of induction would seem to render their conclusions extremely suspect. We might argue, indeed, that science relies more on making a blind leap of faith than it does on the ‘rational’ principles which the Enlightenment favored.

Such problems have, however, also inspired the one major alternative to positivist inductivism which is in fact compatible with empiricism. This alternative – usually termed *critical rationalism* – is most closely associated with the work of Karl Popper (2002a, 2002b, 2002c). Popper’s approach – although it is often incorporated into positivism – differs in one key

respect: it seeks to sidestep the problem of induction by putting forth a philosophy of science which relies solely on the use of *deductive* logic (Kurki, 2007: 48; Blaikie, 2010: 98). If we cannot reliably generalize on the basis of limited samples of empirical evidence, Popper argues, it is still possible to prove that a theory is *false* by means of empirical evidence. If we cannot *prove* (empirically verify) the thesis that all pieces of metal conduct electricity on the basis of an inevitably limited sample, for instance, we may still be able to *disprove* it by experiencing a falsifying instance of the postulated law (i.e. by finding a piece of metal which does *not* conduct electricity) (Okasha, 2002: 23). This allows us to *deductively* disprove the particular law that we are concerned with, as Popper argues that we can uncontroversially move from ‘this piece of metal does not conduct electricity’ to ‘it is false that all pieces of metal conduct electricity’ (ibid). Scientific progress can therefore be made on the basis of the ongoing ‘conjecture and refutation’ (Popper, 2002b) of postulated scientific laws. Once the existence of a law is proposed (conjectured) and then falsified (refuted) it may be safely discarded, and alternative laws may be put forth to replace it. If we are unable to falsify a conjectured law, however, we may continue to assume that it in fact holds.

While this may appear to resolve an important philosophical problem, it should be noted that the critical rationalist approach comes with a new set of problems as well. This is the case because the position which Popper adopts entails that much of what currently qualifies as science would not continue to do so any longer. At the level of the natural sciences, for instance, it requires that we disqualify the tenets of evolutionary biology, as its objects of analysis are *necessarily* unpredictable (and hence do not allow for predictive accuracy). Indeed, Popper, for this exact reason, considered Darwinian evolution to be a ‘metaphysical research program’ rather than a scientific theory (2002c: 195). This diagnosis seems particularly applicable, however, to the social sciences, where the systematic adoption of

Popper's approach would have a profound impact. Most, if not all, forms of social enquiry would seem to be entirely undeserving of their claims to being scientific if the criterion for demarcating science from non-science is predictive success. There is, however, an even more important problem with the approach which Popper develops. A problem, that is, which results from his failure to successfully sidestep the use of inductive logic. As we have seen, Popper presents refutations of a conjectured law as important moments in the scientific enterprise. They are, indeed, 'meant to be unmistakable moments of truth, even if the truth is the negative one that a theory is false' (Hollis, 1994: 76). Yet, as Hollis points out, 'there cannot possibly be such decisive moments, unless we are sure that the same would always occur if the test were repeated. But that depends on an inductive inference from the present occasion to the next. Otherwise why not simply try again? Deny the soundness of induction, and we have no reason to eliminate a theory just because its predictions have not been upheld on particular occasions' (ibid). Both the critical rationalist (deductivist/falsificationist) and the positivist (inductivist/verificationist) approaches therefore seem problematic, leaving both the scientific enterprise - and the PDM more generally – in a situation of some disarray.

The problems which result from the positivist approach do not end here, however. Indeed, critical approaches have developed a number of additional critiques which purport to show that positivism provides us with an extremely inadequate philosophical framework. A number of these critiques have been developed by historians of science – most prominently Thomas Kuhn (1996) – who launched important attacks on the positivist understanding of the natural sciences. In particular, Kuhn challenged the presumption that science is a *cumulative* and *linear* enterprise. This is of the utmost importance, as such an understanding of science seems to flow from the 'spectator conception of experience' (Collier, 1994: 75) which is adopted by positivism. If all that is required in order to answer a particular question is (additional)

empirical information, after all, scientific progress can be expected to progress in the aforementioned manner. Kuhn showed, however, that this has not been the case. Phases which are characterized by the every-day practice of science, and which he termed ‘normal’ science, are – as a result of the mounting up of contradictions – occasionally interrupted by periods of ‘revolutionary’ science. These phases wipe away what was previously considered scientific common sense, and replace it with what will eventually become an entirely *new* common sense. This process, he showed, has consistently occurred and re-occurred throughout the history of the sciences and, importantly, is unintelligible from a positivist perspective.

Kuhn’s work sought, therefore, to challenge a number of the propositions which are central to the positivist approach. This includes, in particular, the *humanistic* (rational and free-thinking/autonomous) account of the scientist/human being which it has traditionally adopted. In place of this assumption he argued that our access to the world is shaped to a significant extent by the intellectual ‘paradigm’ within which we are located.<sup>15</sup> While the nature of his actual position remains controversial, Kuhn seems to have come very close to believing that the development of the natural sciences should be understood as a series of *incommensurable* ‘paradigm shifts’, leaving little or no room for the scientific progress which was previously assumed to result more-or-less automatically from our adoption of a positivist approach.<sup>16</sup> His position is therefore often described as ‘conventionalist’, and tends towards a kind of

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<sup>15</sup> Intellectually, a paradigm consists of a number of basic (and unquestioned) ideas about the character of the world and the manner in which it is to be studied. These ideas shape our practice without us (usually) being aware of them. Institutionally, paradigms are maintained by means of social mechanisms. Science, Kuhn argued, is a highly organized and socially embedded activity. The fact that this is the case shapes its practice and can be seen, for instance, in the fact that science is also a highly politicized activity. It is not, in other words, an exercise in unbiased exploration, but ‘an industry with investors to satisfy [...] This usually means pleasing the government, whose aims are not disinterested. Those who pay the piper call the tune’ (Hollis, 1994: 86).

<sup>16</sup> In ‘The Structure of Scientific Revolutions’ Kuhn states, for instance, that ‘[t]he historian of science may be tempted to claim that when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them. Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places [...] during revolutions, scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before’ (1996: 35-36). On page 120, as well, he states that ‘[t]hough the world does not change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world. [...] I am convinced that we must learn to make sense of statements that at least resemble these. What occurs during a scientific revolution is not fully reducible to a re-interpretation of individual and stable data. In the first place, the data are not unequivocally stable’ (ibid).

*inversion* of humanism which claims that it is not the individual scientist/human being who ‘knows’, but the (scientific) community. Kuhn’s claims are, however, only one manifestation of a much broader critique of the humanism which is inherent to the PDM. Indeed, recent decades have witnessed the increasing prominence of a broad group of approaches which are often described as *anti-humanist*. These approaches – whether in their *structuralist* (Levi-Strauss (1974), Althusser (2008), de Saussure (2013), Lacan (2007), etc.) or their *post-structuralist* (Foucault (1991), Derrida (1998), Butler (2006), etc.) manifestations – have sought to reverse ‘the argument of traditional epistemology and, instead of a being interpreting a world’, see ‘a being formed by tacit know-how which is prior to interpretation of facts, events, or data’ (Smith, 1996: 26). Indeed, more strongly, these approaches have sought to portray the human subject as ‘a decentred contingency which cannot transcend its socio-historical location’ (Cruikshank, 2007: 1), and have understood its consciousness as an *effect* rather than a *cause* of social structures (discourse, ideology, etc) (Ashcroft [et al], 1998: 220 and 8). As Foucault writes in ‘*What is an author?*’ (1984), for instance, the intention of his essay is to deprive ‘the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator’, and, instead, to conceptualize ‘the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse’ (Foucault in *ibid*: 118; see also Barthes, 1993).

These strategies seem to overcome a number of problems which result from the *voluntarism* that is inherent to humanist perspectives – a quality which is often associated with the work of Max Weber (2013) – but it deserves emphasis that the anti-humanist position runs into a number of its own problems as well. These revolve around two issues in particular. The first of these concerns a prominent issue in the philosophy of (social) science, which is generally referred to as *reification*. This concept has, historically, functioned as the dialectical antagonist of Weberian/humanistic voluntarism, and refers to a process by means of which

'human powers, social relations and products, or human beings themselves, are transformed into (non-social, fixed, naturalized) things that appear to be independent of people's control' (Hartwig, 2007: 409). This process is now strongly associated with collectivist forms of sociological explanation – which emphasize the determining role of 'social facts' – and is often explicitly linked with the work of Émile Durkheim (2008). This work is, however, often considered to be problematic, as it seems to reduce the life of human agents to a passive encounter with forces which (i) do not depend on them for their existence, and (ii) cannot be affected by them. This raises a troubling question: if these forces have not themselves been produced by human agents, and cannot be affected by them either, then from where do they arise? Indeed, if agents are simply the *effect* of these forces, and not a *cause* of them, must we presume that they exist even when/where human activity is not occurring? This has, to many, seemed unlikely, and has therefore undermined the 'reified' claims which anti-humanist (structuralist/post-structuralist) approaches have developed as well.

The problem of reification is, however, only the first problem which an adoption of these approaches results in. A second problem derives from the fact that anti-humanist claims about the role of social structures (discourses, ideologies, etc) are fundamentally at odds with the empiricism which positivism has argued is necessary for 'real' science. This is the case, in short, because the adoption of an empiricist position rules out 'any consideration of (unobservable) entities like social, economic or international structures, or even social facts' (Smith, 1996: 19).<sup>17</sup> While anti-humanist approaches may therefore appear to be an analytical

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<sup>17</sup> Importantly, the concept of social structure – throughout this project – does *not* refer to scale (as in, 'large-scale structural change', for instance). Rather, social structure refers to the existence/reality of *social* entities. That is, the concept refers to the existence/reality of something which is irreducible to individual agents, but which may exist at any scale. Or as Danermark [et al] (2002: 47) have put it: 'structures not only refer to macro conditions, despite the fact that much of social science literature gives that impression. We can analyse social structures at all levels and in any area: organizational structures, small group structures, the social structures of the dyad or the triad, the structures of street life, communication structures, linguistic structures, personality structures, and so on'.

advance on the humanism/voluntarism which is inherent to positivism, it should also be noted that these approaches are fundamentally incompatible with the idea of science, at least as this concept is defined by the positivist approach. This conclusion has, however, been embraced by some of its proponents, and anti-humanism can therefore be placed within the broader critiques of science which were developed by critical approaches. These approaches have argued that when empiricism is used as the epistemological basis for our enquiries, it allows us to develop knowledge concerning only a very limited part of the world which we inhabit. This is the case, again, because it does not allow us to study the social structures (whether material, inter-subjective or otherwise) that Marxists, constructivists, and feminists tend to refer to in their explanations.

Whether the aforementioned problems have resulted in an explicit rejection of science or not, however, critiques of humanism have clearly made a significant impact in recent decades. Kuhnian/conventionalist claims about the natural sciences have, furthermore, had a profound impact on approaches with a Critical Theoretical orientation as well. It is now common to find claims like those by Mark Neufeld, who argues that empirical verification should be understood as relative, in the sense that it is fundamentally ‘intraparadigmatic (and not interparadigmatic) in nature’ (2001: 130). While such claims have not been accepted by all Critical Theorists, the authors associated with this approach *have* tended to echo critiques of humanism by stressing the social nature of knowledge/knowledge-production. From Jürgen Habermas (1986) to Robert Cox (1981, 1983) and Andrew Linklater (1990, 1996), these authors have claimed that it is ‘human needs and purposes which determine what counts as valuable knowledge’ (Linklater, 1996: 281) and that ‘theory is always *for* someone or *for* some purpose’ (Cox, 1981: 128). Indeed, as Linklater emphasizes, Critical Theoretical approaches are united by the idea ‘that knowledge about society is incomplete if it lacks

emancipatory purpose' (1996: 281). This has led many of its authors to argue that the discovery of positivist 'covering laws' is by no means *the point* of the human/social sciences. Drawing on Horkheimer's distinction between 'critical' and 'traditional' theory (1975), they have aimed to show that positivism results in a 'naturalization' of what is actually socio-historical. That is to say, positivist social science is argued to result in a depiction of the human/social world as a realm which is ruled by a Comtean 'social physics', thereby creating an air of *necessity* and *inevitability* where there is in fact *choice* and *volition* (Linklater, 1996).

Such claims have had a significant impact on various disciplines in the human/social sciences, and have an obvious appeal for critically-oriented authors, but it should be noted that they are – again – rife with problems. These problems fall into two broad, and interconnected, categories. The first of these concerns the notion of covering laws, and raises a number of questions about their remit. This is the case because – if it is true that (i) the discovery of covering laws is not the point of the human/social sciences, and (ii) the human/social realm is uniquely characterized by choice/volition – *the Critical Theoretical framework would seem to restrict the remit of covering laws to the natural world*. This is extremely problematic, as it leaves unanswered the question of what – if anything – governs the human/social world. In addition to this, however, it also raises an important question about the positivist demarcation of science from non-science by means of a *predictive* criterion. As Colin Hay has argued, '[i]f one is prepared to acknowledge that human agency does inject an inherent indeterminacy and contingency into all social systems, then this poses a fundamental and largely insurmountable problem for a predictive science of the political modeled upon the natural sciences' (2002: 50). It seems, therefore, that we must either *reject* the Critical Theoretical emphasis on agency, and include the human/social realm within the remit of covering laws, or *embrace* this emphasis, and deny the scientific status of enquiries into these realms.



Neither option seems particularly appealing, but a number of important intellectual dynamics have, throughout the last few decades, created an increasing impetus towards the second option. Of particular importance in this regard is the common observation that, unlike the phenomena which are studied by physics, human/social events do not seem to recur (Gorski, 2009). That is to say, concrete events – like the Great Crash of 1929 or the Angolan civil war – do not appear to recur in their geographically and historically specific form. Rather, human/social events seem to be unique and non-repeatable in a way that, for instance, celestial movements (and hence the tides of the ocean) are not. Such observations have been theorized in a variety of ways (see for instance: Tilly, 1995; Hay, 2002), but a number of the most influential approaches – those now grouped together (rather imperfectly) as post-structuralism – have argued in favour of what is essentially an *inversion* of positivist covering laws. That is to say, these approaches have attempted to supplant the positivist ontology of deterministic, mechanistic, universalistic, and unchanging covering laws with an ontology that, instead, stresses indeterminacy, particularity, change, and flux.<sup>18</sup>

This ontological position appears to make better sense of the non-repeating/changing nature of human/social events, and, furthermore, seems to better account for the enormous diversity which characterizes human/social life.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted, however, that an adoption of the post-structuralist ontology also results in a complete collapse of the positivist idea that the human/social world can in fact be studied scientifically. This is the case, of course, because this undermines (i) the idea that *prediction* – a key criterion for demarcating science from

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<sup>18</sup> These types of arguments are not, however, exclusive to post-structuralism. Indeed, they have a much longer historical lineage. As Steinmetz has shown, '[t]he longer-term antecedents of this line of reasoning reach back to 18th- and 19th-century Romanticism, historicism, German historical economics, and ethnology' (2004: 386). Indeed, more radically, we might trace such sentiments back to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, who insisted on the constant presence of change, and famously argued that no person ever steps in the same river twice (see Norrie, 2010, chapter 7, for a discussion of the origins of this idea)

<sup>19</sup> Though it deserves emphasis that most post-structural approaches have not applied this type of ontology to the human/social realm alone. Rather, it is thought to apply to the entire world, whether natural, social, or otherwise.

non-science according to the positivist approach – is a feasible aim, and (ii) the idea that *generalization* – ‘the lifeblood of social science as a cultural formation’ (Connell, 2010: 207) – is a viable intellectual strategy. Such ideas have had a powerful impact even among *critics* of post-structuralism, as – increasingly – it has appeared to be the only approach which seriously engages with/attempts to theorize the change and unrepeatability/uniqueness which seems to characterize the human/social realm. These are, after all, key themes, whatever we may think of the post-structural approach as a whole, as even the most ardent critic of its positions may wish to come to terms with *change* in order to (i) allow for the agency which Critical Theoretical approaches have stressed, and (ii) allow for the possibility of an emancipation from current conditions. As noted, however, this strategy comes at a high price: the impossibility of developing a predictive *science* of the human/social realms which is modeled on the natural sciences. Whatever gains the adoption of a post-structural or Critical Theoretical framework may result in, therefore, these approaches also result in a number of new questions and issues. Indeed, in addition to raising a range of questions about the remit of covering laws and scientific enquiry, these approaches also create a *second* category of problems. This category includes, in particular, questions about the intellectual viability of both *ontological monism* and methodological *naturalism*.

The first of these concerns revolves around two issues in particular: the issue of *agency* and the issue of *meaning*. These are both of key importance as, arguably, they are unintelligible from the monistic perspective which is favoured by certain positivist approaches. With regard to the issue of agency, for instance, the apparent capacity of human beings for *intentional* action seems incompatible with the desire to develop a fully-developed science of matter. This is the case, in short, because ontological monism demands that, ultimately, the qualities and powers of human beings are reducible to those which are possessed by the material world.

These qualities and powers do not, however, appear to match the powers and qualities of human beings: whereas much of the material world seems static and inanimate, human beings seem decidedly dynamic and animate. This raises an important question, posed most eloquently by Ludwig Wittgenstein: ‘what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from that fact that I raise my arm?’ (2009: 169). The answer would appear to have something to do with the fact that there is a distinction between an *action* (which involves intentionality/acting on reasons) and a *movement* (which is unintentional/does not involve acting on reasons). This argumentational strategy is not available to us, however, if we adopt the monistic position which certain positivist approaches have sought to maintain.

Many critical approaches to studying the human/social world have therefore attempted to show that human beings are, in some way or other, radically distinct from the material world (Crompton, 2008: 17). This is referred to as *ontological dualism*, and is the single most important historical alternative to *ontological monism*. Importantly, it has seemed, to various types of people, to better account for the unique qualities and powers which are possessed by human beings – often grouped together under the notion of ‘mind’ – as it creates a clear demarcation between the human and the material worlds. This has made it popular among critics of the PDM, who have often sought to reclaim the distinctiveness of humanity by developing ‘idealist’ critiques of ‘materialism’.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted, however, that this feature has made it popular among a much wider group of people as well. This group has a much longer historical lineage, and has often included proponents of various religious faiths. These faiths have sought to make the most of the apparent limits of ontological monism, and have

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<sup>20</sup> As Parry points out, however, the intelligibility of agency has also been a feature of discussions *within* analytical traditions. She writes, for instance, that ‘the dispute between Althusser and Sartre hinged on the problem of theorizing agency in historical materialist terms: whereas Althusser’s theory of historical structures and their transformation through a variety of social practices both retained the primacy of objective conditions in relations of production, and situated the subject as the effect and the bearer of structures, Sartre accommodated voluntarism and intentionality by grounding the intelligibility of history in praxis’ (2004: 76).

developed various dualistic accounts to replace it. These accounts have defended notions like ‘free will’ against the blanket determinism which results from monistic forms of materialism, and – in what is sometimes referred to as *Manichean* Christianity – have sought to dichotomize/oppose the realms of flesh and spirit.<sup>21</sup> While such approaches have a number of advantages when it comes to developing a concern with qualities/powers which seem particular to human beings, their philosophical position is also problematic. This is the case, again, because the analytical gains which they allow us to make come at a high price: either we allow for the reality of agency, while we exclude human beings from the realm of science, or the tenets of science remain intact, and we deny the human reality of intentionality as simply a post-hoc rationalization.

This conclusion applies to a second prominent form of ontological dualism – which has concerned itself primarily with the study of *meaning* – as well. This discipline is usually referred to as semiotics, and has often sought to problematize monistic forms of materialism by drawing attention to the fact that human beings ‘not only sense the surrounding world as other creatures do’, but are distinctive in that they create elaborate systems of cultural meaning as well (Macionis and Plummer, 2008: 100). Such meanings, it is claimed, ‘are never inherent in objects but are constructed around them through a series of [discursive/linguistic] practices’ (ibid: 101). Like the aforementioned claims about agency/intentionality, such claims serve to set the human/social/cultural world apart from the material world, and meaning-oriented approaches have therefore often been extremely sceptical about the possibility of studying ‘culture’ in a ‘scientific’ manner.

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<sup>21</sup> As Aschcroft [et al] write, the term Manicheism ‘is adapted from the ‘Manichaeism’ of the third century AD which propounded a dualistic theology, according to which Satan was represented as co-eternal with God. Matter was evil and God by His nature could not intervene in the world of evil matter. Thus Christ could not have been born into the flesh and had to be only spirit – a heresy against the doctrine of Christ’s dual nature as both Man and God. The implication that the two realms of spirit and matter were always and eternally separate and could never be linked implies an extreme form of binary structure’ (1998: 133-134)

Indeed, the embrace of ontological dualism has often resulted in the explicit adoption of an *anti-naturalist* methodological orientation. This orientation involves the claim that, while human beings/the social world may indeed be studied, these realms cannot be studied by means of *scientific* methods. There are a number of varieties of this argument, but perhaps the most important among them claims that the distinctive properties of human beings/the social world add an important dimension to the aforementioned debate about covering laws. Concretely, this particular variety of anti-naturalism has claimed that, even if we do uncover covering laws in the behavior of human beings, we have not necessarily *understood* this behaviour. This is the case because it is perfectly possible for instances of the *same* behavior to express an entirely *different* meaning. The meaning of winking at someone, to use an example made famous by Clifford Geertz (1973: 6-7), cannot be ascertained by means of a reference to the material movement which occurs. Rather, the meaning of the physical act of contracting one's eyelids – ranging from flirtation to joking and conspiratorial signaling – can only be understood by means of a reference to (i) the intention of the person involved, and (ii) its location in spatiotemporally specific 'webs of significance' (ibid: 5).

Finding out what kind of meaning is expressed would, however, require that we make use of methods which are interpretive/hermeneutic (and generally qualitative) in nature, and hence undermines the positivist/naturalist claim that enquiries into these realms can be *scientific*. Such conclusions are reinforced by the fact that the mentalistic language of psychology (which refers to intentions/agency/reasons for action, etc) seems radically different from the materialist language of, say, physiology. It is this which Winch aimed to get across, when he wrote that '[t]o discover the motives of a puzzling action is to increase our understanding of that action; that is what 'understanding' means as applied to human behaviour. But this is something we in fact discover without any significant knowledge about people's

physiological states; therefore our accounts of their motives can have nothing to do with their physiological states.’ (2007: 78). Such arguments have, at times, resulted in a split between advocates of (i) a causal/law-based/positivist approach to the human/social sciences, and (ii) non-causal/constitutive/meaning-based approaches. The latter have argued that causal forms of explanation are not in fact appropriate for the human/social sciences at all, but have – instead – claimed that a sharp distinction needs to be made between the positivist idea of *explaining* human behaviour ‘through causal analysis that seeks general patterns’ and the interpretive/hermeneutic idea of non-causally *understanding* human behaviour by ‘inquiring into the constitution of meaning and the ‘reasons for’ particular actions’ (Kurki, 2007: 4). Importantly, these approaches have tended to argue that the two approaches – whatever their relative merits may be – are fundamentally incompatible. We are, in other words, unable to make the jump from *particles* to *people/politics* (Blyth, 2010: 173; Schmitt, 2010; Hollis and Smith, 1991). While some authors have sought a way out of this dilemma by claiming that the differences between the natural world and the human/social world are not in fact as large as was previously imagined (Santos, 2007; Dillon, 2000)<sup>22</sup> the influence of these approaches has remained minimal.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

This leaves the idea of science – along with the PDM more generally – in a state of disarray: every single feature of the positivist approach – from its *foundationalism*, to its *humanism*, *empiricism*, *inductivism*, and *naturalism* – has been systematically problematized, critiqued and/or overturned. The attempts by critical approaches to transcend these positions have,

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<sup>22</sup> Boaventura de Sousa Santos, for instance, writes that: ‘Today the world is natural or social, tomorrow it will be both, and will be looked at as if it were a text of a play, theatre or an autobiography. [...] It will not be long before physics shall speak of particles playing, or biology of the molecular theatre, or astrophysics of the heavenly text, or chemistry of the biography of chemical reactions’ (2007: 34).

however, been extremely varied, and often contradict one-another. There is therefore little agreement on what might lie beyond the problematization/critique of positivist assumptions. Indeed, what – if anything – remains of the Enlightenment aim of developing secure foundations for objective and universally-applicable knowledge is unclear. Whether we accept the more radical critiques of science or not, however, the monistic idea that ‘nature has used only one and the same dough’ appears essential to the idea that the social world can be studied in a scientific manner (Hollis, 1994: 304). Indeed, it would seem to be the case that if we are led to ‘contrast nature with culture, and natural objects with human subjects, then what we thought external becomes internal, truth yields to meaning’ and ‘knowledge yields to discourse’ (ibid). It is therefore essential to stress that the critical approaches which have been discussed in this chapter have, very largely, made their contributions by stressing ‘the distinctiveness of the social sciences from the sciences of nature’ (Outhwaite, 1987: 4). This has, inevitably, left positivism largely intact with regard to its assumed applicability to the natural sciences. The CR critique of positivism begins, however, by claiming that positivism has radically misunderstood the nature of the natural sciences as well, and it has attempted to show that it is this ‘incomplete critique’ of positivism (Bhaskar, 2009: 3) which lies at the heart of many of the intractable debates that characterize discussions about the nature and possibility of science. It is to these arguments, therefore, that the project turns at present.

**CHAPTER II:  
SITUATING CRITICAL REALISM**



## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will situate the tenets of CR within the philosophical debates which were described throughout the first chapter. Indeed, more substantively, it aims to show that the framework which CR develops allows us to step out of the problem field within which both the PDM and its various critical antagonists are located. This is, for a number of reasons, of key importance. Perhaps the most significant among these, however, is the fact that it allows us to reclaim the notion of science from proponents of the positivist approach, who have – largely successfully – sought to universalize their understanding of its processes. In addition to this, however, the CR framework also allows us to reclaim the idea of science *as such*, as it provides us with a way out of the philosophical/intellectual crisis which was described in the previous chapter. As will be shown, CR is not just a philosophy *of* science, but also a philosophy *for* science. This feature has allowed it to salvage a number of the most important *aims* which are associated with the PDM, while illustrating that the *philosophical positions* which this tradition has developed are largely untenable. These positions are incompatible with the most central practices of the sciences (in particular, experimental activity), and should therefore be abandoned and replaced.

The same conclusion applies, however, to the philosophical positions which many members of the *opposition* to positivism/the PDM have adopted. While these authors have developed a number of important critiques, and CR draws on the important insights which they have developed, this chapter intends to show that they have failed to develop a ‘complete’ critique of its positions (Bhaskar, 2009: 3). This is the case, in short, because they have left a number of its most fundamental (and problematic) assumptions – especially those which are concerned with the *natural* sciences – intact. This has resulted in the problems, dualisms and

oppositions which were described in the previous chapter, and underpins the anti-science sentiments which characterize a number of critical approaches as well. As will be shown in the fourth chapter, these sentiments are better understood as being anti-*positivist* in nature, and hence do not apply to CR. Indeed, CR provides us with an *anti-positivist* approach to science which avoids the epistemic hubris of modernism and resolves the problems and dualisms and oppositions which were discussed in the first chapter. These include, in particular, the *problem* of induction, and the *dualisms/oppositions* of foundationalism/anti-foundationalism, ontological monism/ontological dualism, humanism (voluntarism)/anti-humanism (reification), and naturalism/anti-naturalism.

Before it is possible to discuss these claims in greater detail, however, it is of key importance that some of the more general features of CR are briefly described. This is the case because scientific realism as a whole seems to have developed something of a bad name during the last few (anti-modernist/judgmentally-relativist) decades, and this has negatively impacted on the ways in which CR has been received. Indeed, this situation has arguably prevented many academics from (i) seriously engaging with the tenets of CR, and (ii) fully understanding the claims which it has made. This is unfortunate, as CR provides us with a very distinctive form of realism which takes on board/systematizes many of the insights that are more commonly associated with *critiques* of realism. The objections which are often leveled at realism *as such* therefore do not apply to CR. Indeed, the CR approach results in a framework which furnishes science with an extremely *inclusive* philosophical foundation, and is characterized by a logic which is very largely ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or’ in nature. This feature has been referred to as the ‘critical realist embrace’ (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010: 77-78), and – against the dogmatism which some its critics have claimed it represents (Blyth, 2010; Schmitt, 2010) – this chapter will therefore stress both the *heterodox* and the *modest* nature of CR.

This is of key importance because, against common presumptions, there is nothing about the framework which CR has developed that presumes that knowledge ‘*is other than fallible, partial and itself transient, or that scientists or researchers are other than positioned, biased, interested, and practically, culturally and socially conditioned*’ (Lawson, 2003: 220). Rather, its basic premise is the idea ‘that the real world puts limits on knowledge so that not all interpretations are equally plausible’ (McCall, 2005: 1793). It has therefore sought to defend what has become known – entirely tongue-in-cheek – as its ‘holy trinity’. This trinity involves a commitment to (i) *ontological realism* (the idea that the world exists, very largely, independently of our knowing it), (ii) *epistemic relativism* (the idea that this world can only be known in terms of those discourses which are in fact available to us), and (iii) *judgmental rationalism* (the idea that we *can*, at least in principle, judge between different discourses in order to establish which are more explanatorily adequate) (Hartwig, 2007: 238-242).

While this allows for the idea that scientific knowledge may indeed differ from/contrast with common sense knowledge, the CR emphasis on judgmental rationality (rather than the absolute/universal truths of the PDM/Enlightenment) also illustrates that these terms should not be understood simply as binary opposites. Rather, the chapter will argue that they should be understood in terms of *qualified* differences, which allow for both continuities and (sometimes drastic) discontinuities. This means, importantly, that it is possible for us to hang on to the notion of science as a term of praise for the most systematically-developed, well-founded, logically-coherent, etc. forms of knowledge, while (i) rejecting the idea that there is a hard-and-fast criterion for demarcating scientific from non-scientific claims, and (ii) removing science from the pedestal which proponents of the PDM have placed it on.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This orientation is similar to the one which is adopted by Sandra Harding, who argues that – while we must give up on ‘the goal of telling one true story about reality’ – this does not mean that we ‘must also give up [on] trying to tell less false stories’ (1991: 187).

In order to make the case for this philosophical orientation it is necessary, however, to come to terms with CR's critique of positivism as applied to the natural sciences first. The initial sections of this chapter will therefore describe the position which Bhaskar develops in *A Realist Theory of Science* (2008), and discusses the reasons that CR rejects positivism as an adequate framework for the natural sciences. In particular, these sections highlight the implications of Bhaskar's arguments for our understanding of causation. The chapter then continues by discussing the application of CR to the human/social sciences, and provides an outline of the main features of the 'critical naturalist' position which Bhaskar develops in *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1998) and *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (2009). This section will focus, in particular, on the importance of processes of emergence with regard to resolving many of the abovementioned dualisms/oppositions.

While the chapter depends very largely on Bhaskar's original works, it should be noted that it draws on the contributions of a variety of other authors as well. Authors, that is, who have made CR the diverse and developing body of claims which it is today, and have enriched/developed important corrections of Bhaskar's original formulations. Indeed, as will become clear throughout, the framework which this project employs differs slightly from the framework which is inherent to Bhaskar's work, as it stresses the need for a broader social ontology. It should be noted, however, that – in setting out the CR framework in this manner – it has not been possible to provide a *full* description of its tenets. Rather, the chapter will describe – in as clear a fashion as possible – the *main* features of the CR approach, in order to (i) avoid a number of common misconceptions, (ii) indicate which issues its critics have misunderstood, and (iii) clear the philosophical ground for the remainder of the project. This excludes, importantly, the discussion of *methodological* issues (which will take place in chapter four instead), and the adjudication of *internal* disputes among proponents of CR

(though I have indicated where a number of disagreements have occurred, allowing for readers to follow up on these debates themselves). With these limitations in mind, however, it is now time to move on to a discussion of the way in which CR aims to complete the incomplete critiques of positivism which other critical approaches have developed.

## **2.2 Critical Realism and the Natural Sciences**

This requires, however, that a number of the more basic positions which it takes are clarified. First among these is the position which CR adopts concerning the foundationalism/anti-foundationalism debate. In this, as in most of the matters which will be discussed throughout this chapter, CR develops an alternative to the extremes which both positions represent. While it denies that there are in fact indubitable/unassailable foundations from which absolutely secure and independent knowledge can be developed, for instance, it also denies that the lack of such foundations means that we cannot develop robust forms of knowledge at all. Rather, CR seeks to develop an approach which is characterized by philosophical ‘seriousness’ (that is to say, it seeks to develop an approach which *allows for theory/praxis unity*), and relies on the *immanent critique* of rival positions in the philosophy of science. As will be shown, this allows it to develop a unique approach which provides a coherent alternative to ‘defeatist’ forms of post-modernism, ‘conceited’ forms of modernism, and the various problems that are inherent to the approaches which were discussed in the first chapter of this project.

This alternative orientation is also apparent in the second CR position which requires clarification, and which concerns the manner in which it theorizes the relationship between our statements and the (natural) world. This relationship is described by Bhaskar at the start of *A Realist Theory of Science*, when he writes that: ‘[a]ny adequate philosophy of science must

find a way of grappling with this central paradox of science: that men in their social activity produce knowledge which is a social product much like any other, which is no more independent of its production and the men who produce it than motor cars, armchairs or books, which has its own craftsmen, technicians, publicists, standards and skills and which is no less subject to change than any other commodity. This is one side of ‘knowledge’ (2008: 21). The other side of knowledge, however, consists of things ‘which are not produced by men at all: the specific gravity of mercury, the process of electrolysis, the mechanism of light propagation’ (ibid). This distinction is theorized by means of a separation between the ‘*intransitive*’ and the ‘*transitive*’ dimensions of knowledge, in which the former refers to the things we study, and the latter consists of the theories we create *about* the things we study.

This is of key importance for CR, as it is this feature which ensures that (i) it is an inherently *fallibilist* approach, (ii) that it rejects approaches which suggest that the world is simply a reflection of the theories/concepts we have about it, and (iii) that it rejects conventionalist claims about the *incommensurability* of different theories/the impossibility of scientific progress. As Bhaskar has argued with regard to the latter, for instance, it is important to note that ‘if the relation between the theories [transitive dimension] is one of conflict rather than merely difference, this presupposes that they are alternative accounts of the *same* world [intransitive dimension] (1998: x-xi). If one theory can furthermore ‘explain more significant phenomena in terms of its descriptions than the other can in terms of *its*, then there is a rational criterion for theory choice, and *a fortiori* a positive sense to the idea of scientific development over time’ (ibid). This is not, of course, to suggest that scientific progress is *inevitable*, *linear* or *straightforward*. Rather, it is to unambiguously state that – despite the various problems which scientists face – scientific progress is *possible*.<sup>2425</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Of course, there are social as well as intellectual determinants of progress. There is therefore no reason to presume that the best ideas are in fact the ideas that are most likely to be adopted at a societal level.

As opposed to what Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (2011) has claimed, however, this does not commit CR to the much-maligned positivist dualisms of theory/world, knower/known, and ideal/material. Indeed – like many other critical approaches – proponents of CR have explicitly rejected such dualisms, and have sought to place the knower/producer of theory firmly within being/existence more broadly. As Bhaskar (1997: 142) has argued, for instance, ‘[e]verything is contained (constellationally) within ontology (including epistemology and ethics)—or rather its referent, being (including knowledge and values)’. To place knowledge/theory outside of being more generally – and thereby to create a dualism between the knower and the known – is hence to engage in misleading forms of de-totalization.

Unlike post-structural (particularly Derridean) and Wittgensteinian approaches, however, its rejection of common positivist dualisms does not result in a simple collapse of the distinction between these terms. This is the case for two main reasons. First among these is the fact that, while theory/language and the world are certainly co-determining and/or intertwined, there is no reason to presume that they are also simply *the same* (i.e. that there is a relationship of *identity* between them). Indeed, as Andrew Sayer has argued, if ‘our concepts [theories/narratives/ideas/etc] already specified everything about what could be observed’, it ‘would be hard to see why observation would ever be necessary in science and everyday life’ (2000: 47). Derridean and Wittgensteinian claims can therefore be argued to fail the aforementioned test of ‘seriousness’, as they do not allow for unity between theory and praxis. In addition to this, however, it should also be clear that – while the knower and the known are both part of the same world – they are not simply *identical*. This is, again, clearly apparent in our everyday lives, as the knife we use to butter our bread in the morning is left at home, while we depart

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<sup>25</sup> Indeed, if it is true – as Kuhn has argued – that revolutions in science take place as a result of the mounting up of contradictions, this raises an important question about what *causes* these contradictions to take place. It is arguably only if we allow for a distinction between a transitive dimension and an intransitive dimension that contradictions could occur at all. The adoption of a straightforward conventionalist approach is therefore simply not tenable.

for work or study. This scenario presupposes a relationship of *non-identity* (or not-the-same-ness) between the knife and ourselves, as without this relationship the aforementioned situation could not possibly occur. Whereas many critical approaches have sought to exchange positivist *dualisms* with notions of *identity*, therefore, CR has sought to replace them with the more ‘serious’ notion of *non-identity*.

In addition to simply being a feature of our everyday lives, however, such relationships of non-identity are also a feature of the first immanent critique which Bhaskar develops. This critique aims to complete the various incomplete critiques which were discussed in the previous chapter, and takes as its focus the archetypal activity of the ‘hard’ sciences – experimental activity – in an attempt to show that the area in which positivism has long presumed it is strong, it is in fact extremely weak. As will be shown, Bhaskar’s analysis illustrates that experimentation is both incompatible with, and unintelligible from, a positivist perspective. This conclusion is derived from a so-called *Achilles’ heel* critique, in which we seize on ‘the most important premise for a particular position and show that the premise and all the beautiful insights that are hoped to be sustained by it cannot in fact be sustained’ (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010: 79).<sup>26</sup> This applies to experimental activity in two main ways. The first of these concerns the fact that experimentation involves *intentional* interaction with/interventions in the natural world. As was shown in the previous chapter, however, the phenomenon of intentionality is incompatible with the ontological monism which is inherent to *reductionist* forms of positivism. The philosophical premises of these approaches are therefore *inconsistent with one of the most central activities which the sciences engages in*, and their credibility as philosophies of science is hence drastically reduced.

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<sup>26</sup> Experimental activity is, of course, only one premise among many other potential premises. While certain (especially postmodern) approaches have rejected the idea that the natural sciences have in fact provided us with valid knowledge, and would therefore discount it as an adequate premise from which to start, this practice is of importance when it comes to the critique of positivism. Additional critiques, resulting in the same results, may be developed on the basis of alternative premises, which *are* accepted by postmodern approaches.



More important, however, is the *second* part of Bhaskar's critique, as this applies to the broader positivist approach. This part begins by asking a key question: why is the kind of interaction with/manipulation of the natural world which is characteristic of experimentation necessary at all? The empiricist position which positivism adopts demands, after all, that knowledge is derived solely by means of direct experience. This approach is, therefore, *strictly incompatible with situations in which experimental design and/or the creation of technical equipment are required in order develop such knowledge*. If we could simply 'taste the hydrogen and oxygen in water', after all, 'we would not need to separate them by electrolysis. Knowledge which we in fact have only by virtue of scientific experiment (water =  $H_2O$ ) could then have been acquired in the same way as we discover [that] the grass is green and lemons are sour' (Collier, 1994: 31). The 'nature of the *work* we must do in order to find out about the world' therefore shows us – in direct contradiction with positivist/empiricist claims – 'that the world is not transparent to us but [that it] needs to be discovered' (ibid: 22). Indeed, concretely, this analysis of experimental activity clearly illustrates that one of the most central practices of the sciences does not just seek to go *beyond* appearances (trans-phenomenality), but may also result in knowledge-claims which directly *contradict* appearances (counter-phenomenality). It is the ability of the sciences to do so, in fact, which makes it necessary, as 'without the contradiction between appearance and reality, science would be redundant, and we could [simply] go by appearances' (ibid: 7).<sup>27</sup>

As this does not appear to be the case, however, it seems clear that the philosophy of science must give up on the idea that empiricism provides us with an adequate epistemological framework for engaging in ('hard' forms of) science. This is the case, again, because the aforementioned analysis of experimental activity illustrates quite clearly that the problem with

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<sup>27</sup>As Marx commented, 'all science would be superfluous if the outward appearances and essences of things directly coincided' (in Bhaskar, 1998: 8).

empiricism is the fact that it assumes that what exists in the world is exhausted by what human beings are capable of experiencing. It cannot, therefore, sustain the intelligibility of experimental activity, and reduces questions about what is (ontology) to questions about how we know what is (epistemology). Positivism therefore succumbs to what Bhaskar terms the *epistemic fallacy*, which consists of ‘confusing the ontological order with the epistemic order, priority in being with priority in deciding claims to being’ (2008: 242). This results in the generation of an *implicit* ontology – consisting solely of empirical events – which is tied to human experience. CR, instead, seeks to avoid the anthropocentric idea that ‘[w]hat can be considered real always bears the mark, or insignia, of some human attribute’ (Patomäki and Wight, 2000: 217).<sup>28</sup> Rather than accept the empiricist criterion for reality it has therefore rejected attempts to relegate the non-empirical to a lower ontological status (as ‘mere’ metaphysics). In its place, it has argued for the adoption of a *causal* criterion for reality. If something is able to effect change in the world, after all, it can be legitimately said to exist.

These arguments may be refined, however, by returning to Bhaskar’s analysis of experimental activity for a second time. This is the case because his analysis allows us to replace the implicit (and ‘flat’) ontology which results from positivist empiricism with a new ontology. An ontology, that is, which illustrates that the world is characterized by the phenomenon of *depth*. The first thing to note in this regard is the fact that experimental activity illustrates that those events which occur are not necessarily *perceived* or *perceivable* by human beings. At the level of ontology it is therefore important that we distinguish between the ‘empirical’ realm (which concerns experience) and the realm of the ‘actual’ (which concerns the broader category of events as such). This is the *first* way in which the intelligibility of experimental

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<sup>28</sup> The anthropocentricity of classical philosophy is also deeply implicated in Descartes’ ‘cogito ergo sum’ (I think, therefore I am). This claim erroneously privileges mind over body, knowing over being, the ‘I’ over nature, and the ‘I’ over others/humanity. I am grateful to Tim Rutzou for making this point during one of his presentations at the CR postgraduate reading seminar at the Institute of Education.

activity requires that we ‘deepen’ our ontology. In addition to this, however, experimentation also illustrates that our interventions into the natural world can trigger mechanisms which would have otherwise remained inactive. This is, again, of key importance for the ontology we adopt, as such mechanisms may therefore be said to be ‘real’, irrespective of whether they are activated (‘actual’) or experienced (‘empirical’). The intelligibility of experimental activity therefore requires a *second* deepening of our ontology as well, in order to incorporate the powers which objects possess. This second deepening is, in fact, the only way to avoid what Bhaskar has termed ‘actualism’, which refers to the idea that ‘what actually happens at the level of events exhausts the world, leaving no domain of the real, of powers which can be either activated or remain dormant’ (Sayer, 2000: 12). Such arguments result, overall, in the following representation of ontological depth.

	<i>Domain of Real</i>	<i>Domain of Actual</i>	<i>Domain of Empirical</i>
<i>Mechanisms</i>	✓		
<i>Events</i>	✓	✓	
<i>Experiences</i>	✓	✓	✓

(Bhaskar, 2008: 47)

This representation is, of course, entirely at odds with empiricism, and – instead of the ontology of *empirical events* which is inherent to positivism – results in an ontology of *structures*. These structures are conceptualized as possessing causal powers which are ‘real’, and may also be ‘actual’ and/or ‘empirical’. This has a number of important implications for the ways in which we ‘do’ science, which will be described throughout the fourth chapter. For now, however, it is important to note two distinct advantages of adopting the CR ontology. The first of these concerns the fact that it allows us to reclaim the legitimacy of making inductive inferences. As opposed to the manner in which the problem of induction was

defined in the previous chapter – that is, as a problem of generalization on the basis of (a necessarily limited number of) experiences – Bhaskar shows that it can be resolved by means of a focus on the powers which structures possess. As science ‘attempts to discover the real essences of things’ and aims to express these discoveries ‘in real definitions of natural kinds’, he argues, ‘no problem of induction can arise’ (2008: 205). This is the case because this problem results from the mistaken idea that generalization proceeds on the basis of past experiences. This results in circularity. If we base the idea of generalization on real definitions of the nature of things, however, it re-validates the idea of induction, as ‘it is not possible for a thing to act inconsistently with its own nature and remain the kind of thing that it is’ (ibid). Instead of referring to (invariant) relationships between empirical events, CR therefore proposes that ‘causal laws’ be understood as the ways-of-acting of structures.

In addition to providing a resolution to the problem of induction in this manner, however, the CR ontology has a second advantage as well, which concerns the increased consistency it results in. This results from the fact that, when *positivist* scientists have successfully employed experimentation in the past, they have of course *necessarily* used methods which are *non-positivist* in nature. We must therefore acknowledge the existence of a break between the philosophical views which scientists have at times espoused, and the assumptions which are implicit in their practice. This inconsistency can be overcome, however, when we adopt the ontology which CR develops, as – arguably – this ontology *is* able to sustain the intelligibility of experimentation. While it remains possible, of course, for positivists to deny that experimentation is in fact a legitimate scientific activity in order to *maintain* their commitment to empiricism, this would put it at odds with everything the ‘hard’ sciences have historically stood for. CR therefore has the distinct advantage of providing us with an ontological position which is characterized by a much greater degree of ‘seriousness’.

In addition to being serious in this manner, however, CR's ontological position has a number of important consequences for our understanding of another issue as well. This is the issue of *causation*, which has been a major area of concern for proponents of CR (Kurki, 2007; Groff, 2007, 2009; Elder-Vass, 2011). CR's ontological position is of importance for this issue as the position which it develops allows us to break free from both the mechanistic/a-historical 'covering law' notion of causation<sup>29</sup> which is inherent to positivism/critical rationalism, and the pure flux and indeterminacy which is characteristic of many post-structural approaches. In order to make sense of this claim it is necessary to return – once again – to Bhaskar's analysis of experimental activity, during which he asks an important question: why is it that experimental activity is (usually) required for the production of regular sequences of events?

He answers in the following manner: 'an experiment is necessary precisely to the extent that the pattern of events forthcoming under experimental conditions would not be forthcoming without it' (2008: 23). Creating a 'closed system' by means of experimentation would not be necessary, after all, if such patterns of events were also forthcoming *without* human intervention. This means, however, that non-experimental and open-systemic settings are unlikely to be characterized by the universal patterns which positivism and critical rationalism have demanded. This is the case, of course, because mechanisms, when they act (become 'actual') *outside* closed systems, are likely to act in conjunction with *other* causally efficacious entities. These entities, in turn, are likely to interfere with and/or cancel out the operation of the entities which they encounter, and hence result in changes to the actual/empirical outcome which would have resulted in a closed system. Such systems require both 'intrinsic conditions' (a stable object with particular actualized causal powers) and 'extrinsic conditions' (stable/constant external conditions) for their realization. As such conditions are

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<sup>29</sup> Critical realism refers to causal mechanisms, which makes it *mechanismic* not *mechanistic* (Gorski, 2009)

not universally satisfied, however, ‘the same causal power can produce different outcomes, according to how the conditions for closure are broken’ (Sayer, 2000: 15). Whereas many philosophers have accepted the idea that regularities are not *sufficient* for establishing a causal relationship, therefore, Bhaskar’s analysis illustrates that it is not a *necessary* condition either.

This has a number of important analytical implications. The first of these concerns the fact that CR is better able to account for situations which do not seem to exhibit regular successions of events. Because causation, from the perspective which it develops, has nothing *as such* to do with regularity, the ‘lack’ of clear covering laws can be easily explained in a manner which is philosophically consistent. In addition to this, however, its theorization of causation also undermines the positivist/critical rationalist emphasis on *prediction* as a criterion for (i) demarcating science from non-science, and (ii) measuring the maturity of a discipline. This is the case because CR claims illustrate that there is an inevitable limit to making predictions in open systems. A limit, that is, which results from a mechanism’s entirely contingent relations with other mechanisms. This also invalidates the idea that it is an ability to predict which reflects the maturity of a discipline. Although we may be able to retroactively *explain* the occurrence of events which take place in open systems, it should be clear that this does not entail that these events could also have been *predicted*. This is what Bhaskar refers to as ‘the asymmetry of explanation and prediction’ (2008: 127), and has the effect of revalidating non-predictive sciences (like evolutionary biology). Such sciences may be able to achieve high degrees of *explanatory* power without ever being able to *predict* anything at all. This inability is not, however, ‘a *failure*; it is a theoretically demonstrable feature of the real object of these sciences’ (Collier, 1994: 58).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> No one could sensibly expect the discipline of evolutionary biology to predict the next evolutionary step of a particular species, for instance, or demand that the discipline of generative grammar predicts the manner in which a language will be used in a concrete conversation.

The fact that this is the case undermines some of the more radical claims which proponents of critical rationalist falsificationism have made as well. Scientific theories do of course remain falsifiable, ‘in the sense that they can be shown to be false, but not in the sense that any given ‘counter-example’ will overturn them [...] nothing that happens in an open system will of itself falsify a theory’ (ibid). This is the case, of course, because such ‘falsifications’ do not take into account the possible counteracting mechanisms which are often found in open systems. Mechanisms in open systems may, after all, continue to act, but be either completely or partly cancelled out. Indeed, as Bhaskar has argued, causal powers may ‘be possessed unexercised, exercised unrealized, and realized unperceived (or undetected)’ (2008: 175).

In addition to having important consequences for positivist and critical rationalist claims, however, the CR understanding of causation has a number of important consequences for the critical approaches which were discussed in the previous chapter as well. Perhaps most important among these is the fact that CR’s claims undermine the distinction which some critically-oriented authors have sought to make between *causal/law-based* and *non-causal/constitutive* approaches. This is the case because both ‘the self-avowed causal theorists [...] and their critics have failed to recognize the role that a Humean [covering law] background discourse of causation has had in shaping and delimiting the very starting points for the development of models and methods of causal analysis’ (Kurki, 2007: 7). What has often been described as ‘merely’ *constitutive* by critical approaches can, in other words, be understood as *causal* when we adopt a CR perspective, even if it does not result in the covering laws which many approaches have associated with the notion of causation. In addition to this, however, the aforementioned theorization – including especially the concepts of *open systems* and *actualism* – has a *second* important implication for critical approaches as well. This is the case because it illustrates that these approaches need not resort to post-

structural claims in order to allow for the possibility of *change*. Indeed, from a CR perspective, a resort to such approaches is inadvisable, as the ontology which they adopt is likely to overstate the prevalence of flux. This is the case because limited examples of spatiotemporal closure (or quasi-closures) do tend to occur, even outside of experimental settings, and these are likely to result in so-called demi-regularities (Lawson: 1997, 2003). While such quasi-closures are of course ‘always relative to a particular set of events and a particular region of space and period of time’ (Bhaskar, 2008: 63) – and many (types of) events are therefore unlikely to recur – this does not mean that we should simply replace an ontology of unchanging covering laws with an ontology of constant change. Rather, what is required is an ontology which is capable of accommodating both change (‘becoming’) *and* stability (‘being’). This is, arguably, exactly what CR’s theorization of open and closed systems provides us with.

It should be noted, however, that a theorization of the *intransitive* dimension of knowledge is not all that is required in order to develop a more ‘complete’ critique of positivism/the PDM. Rather, the second side of knowledge – referred to as the *transitive* dimension by proponents of CR – requires an alternative theorization as well. While CR is perhaps best known for its focus on the intransitive dimension it is therefore important to note that it has developed a sophisticated theorization of the transitive domain as well. As the next few sections will show, this theorization provides us with reasons to remain intellectually modest, and steers clear of both modernist forms of hubris and the judgmental relativism which is characteristic of the previous chapter’s ‘epistemological radicals’ (Pätomaki and Wight, 2000: 214). In developing this approach, however, CR has drawn on, and is compatible with, a relatively heterodox range of critical sources. These include, in particular, critiques of the PDM’s *humanism*, and critiques of positivist/empiricist negations of *theory* (discourse/language/text/narrative/etc).



With regard to the first of these, it is important to note that CR adopts a distinctly *socialized* understanding of science. Bhaskar's phrase for the transitive processes of science is, in fact, 'the social production of knowledge by means of knowledge' (2008: 176). Mirroring the *epistemic fallacy* – which reduces the world to our (possible) experience of it – CR has therefore developed the concept of the *ontic fallacy*, which describes the process whereby approaches like positivism collapse the transitive dimension, and effect 'the desocialization of science and other ways of knowing' (Hartwig, 2007: 173-175). Against such forms of voluntarism, CR argues that nature 'does not produce people spontaneously capable of perceiving and interpreting' the various kinds of phenomena which the world contains (Collier, 1994: 50). The necessity of scientific training/education, for instance, clearly illustrates 'that knowledge is a social product and cannot be conceived as a purely individual acquisition' (Bhaskar, 2008: 178). Rather, training/education may be described as producing 'suitable 'knowing subjects' by induction into the theory and practice of existing science [...] [T]o become a scientifically 'knowing subject' is [therefore] to acquire a historically specific set of ideas, techniques and skills' (Collier, 1994: 50). This commits CR to the sociology of knowledge, and – importantly – places scientific enquiries firmly within the concerns which characterize social life more generally.

This makes these enquiries subject to various socio-political pressures<sup>31</sup>, and places them within the theoretical (linguistic, discursive, textual, narrative, etc) resources which are available to scientists as well. Indeed, as was mentioned at the start of the chapter, CR includes the concept of *epistemic relativism* as a part of its 'holy trinity'. This entails, again, that the world can only be known in terms of the discourses which are available to us, and

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<sup>31</sup> This was true of classical scientific practice but, arguably, is even more clearly the case with regard to what Manicas calls 'industrialized science' (1989: 201). This concept refers to the 'symbiosis of science, business, industry, and the state' which characterizes many Northern societies, and which 'has become an absolutely essential part of the basic mode of production in a modern economy' (ibid).

places the study of meaning/signification at the very heart of the CR framework. In light of the criticisms which have at times been levelled at CR it is therefore essential to note that its proponents do *not* claim unmediated access to reality. Although one of the defining features of realist philosophy is, of course, the claim that ‘there is a world existing independently of our knowledge of it’, the position which CR develops also entails that it is exactly this ‘independence of objects from knowledge [...] [which] undermines any complacent assumptions about the relation between them’ (Sayer, 2000: 2). We can, after all, only think about the relationship between language and the world from *within* language itself, and ‘we cannot step outside the latter to see how it relates to its referents’ (ibid: 36). This makes conceptual reflexivity an essential feature of the scientific process, and conceptual change and innovation (as opposed to simply gathering additional empirical information, for instance) may therefore play an extremely important role in the advancement of the sciences. While it has not, perhaps, been the primary focus of its proponents, the CR framework therefore provides us with an excellent opportunity to engage in the kinds of discourse analysis which are now more commonly associated with post-structuralism. Indeed, an interest in pursuing these types of analyses is already becoming more common among proponents of this framework (see for instance Joseph and Roberts, 2004; Fairclough, 2003, 2010; Carter and Sealey, 2004; Elder-Vass, 2010).

It should be noted, however, that CR does not – like some of the critical approaches which were discussed in the previous chapter – argue that empirical evidence is simply irrelevant. Rather, it argues that empiricism underestimates the social conditions which are required for the development of knowledge, that it fails to consider the active nature of theory/human consciousness, and that it neglects the various problems which result from trans- and counter-phenomenality. Indeed, Bhaskar has argued that there is no reason to assume that the nature of

the world matches our abilities to experience it, and no reason to assume that we can ever comprehend *all* of it. For, ‘unless it is dogmatically postulated that our present knowledge is complete’, or that real possibilities are exhausted, ‘there are good grounds for holding that the class of unknowable events is non-empty, and unperceivable ones non-emptier; and no grounds for supposing that this will ever not be so’ (2008: 22). Such claims should not, however, be read as implying that we cannot have knowledge of the world at all, or that there are no reasons to prefer one explanatory account over another. There remains, of course, room for judgmental rationality, despite the fact that none of the hard-and-fast positivist/critical rationalist criteria for demarcating scientific from non-scientific/common sense claims (empiricism, prediction, etc) have stood up to analytical scrutiny.

While CR therefore takes the determining role of social circumstances seriously, and rejects the autonomous (or voluntaristic) individuals which are characteristic of the PDM/ Enlightenment thought, it should also be noted that it rejects *reified* accounts of social determination. Indeed, its proponents have claimed that human agents are *irreducible* to the social structures which they encounter (Archer, 1995, 2000; Bhaskar, 1998). Such formulations have clear analytical appeal, as they appear to resolve the various analytical problems which result from both humanist and anti-humanist positions. It should be noted, however, that the CR framework for the natural sciences also raises a number new questions. This is the case, in short, because its theorization involves a number of controversial philosophical presuppositions. These include, in particular, its presuppositions about (i) the reality of agency (both in terms of our capacity for *intentional action* and the *irreducibility* of agents to social forms of determination), (ii) the reality and irreducibility of meaning (discourse, semiosis, etc), (iii) the reality and irreducibility of social structures, and (iv) the need to distinguish between the natural world, human agents, and social structures at all.

These positions are controversial for a variety of reasons, but this status results particularly from the fact that (i) the *first* position requires an effective argument against collectivism/structuralism/post-structuralism, (ii) the *first*, *second* and *fourth* positions presuppose an alternative to ontological monism/reductionist forms of materialism, and (iii) the *third* position presupposes the reality of non-empirical entities. Such issues are central to the human/social sciences as well but, importantly, are amplified when we attempt to make the jump to these realms. This is the case, in short, because the CR distinction between the transitive and the intransitive dimensions appears to break down when we study the human/social worlds. As the social realm is (at least in part) socially constructed, for instance, it cannot be independent of the knowledge which social scientists have about it. Indeed, the social realm clearly consists (in part) of the knowledge which scientists acquire, and the social sciences should therefore be understood as both constitutive *of* and constituted *by* society. This means, however, that – unlike knowledge of the natural world – social scientific knowledge cannot be said to exist in the transitive or the intransitive realm alone.

If both the natural and the human/social sciences are to be provided with a coherent philosophical framework it is therefore essential that (i) the separation between the transitive and intransitive dimensions can be maintained, and (ii) that agency, meaning (discourse, semiosis, etc), and the idea of social structures can be interpreted in coherent and non-reductionist manner. Bhaskar has therefore explicitly sought to address these issues, and it is to the elaboration and defence of his ‘critical naturalist’ position that the next section will turn. Of particular importance for the grounding of this position – and the resolution of the analytical dualisms which were discussed in the previous chapter – is the notion of ‘emergence’, which the next section will therefore examine first.

### 2.3 Critical Realism and the Human/Social Sciences

This concept is of key importance for CR as, arguably, it allows it to get beyond the intractable (and increasingly stale) debates between proponents of ontological monism, on the one hand, and ontological dualism, on the other. This is the case, in short, because it allows CR to propose a *stratified* ontology in place of the aforementioned alternatives. This has a number of distinct advantages, but – at a very general level – allows CR to come to terms with ‘very different qualities and features in a reality that is understood to be unified, not dualistic’ (Smith, 2010: 26). In doing so, it paves the way for an approach to science which allows us to get from particles to people/politics, without succumbing to either reductionism or dualism. Indeed, it (i) allows CR to resolve a number of important philosophical dualisms, (ii) grounds the CR approach to the natural sciences, and (iii) provides a philosophical basis for engaging in the human and social sciences.

What, however, does the concept of emergence actually mean? In short, it may be said to refer to situations in which the ‘conjunction of two or more features or aspects gives rise to new phenomena, which have properties which are irreducible to those of their constituents’ (Sayer, 2000: 12). A basic, and commonly used, example is water. Water possesses causal powers/taxonomic qualities (for instance the *power* to extinguish fires and the *quality* of liquidity) which neither of the components of which it consists (oxygen and hydrogen) possess. It may therefore be said to have causal powers/taxonomic qualities which are *irreducible* to its component parts, and are *emergent from* their combination. CR has argued, however, that such processes occur at various levels, and that the world can therefore be said to consist of various emergent (and hence *irreducible*) strata – from the chemical to the biological, psychological and the social – which are characterized by their own causal powers and

taxonomic qualities. These strata remain *unilaterally dependent* on the pre-existing strata for their existence – as there can be no biological functions without chemical functions, no psychological functions without biological functions, etc. – and result in a situation which is characterized by *stratification*. This allows for the development of an approach to the sciences which avoids both (i) *reductionist* forms of positivism and *dualistic* forms of critical theory, and (ii) *voluntaristic* forms of humanism and *reified* forms of anti-humanism.

At the level of the human sciences, for instance, Bhaskar (2008: 106-117) has argued in favour of what he terms a Synchronic Emergent Powers Materialism (SEPM). This SEPM aims to resolve one of the antinomies which has characterized previous debates by arguing:

- (i) against reductionist forms of materialism, that we *cannot* grasp the causal powers/taxonomic qualities which are characteristic of ‘mind’ by making reference to the causal powers/taxonomic qualities of its material components, and;
- (ii) against dualistic (or ‘idealist’) approaches, that the causal powers/taxonomic qualities which are characteristic of ‘mind’ *can* form part of a (non-reductionist/non-monistic) account of the (material) world more generally.

In order to make the case for this position Bhaskar draws on the notion of emergence, in order to show that it is because of the relationship which our various components enter into that a number of *new* and *irreducible* causal powers/taxonomic qualities emerge. These powers/qualities include, importantly, the power to act in an agential/intentional manner<sup>32</sup>, the *unintelligibility* of which, as we have seen, has been a key claim of many critical approaches.

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<sup>32</sup> Or more expansively, ‘persons are material things with a degree of neurophysiological complexity which enables them not just, like the other higher-order animals, to initiate changes in a purposeful way, to monitor and control their performances, but to monitor the monitoring of these performances and to be capable of a commentary upon them (1998: 215).

As opposed to the way in which monistic forms of positivism have understood human beings (as, ultimately, possessing *the same* qualities/causal powers as the material world) and the way in which many critical approaches have (as being more-or-less *distinct from* this world), CR therefore argues that both options are misleading. The qualities/powers of mind, although they are clearly both *rooted in* and *dependent upon* the brain/matter/nature, are better understood as *emergent from* (and hence irreducible to) it. Although human beings may therefore be drastically unlike the rest of the material world, this does not mean that (i) they are not rooted in it/dependent on it for their existence<sup>33</sup>, or (ii) that the qualities/powers possessed by human beings are not susceptible to scientific/causal forms of enquiry.

As human beings are indeed causally and taxonomically irreducible, however, Winch is correct when he argues that (i) '[t]o discover the motives of a puzzling action is to increase our understanding of that action', and (ii) that this is 'what 'understanding' means as applied to human behaviour' (2007: 78). Studying a person's physiological make-up does not add information to the manner in which we understand an intentional action undertaken by them, as such actions are irreducible to the causal powers/taxonomic properties which characterize this make-up. Where Winch – along with many other critical authors – is wrong, however, is the claim that this irreducibility has dualistic or anti-scientific implications. Emergence – as the example of water shows – is a perfectly common phenomenon. The radical difference between the powers/qualities of the component parts (the body/brain tissue) and the emergent powers/qualities (the qualities of 'mind') therefore need not surprise us. Rather, emergence allows us to come to terms with a reality which is both unified (*we are* matter/bodies) and differentiated (*we have or make use of* bodies). This *negates* the idealism/materialism divide which has characterized much of the philosophical and scientific enterprise. Indeed, more

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<sup>33</sup> Indeed, these qualities/powers have emerged (diachronically) from the more basic chemical strata on which they are dependent by means of evolution. This has involved, among various other things, the emergence of organic matter from inorganic forms of matter, conscious/animate matter from inanimate matter, etc.

substantively, it allows us to develop an alternative to the matter/mind dualism, the common opposition between free will and blanket determinism, and the dichotomized/opposed notions of flesh and spirit which characterize Manichean forms of Christianity. All of these positions can now be understood as ‘grounded in the common mistake of [a] denial of the causal efficacy of ideas’ (Hartwig, 2007: 249).

It should be noted, however, that in attempting to resolve such oppositions CR has a second advantage as well. This is the case because this kind of resolution has, in the past, been made impossible by (i) the adoption of reductionist forms of materialism/dualistic forms of idealism, and (ii) the predominance of covering law notions of causation. While the SEPM position resolves the first problem, the second problem requires an additional resolution. This is easy enough to accomplish, however, as our powers as agents become immediately intelligible once we adopt the CR understanding of causation. This is the case because it conceptualizes causation as (i) having nothing as such to do with empirical regularities, and (ii) as rooted in the causal capacities which are possessed by the various types of structures which exist. One of the emergent causal powers of the structures which we know as human beings is therefore arguably the irreducible power to act intentionally. Acting in this manner does not, however, entail a moment of ‘escape’ from the world and its (universal/empirical/mechanistic) laws. As Groff (2007:111) has argued, agency ‘has nothing to do with getting out from under structures’. Rather, as ‘causality is the exercise or display of causal powers’, agency can be conceptualized as ‘the *intentional* display of such powers’ (ibid). ‘Reasons’ can therefore be said to function in the same way that generative mechanisms function in *natural* structures. They can ‘exist unexercised or be exercised unrealized, like any [other] tendencies’, and they ‘cohabit and interact with other causes in the open system of the world [...] [and] are explicable in terms of, but irreducible to, deeper strata’ (Collier, 1994: 155).



It should be noted, however, that such claims should *not* be read as claiming that human beings are somehow fully transparent in terms of their motivations. As Lawson (2003: 46) has argued, to acknowledge the causal efficaciousness of reasons ‘is not to suggest that an individual is always clear, or even able easily to be clear, about their conscious states’. Rather, it is to argue that (i) human beings are – at least to an extent – ‘self-steering’ structures, and (ii) that the distinction between an ‘action’ (intentionally raising my arm) and ‘behaviour’ (my arm moving without me intending it to) is in fact intelligible. This means, importantly, that CR is compatible with the emphasis on volition which is characteristic of Critical Theoretical approaches. Unlike these approaches, however, its emphasis on agency does not put CR at odds with the notion of covering laws, the actualism which is inherent to these approaches, monistic forms of materialism, and the idea of science more generally.

This is of key importance for a number of reasons. Most prominent among these, however, is the fact that its philosophical approach provides the *natural* sciences with a framework which is in fact compatible with experimental activity. As mentioned, experimental activity involves *intentional* manipulations of/interventions in the natural world, and is therefore incompatible with reductionist/monistic forms of materialism/positivism. The SEPM approach which Bhaskar develops does not succumb to such problems, however, and is therefore capable of grounding the framework which was developed in the previous section of this chapter. While it secures the notion of agency in this manner, however, it should also be noted that the CR approach does not result in a return to the simple humanism/voluntarism which is characteristic of the PDM/positivism. Rather, CR might be argued to result in a ‘critical’ (or minimalist) form of humanism which – while it recognizes the reality/irreducibility of human agency – accepts both the idea that individuals are embedded in the broader material/natural world, and the reality/irreducibility of distinctly social forms of causation.

What, however, does it mean to talk about the reality and irreducibility of social causes at all? And how does CR avoid the philosophical problems which anti-humanist perspectives have encountered in the past? Such questions, and their answers, will be discussed in the next few sections of this chapter. These sections will stress that – like the critique of positivism which he develops about the *natural* sciences, and against what is claimed by Cruickshank (2010) – Bhaskar’s arguments concerning the social sciences should be understood as immanent critiques of rival positions. These include, in particular, the positions which are adopted by humanist and anti-humanist perspectives, and result in an important resolution to the antinomies which have long plagued the social sciences. In developing this perspective CR draws, again, on the idea of emergence. In line with his conceptualization of emergent properties/powers in human beings, Bhaskar argues that *social* structures should be understood as emergent from (and hence irreducible to) psychological structures. His arguments in favour of this position results, overall, from his contention that ‘social forms are a necessary condition for any intentional act, that their *pre-existence* establishes their *autonomy* as possible objects of scientific investigation and that their *causal power* establishes their reality’ (1998: 27). What, however, does all of this entail in concrete terms?

The first thing to note is the fact that CR – although it explicitly embraces the reality of human agency – rejects positivist/modernist forms of humanism. Indeed, CR argues that such approaches are rooted in reductionist/monistic assumptions about the nature of reality more generally. This is the case because such forms of humanism are rooted in the belief that complex wholes ‘must be resolved into simple parts before they can really be understood’ (Collier, 1994: 138). As we have seen, however, this argument is problematic, as the world is characterized by processes of emergence which result in new ontological strata, and are characterized by irreducible taxonomic properties and causal powers. The reductionist

assumptions which certain humanist positions are rooted in can therefore cause serious philosophical problems for the ‘social’ scientist who adopts them. As Bhaskar has argued, ‘[s]eldom does it occur to subscribers to this view that an identical train of thought logically entails their own reducibility, via the laws and principles of neurophysiology, to the status of inanimate things!’ (1998: 29). How, though, does he illustrate that his claims about the irreducibility and emergence of the social are in fact correct?

He begins, concretely, by means of a second immanent critique, which mirrors the critique of experimentation that was discussed above. This critique takes as its premise the phenomenon which humanist approaches have argued should be at the heart of our explanations: the actions and intentions of individual human beings. Bhaskar’s critique shows, however, that even if we adopt this premise, the need for distinctively social forms of explanation remains clearly apparent. This is the case because *social contexts* are necessary conditions for the acts which humanist approaches have sought to place centre-stage: a tribesman, after all ‘implies a tribe, the cashing of a cheque a banking system’ (ibid: 30). Such contexts are of significant importance, as the intentional activity/agency which is stressed by humanist approaches *would simply not be possible without the causal powers which social structures possess*. The practice of cashing a cheque, for instance, would not be possible without certain social conditions (in this case a banking system) being in place. The act of speaking or writing, as well, necessitates the prior existence of social conditions (the existence of language/rules of grammar). And finally, the hiring and/or firing of staff would not be possible without certain social structural conditions being in place (like the division of the population into capitalists and workers).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the power to hire and/or fire is quite clearly not a power which is possessed by individual human beings. Rather, it is a power which results from the *social positions* which people occupy, and therefore requires that we make reference to a social structural context which is neglected by humanist approaches.

As we know that the cashing of cheques, the speaking of a language, and the hiring and firing of staff are in fact activities which human beings *do* successfully engage in, however, the *social conditions which are required for such activities to be possible must also be real*.<sup>35</sup> As David Tyfield has argued, this line of argument shows ‘that only specifically *social* causes, while not themselves directly perceptible, render intelligible certain physical states of affairs that *are* directly perceptible’ (2012: 162). Social contexts therefore play an important role in *causal* forms of social science and – by applying the causal criterion for reality which was described above – social structures can therefore be shown to be quite real. This is of key importance for the social sciences, as it provides them with an emergent/irreducible object of study. In addition to this, however, it is also essential for our understanding of the *natural* sciences, as it is only if we accept the idea that distinctively social forms of causation are in fact real that we can in fact make sense of (i) historical findings like those which were put forth by Kuhn (1996), and (ii) the predominance of scientific training/education.

While distinctly *social* forms of causation should therefore be considered real, it deserves emphasis that CR *rejects* the claims of anti-humanist approaches, and has developed critiques of the reification which such approaches result in. This rejection in fact flows directly from the stratified ontology which CR adopts, as processes of emergence inevitably involve the unilateral dependence of higher strata upon lower ones. As was mentioned previously, there can be no biological functions without chemical functions, no psychological functions without biological functions, etc. This logic applies as well, however, to social structures, as these could not possibly exist without the human agents upon which they are dependent. Its use of

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<sup>35</sup> Acknowledging that this is the case is important, furthermore, for the advancement of theory/practice consistency. As Tyfield argues: ‘Theory/practice consistency also depends [...] on the explicit consideration of the ontological presuppositions of particular social practices in order to articulate in greater detail what reality must be like given that these are possible. As this elucidates the nature of reality already immanent in our understanding, this makes a crucial contribution to the [...] ongoing process of seeking consistency, by way of such comparisons, between our beliefs (explicit and implicit) and our actions (2012: 163).

the notion of emergence therefore allows CR to avoid the reification which is characteristic of anti-humanist approaches. If human beings are necessary for the existence of social structures, and we are therefore responsible for their creation, they cannot be simply independent of people's control. Rather than as a *passive* encounter with forces which *do not* depend on them for their existence, therefore, CR theorizes the relationship between human beings and social structures as an *active* encounter with forces which *do* depend on them.<sup>36</sup>

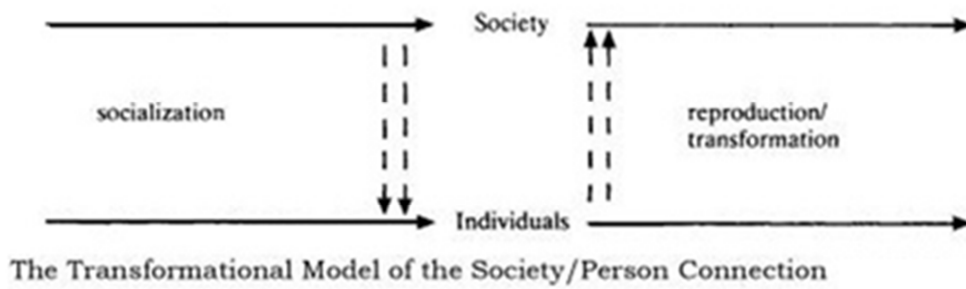
Such arguments may be refined, however, by noting that any *particular* person always faces social structures as entities which exist *prior to* them. This means, importantly, that it is incorrect to argue that human agents simply create or produce society. Rather, it is more accurate to say that they *reproduce* and/or *transform* it. If social circumstances are always already in place, after all, agents can only either recreate or modify these circumstances.<sup>37</sup> As Bhaskar argues, this 'suggests a radically different conception of social activity from that which typically informs discussion of the society/person connection. It suggests an essentially Aristotelian one, in which the paradigm is that of a sculptress at work, fashioning a product out of the material and with the tools available to her' (1998: 37). This approach is referred to as the *Transformational Model of Social Activity* (TMSA), and entails that both society and human praxis have a dual character: society is 'both the ever-present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is, conscious *production*, and (normally unconscious) *reproduction* of the conditions of production, that is society' (ibid: 37-8).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> While his work does not appear to have been an explicit source of influence on Bhaskar's writing this formulation means that the approach which is developed by CR is very similar to the approach which is employed by Raymond Williams (1977, 2005). As Milner has written, Williams' cultural materialist approach explicitly rejects different forms of structuralism, while stressing that 'structures set limits and exert pressures' for forms of agency which are considered 'both real and active' (1989: 101).

<sup>37</sup> There is therefore, in Connel's terms no 'cleared space' in the CR framework (2010: 47), as we are always born into circumstances which pre-exist us.

<sup>38</sup> This understanding of social causes, it should be noted, amounts to an important shift in our understanding of causation. If social structures play a causal role in our social scientific explanations, in other words, we may ask



(ibid: 40)

What, however, does this society consist of? Bhaskar, for one, has argued that, when we study society, we are not – as is claimed by collectivist approaches – concerned with ‘large-scale, mass or group behaviour (conceived as the behaviour of large numbers, masses or groups of individuals)’ (ibid: 31). Rather, we are concerned with ‘the persistent *relations* between individuals (and groups), and with the relations between these relations (and between such relations and nature and the products of such relations)’ (ibid). This means, importantly, that Bhaskar’s approach is compatible with the social ontology which has been adopted by a broad range of critical traditions. These include, in particular, traditions like feminism (with a focus on gender relations), Marxism (with a focus on class relations), Weberian forms of historical sociology (with a focus on a broad range of social relations), and certain forms of postcolonial/decolonial thought (with a focus on North/South and/or ‘race’ relations) (Porpora, 1998). In addition to being compatible with such explicitly relational approaches,

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exactly what kind of causes they are? CR authors have here argued for a *broadening* of our understanding of causation to complement the *deepening* of our understanding of causation which was discussed above. This broadening amounts to an acknowledgement of the fact that social structures are not ‘powerful particulars’ (Valera and Harré, 1996: 318), or so-called *efficient* causes. It is, in other words, only *people* that are active agents, only people that actually *do* things. Rather, social structures are understood as ‘motivating or discouraging, constraining and enabling certain sorts of human action’ (Carter and New, 2004: 12). The existence of a language, as we have seen, is a necessary condition for the act of speaking/writing. It therefore clearly *enables* speech/writing. It should be noted, however, that it also *constrains* these acts. We cannot, for instance, neglect to make use of the rules of grammar (at least not in their entirety), or speak only French when in England, and expect to be understood/listened to. The existence of these social structures can therefore also be understood as *motivating* the use of English/the rules of grammar and *discouraging* the speaking French/breaking the rules of grammar. For different/competing realist takes on the issue of social structure/the broadening of the notion of causation see especially Kurki (2007), Groff (2004) and Elder-Vass (2011).

however, CR is arguably compatible with a much *broader* range of social ontologies as well. This is the case – as authors like Milja Kurki and Tony Lawson have pointed out – because the particular understanding of causation which CR develops allows us to recognize the reality ‘of such aspects of social life as rules, norms, ideas, reasons, [and] discourses’ as well (Kurki, 2007: 11). These factors can ‘be seen as ‘constraining and enabling’ conditioning causes of social action’ (ibid: 12), or – as in Lawson’s understanding of rules – as laying down ‘rights, obligations, prerogatives, and other possibilities and limits’ (1999: 32).

When such claims are combined with the TMSA, it results in a conception of social activity according to which human beings are engaged in the *reproduction* and/or *transformation* of various types of social relations, rules, norms, ideas, discourses, etc. The forms of reproduction/transformation which CR is concerned with are not, therefore, limited to economics. Rather, they should be understood as applying ‘to discursive as well as to non-discursive practices; to science and politics, as much as to technology and economics’ (Bhaskar, 1998: 37).<sup>39</sup> This is of key importance for the social sciences, as it allows these disciplines to come to terms with the *emergent* nature of meaning. This can now be understood as phenomena which – though it is not reducible to matter – is nonetheless fully dependent on (very specific combinations of) matter for its actualisation. In addition to being important for the social sciences, however, the irreducibility of meaning/discourse is also of the utmost importance for the CR approach to the natural sciences which was described above. This is the case because it is only if meaning/discourse is in fact irreducible and real in this manner that knowledge of the natural world – whether by means of experimental activity or not – is possible. Without the idea of emergence both the CR account of the natural sciences and its account of the human/social sciences would therefore be unsustainable.

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<sup>39</sup> This is, again, very similar to the approach which was developed by Raymond Williams, who understood the notion of production as applying to a much wider realm than the merely economic (1977, 2005).

If the last few sections have shown that agency, meaning, and the notion of social structures can indeed be interpreted in a coherent and non-reductionist manner, however, this still leaves one of the concerns with which we started this section intact. This is the case as we have not yet discussed whether the transitive/intransitive divide which CR maintains in the natural sciences can also be maintained throughout the human/social sciences. As will be shown, however, this is indeed possible, though Bhaskar has also offered a qualification to this statement.<sup>40</sup> This qualification is necessary because the potential causal interdependence of the social sciences with its object of study ‘necessitates a precision in the sense in which their objects of knowledge can be said to be ‘intransitive’’ (1998: 51). As Bhaskar has argued, it essential that we make a distinction between *causal interdependency*, on the one hand, and *existential intransitivity*, on the other.<sup>41</sup>

The first of these designates a clear *relational* limit to any naturalism, which derives from the potential effect that the social sciences may have on the social realm which it studies. Existential intransitivity, however, refers to the fact that ‘once some object  $\emptyset$ , exists, if it exists, however it has been produced, it constitutes a possible object of scientific investigation. And its existence (or not), and properties, are quite independent of the act or process of investigation of which it is the putative object, even though such an investigation, once initiated, may radically modify it’ (ibid: 51-52). Although causal interdependence is therefore certainly possible ‘the concept of existence [itself] is univocal: ‘being’ means the same in the human as the natural world, even though the modes of being may radically differ’

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed, in *The Possibility of Naturalism* Bhaskar suggests a range of different limits on scientific naturalism, only one of which – the relational limit – is discussed in this chapter. This is the case because the merits of the additional limits on naturalism which he suggests (the concept-, activity-, and space-time-dependence of social structures) have remained controversial among authors drawing on CR. See especially Benton (1998), Benton and Craib (2011: 134-136), Collier (1994, chapter 8) for critiques, and the postscript to the second edition of *The Possibility of Naturalism* for Bhaskar’s response to them.

<sup>41</sup> While it may be true, therefore, that discourse and representation are indeed constitutive of reality – rather than simply mimetic – it should also be noted that this reality is always *pre-constituted*, and therefore largely independent of our activities as scientists.



(ibid: 52). We must not, therefore, collapse the transitive/intransitive distinction – and the relationship of *non-identity* which it implies – but neither must we deny that causal interdependence *may* indeed occur. As Bhaskar writes: ‘if it is the characteristic error of positivism to ignore (or play down) interdependency it is the characteristic error of hermeneutics to dissolve intransitivity’ (ibid).<sup>42</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

We may therefore conclude by stating that there is indeed scientific life after positivism/the PDM. Indeed, as this chapter has attempted to show, this scientific life is dependent on transcending the philosophical positions which positivism has adopted. These positions are incompatible with the most central practices of the sciences (in particular, experimental activity), and should therefore be abandoned and replaced. As the chapter has shown as well, however, this conclusion applies equally to the positions which many members of the *opposition* to positivism have adopted. While these critical approaches have developed a number of important critiques of positivism/the PDM, this chapter has illustrated that they have failed to develop a ‘complete’ critique of its positions (Bhaskar, 2009: 3). These critiques have resulted in a number of problems, dualisms and oppositions, which can only be resolved when we step out of the philosophical problem field which was described in the first chapter. Of particular importance for doing this is the stratified ontology which CR has developed, as it is this which underpins the philosophical resolutions it suggests. Indeed, more substantively, it is this which allows us to develop a notion of science which is anti-positivist in nature. If this has in fact been shown to be the case, however, it should also be clear that it is only the first aim of this project which has been achieved. This is the case, of course,

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<sup>42</sup> Indeed, if social science is to play an emancipatory/critical role, causal interdependency is not a phenomenon which we should seek to avoid. Rather, it is something which we should embrace.

because the remainder of the project will be concerned with exploring the implications of the CR framework for the discipline of CS. In order to achieve this goal the second part of the project will engage in a series of *interventions* into ongoing CS debates: concretely, chapter four will intervene in the *methodological* debates which have characterized the CS discipline, while chapter five will provide an intervention into its the *social theoretical* debates. In order to pave the way for these interventions, however, the next chapter will provide an in-depth overview of the post-Cold War CS literature.

**PART II:**  
**INTERVENTIONS**

**CHAPTER III:**  
**METHODOLOGY AND SOCIAL THEORY**  
**IN CONFLICT STUDIES**

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the post-Cold War conflict studies (CS) literature, and is divided into two main sections. The *first* of these sections will discuss the methodological approaches which authors working within the disciplinary confines of CS have adopted in order to come to terms with both the causes and nature of intra-state conflict. As will be shown, the CS literature has been characterized by a number of key methodological divides. This is important for a variety of reasons. Principal among these, however, is the fact that studies using different *methodological* approaches have often come to opposing conclusions with regard to various *substantive* issues. Much depends, therefore, on the kinds of methods we are willing to accept as providing us with robust forms of knowledge. Indeed, the development of CS as a discipline is arguably dependent on the resolution of such methodological issues. The *fourth* chapter will therefore intervene in these CS debates, and – by building on the CR framework which was set out in the previous chapter – will argue in favour of a Critical Methodological Pluralism (CMP).

In addition to discussing various methodological issues, however, the *second* section of this chapter will also provide an overview of the most important social theoretical divides which currently characterize CS. In particular, this section reviews ongoing debates between (i) proponents of *materialist* and *idealist* approaches, (ii) proponents of *rationalist* and *affective* approaches, and (iii) *modernist* understandings of ‘development’ as inherently pacifying and a range of *critical* voices. These debates have, again, been extremely divisive in nature, and it is therefore important that a new approach to CS attempts to get beyond them. It is this which the *fifth* chapter of this project will attempt to do, by developing a Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach to CS. This approach aims to address, in particular, the materialist/idealist

divide and the rationalist/affective divide, while the *seventh* chapter engages with CS debates about the relationship between modernity/development and violent conflict. It is to an overview of the aforementioned methodological debates, however, that we turn first.

### 3.2 Methodological Debates in Conflict Studies

These debates have been extremely varied in nature, and have revolved around a number of key divides. These include, in particular, the (overlapping) divides between (i) *positivist*, *hermeneutic* and *complexity sciences* approaches, (ii) *nomothetic* and *idiographic* approaches, (iii) *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods, (iv) *methodological individualism* and its various *critics*, (v) *objectivist* and *subjectivist* approaches to research, and (vi) *empiricism* and *theoretical reflexivity*. The philosophical and theoretical debates among proponents of these different approaches have, however, filtered into debates about research formats as well. These debates have included, in particular, debates about the *nature*, *aims* and *scientific status* of large-N and small-N research, comparative forms of research, and case studies.

While the CS literature is therefore extremely diverse in terms of its methodological orientation, it should also be noted that – when the study of intra-state conflict took off in earnest after the Cold War – this trend manifested itself predominantly in the increasing numbers of large-N econometric/statistical studies. Such studies, influential especially in policy-circles<sup>43</sup>, have sought to make their claims on the basis of large numbers of quantified, cross-spatial/temporal observations, and were given a particular impetus by (i) the increased availability of statistical data<sup>44</sup>, and (ii) expanding technological possibilities. As Christopher

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<sup>43</sup> Fearon (2005: 483-484) notes, in particular, the impact of Collier and Hoeffler's *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* (2000) on policy-makers.

<sup>44</sup> Provided especially by the Correlates of War project at the University of Michigan. See [www.correlatesofwar.org](http://www.correlatesofwar.org) for further information.

Cramer (2006: 93) has argued, computers are now able to perform ‘ever more complex statistical tests of larger and larger datasets and [...] [thereby] make possible the large-scale trawling of media archives for reports on violent conflict that would take years for individual researchers to do’ (see also Checkel, 2008). Prominent figures who have made use of the opportunities which these developments provide include authors like Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, Dominic Rohner, Lisa Chauvet, Mans Soderbom, Indra de Soysa, James D. Fearon, David. D. Laitin, Havard Hegre, Michael L. Ross, and Nicholas Sambanis.<sup>45</sup>

The work of these authors is – broadly-speaking – *positivist* (or sometimes Popperian/critical rationalist) in orientation, even if they have not explicitly adopted these labels. This is the case for three main reasons. The first of these concerns the fact that they have consistently chosen to adopt *quantitative* methods as a way of evaluating competing hypotheses about intra-state conflict. This, quite clearly, puts their work in line with the emphasis on mathematical precision which, as we have seen, is typical of the positivist approach. In addition to this, however, these approaches can also be described as being broadly *empiricist* in nature. This is the case because they have generally sought to either (i) move from observable indicators (or their proxies) to the formation of theories, or (ii) formulate (conjecture) and test (empirically verify or falsify) these theories. This places them firmly within the range of either positivist or critical rationalist approaches to science. Perhaps most important, however, is the fact that the aforementioned authors have attempted to uncover something akin to the *covering laws* which govern the occurrence/continuation of intra-state conflict. As Collier argues in his most recent book on violent conflict, for instance, his approach is ‘not interested in the personalities and immediate political circumstances’ leading to a particular conflict (2010: 125). Such issues,

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<sup>45</sup> For a selection of influential studies which adopt this approach see Collier: (2000, 2003, 2010), Collier and Hoeffler (2000, 2004), Collier [et al] (2009), Collier [et al] (2004), Chauvet and Collier (2008), de Soysa (2000), Ross (2004), Fearon (2004a, 2004b, 2005), Fearon and Laitin (2003), Fearon [et al] (2007), Hegre and Sambanis (2006), Sambanis (2004a, 2004b).

he argues, ‘matter for a proper understanding of any particular war but clutter up and detract from our understanding of civil war as a phenomenon’ (ibid). His approach therefore aims to uncover cross-spatial/temporal correlations instead, and attempts ‘to find [the] structural characteristics that expose a country to risks’ (ibid). While this is not, perhaps, the same as attempting to uncover strict or mechanistic covering laws – and some CS authors have indeed made concessions concerning the *probabilistic* nature of their claims – the emphasis on cross-spatial/temporal regularities and robust empirical correlations is clearly apparent. The intent of these positivist/critical rationalist approaches, whether explicitly or implicitly, is the development of a general *theory* of conflict (see especially Sambanis: 2004a), and they can therefore be described as being *nomothetic* in nature.

It should be noted, however, that positivist approaches to CS have been problematized in a number of different ways as well. A variety of CS authors have shown, for instance, that they are often characterized by numerous *technical* problems.<sup>46</sup> These are summarized by Kalyvas (2008: 397), when he writes that these studies have (i) ‘produced very little in terms of robust results’ (that is, different studies have come to contrasting conclusions<sup>47</sup>), (ii) that their ‘main findings are incredibly sensitive to coding and measurement procedures’, (iii) that ‘they entail

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<sup>46</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of such technical problems see Hegre and Sambanis (2006), Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005), Sambanis (2004a, 2004b), Cederman and Girardin (2007), Fearon [et al] (2007), Humpreys (2005), Miguel [et al] (2004), Cramer (2002), Kalyvas and Kocher (2007), Gutierrez Sanin (2008), Wimmer and Min (2006).

<sup>47</sup> Goodhand shows, for instance that ‘[f]indings on the underlying causes of conflict often contradict one another. Even when similar methodologies or data sets are used, researchers may come to different conclusions. Some, for example, have found a high correlation between inequality and conflict, while others have found it to be insignificant. The same can be said about a number of different factors such as democracy, ethnic fragmentation or levels of poverty’ (2006: 29). Wood, in her discussion of the role of ethnicity in civil wars, encounters similar problems. She shows that ‘David T. Mason and Patrick J. Fett found that ethnic conflicts were no less susceptible to negotiated settlement than nonethnic wars, and that separatist wars were as likely to be settled by negotiation as nonseparatist wars. Roy Licklider found that civil wars based on identity issues were no more intense and were as likely as nonidentity wars to end in negotiated settlement; but he also found that those settlements were then more likely to break down. Barbara F. Walter found that the presence of ethnic divisions did not make wars more or less difficult to resolve via negotiations than their absence but that the presence of territorial goals makes conflicts 20 percent less likely to end via negotiations. Fearon and Laitin did not find any significant relationship between civil war incidence and ethnic heterogeneity. In contrast, Collier and Hoeffler found a nonmonotonic relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and the propensity for civil war: where one ethnic minority is dominant, civil wars are more likely than where a population is homogenous or where there are many ethnic groups’ (2003a: 251).



a considerable distance between theoretical constructs and proxies’, (iv) that ‘they lack clear microfoundations or are based on erroneous ones’, and (v) that ‘they are subject to narrow (and untheorized) scope conditions’ (ibid). Case-studies seem, furthermore, to regularly come to conclusions which are entirely at odds with the results which positivist studies have produced (Ballentine and Nitzschke, 2003), and these studies continue to be plagued by unreliable data.<sup>48</sup> This has led to serious questions being asked about the status of their claims, and has resulted in a variety of more-or-less distinct responses.

The first of these responses aims, quite simply, to refine the positivist approach. In a discussion of coding problems, for instance, Sambanis states that these problems should not lead his readers to think that ‘coding wars and analyzing them quantitatively is a futile exercise. Rather than abandon these efforts’, he argues, we should redouble them ‘by improving the coding rules, applying them transparently to the data, and studying the implications of differences across coding rules’ (2004a: 857). While the existence of various technical problems is acknowledged, therefore, the aim of developing nomothetic theory remains firmly in place. In maintaining this kind of orientation he is not, however, alone. Kalyvas (2006), for instance, has developed theories of *irregular war*, *indiscriminate violence* and *selective violence*, while Metelits (2010) puts forth a theory of *insurgent behaviour towards civilians*. A similar goal is pursued by a number of influential historical sociological studies. Skocpol (1979), for instance, developed a theory of *social revolutions*. Indeed, she has done this – in broadly positivist fashion – by means of historically-rooted forms of inductive generalizations, and her approach can therefore be described as tending towards *nomotheticism* as well (Gorski, 2009).

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<sup>48</sup> Cramer (2006: 110) argues, for instance, that ‘[c]omparisons of the data on inequality across a range of countries are almost useless. [...] Most of the problems come about because the surveys conducted in different countries are often measuring different things and, when they are trying to measure the same thing, they often do so with varying degrees of precision’. See his ‘*Civil War is Not a Stupid Thing*’, Chapter 2 (ibid: 49 – 84) for an extended discussion of various data- and information-problems faced by studies of violent conflict.

Such strategies are rejected, however, by other forms of historical sociology. Indeed, authors like Tilly (1995) have claimed that it is only when we reject nomothetic approaches that we can begin to ground a genuinely *historical* form of social science. This is the case because it is only when the past is conceived of as variable/changing that it makes sense to talk about history at all. Change and variation are denied, however, when the past is used solely as a source of testable hypotheses/inductive generalizations. This is clearly a feature of Skocpol's work, but is a prominent feature of many positivist approaches to CS as well. These approaches have made use of increasingly large data-sets, which tend to include statistical information about both contemporary and historical forms of conflict. This assumes, however, that conflict is governed by processes which are temporally invariant, and hence ensures that these approaches are *inherently* a-historical. This a-historicism has been challenged, however, by authors like Duffield (2001), Kaldor (2007a [1999]), Münkler (2004) and Cramer (2006), who have stressed the importance of long-term *transformations* (in the global political economy) as a means of understanding contemporary forms of intra-state conflict. This focus on change is especially apparent in Kaldor's (2007a) work, who has famously argued that the post-Cold War period is characterized by forms of violent conflict (so-called 'new wars') which are radically unlike the modern forms of warfare which predominated before the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>49</sup>

The scale at which these historically-oriented approaches operate has been questioned and/or rejected, however, by a significant amount of authors working within CS. These authors have, instead, favoured a shift towards either the case-study format or comparative forms of research, and have distanced themselves from large-N cross-spatial/temporal studies. Kalyvas, for instance, has argued for the establishment of a research program which is concerned with

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<sup>49</sup> Though see for instance Kalyvas (2001) and Berdal (2003) for critiques of the new/old wars distinction.

‘the microdynamics of civil war’ (2003, 2008; see also Keen, 2005a), while others have sought to make use of interpretive or ethnographic methods in order to come to terms with the causes and nature of intra-state conflict (Richards, 2005; Nordstrom, 1997, 2004). In addition to simply engaging in smaller scale research, however, such approaches have also (i) tended to favour *qualitative* over *quantitative* methods (though see Weinstein, 2007; Wood, 2003b; Kalyvas, 2006, 2008 for exceptions), and (ii) tended to emphasize the fact that – against the universal/mechanistic forms of regularity which are stressed by positivist approaches – conflict is often characterized by various types of contingencies (Goodhand, 2006: 43; Tilly, 1995). This analytical orientation has always been a feature of Clausewitzian approaches to CS, which have historically emphasized the importance of *chance* in warfare (Schuurman, 2010), but has also been highlighted more recently by authors like Kalyvas (2006: 1-3).

A common complaint about the kinds of studies which such authors have developed, however, is fact that ‘they are overly descriptive, [that] they do not confirm any general theoretical constancy and [that] the more detailed they are the less useful they are for the rest of the world’ (Cramer, 2006: 92). This mirrors common claims in the philosophy and methodology of science, which have long opposed the nomothetic aims of the ‘hard’ sciences with the idiographic aims of case studies and interpretive/hermeneutic approaches. In order to avoid the conclusion that case studies are only relevant for idiographic purposes a number of CS authors have therefore sought to *incorporate* them into larger theoretical frameworks. Sambanis (2004a), for instance, makes use of qualitatively-oriented case-studies in order to identify/correct problems with two quantitative large-N studies. In particular, he argues that the incorporation of case studies/qualitative data can help us to establish measurements errors, explore exogeneity and establish omitted variables in these studies (also see Collier and Sambanis, 2005; Gates, 2008). While, as Sambanis claims, this provides us with a way of

engaging in Mixed-Method Research (MMR), it should also be noted that – in these kinds of studies – the role of case studies/qualitative data remains entirely subservient to the larger aim of developing nomothetic forms of theory. This is not, however, a *necessary* feature of MMR, as authors like Kalyvas and Wood have shown that MMR can also be used in order to test hypotheses at a much smaller scale. Whereas Kalyvas (2006, 2008) has employed both qualitative data and quantitative modelling in order to test his hypotheses about the civil war in Greece, for instance, Wood (2003) makes use of MMR to test the conclusions of her study about the El Salvadorian conflict. It should be noted, however, that the adoption of such an approach poses important questions about whether their results have any wider (nomothetic) relevance, or if they are limited to documenting unique cases (as in idiographic research).

A more radical challenge to these debates has come, however, from authors favouring a *complexity sciences* approach. This approach is closely associated with the work of David Keen (2005b, 2008), but is most explicitly described in Mark Duffield's *Global Governance and the New Wars* (2001). In this book Duffield seeks to problematize the mechanical and linear forms of explanation which he associates with Newtonian physics, and argues that these forms of explanation should be replaced by *complex* forms of analysis. This is the case, he argues, because the Newtonian framework – in which the world is understood as a 'perfect clockwork' and everything is 'reduced to a scientific cause and effect' (ibid: 10) – has been superseded by more recent approaches to science. These approaches include, in particular, quantum theory, non-linear mathematics, biotechnology and cybernetics, all of which – he argues – adopt the idea that the world should be understood in terms of organic, holistic and/or ecological principles. This means, in short, that – as opposed to understanding the world in terms of the properties of a *machine* (Newton's 'perfect clockwork') – we must understand it as an *integrated system* or an *organism*.

This has a number of important implications for our understanding of violent conflict, as Duffield (2001) argues that organic systems are primarily concerned with *self-renewal*. An adequate understanding of violent conflict therefore requires its analysis in terms of such processes of self-renewal as well. This means, in practice, that we should aim to uncover the *functions* which conflict serves, as the organic/systemic properties of the world entail that ‘there may be more to war than winning’ (Keen, 2000: 26). Indeed, as Duffield has argued, conflicts ‘are not necessarily about winning or securing a comprehensive settlement’ at all (2001: 81). Rather, they may be understood as a necessary precondition for the pursuit/realization of various elite agendas. Conflict should not, therefore, be understood as ‘simply a breakdown in a particular system’, but rather should be understood as ‘a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection’ (Keen, 2005b: 11). This means, importantly, that it is likely to be characterized by cooperation between the different (and supposedly opposing) factions, as these collude to benefit from war. Keen has shown, in fact, that this kind of behaviour has occurred in places like Liberia (the avoidance of pitched battles), Sierra Leone (the coordination of movements in and out of villages), Yugoslavia (the implementation of trading arrangements between the different factions), Chechnya and Peru (the paying of ransom for captured fighters), and Cambodia, Chechnya, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka (the selling of arms and ammunitions to the other side). The ‘system’ properties of war have therefore often manifested themselves in ‘the prevalence and persistence of behaviour that is, in military terms, counter-productive’ (ibid: 17).

This presupposes, however, that it is both necessary and intelligible to talk about entities like *social systems* at all. This claim has, however, long been rejected by various types of methodological individualists, who have – instead – adopted rational choice theories, neo-classical economic approaches, or the New Institutional Economics framework which is

associated with the work of Ronald Coase. These perspectives have been extremely influential throughout the CS literature, as they have been adopted by prominent economists like Paul Collier (2001), Jeremy Weinstein (2007), and Jack Hirshleifer (1994, 2001). These authors have denied – whether implicitly or explicitly – that it is necessary and/or intelligible to talk about distinctly *social* forms of determination at all, and have claimed that it is individual choices that should be the focus of our scientific attention. This claim has been rejected, however, by a heterodox range of ‘critical’ approaches to CS. These range from the aforementioned complexity sciences approach – with its emphasis on social systems – to a broader group of approaches which are concerned with the ways in which cultural, political and economic forces shape the lives of people in (pre-/post-) conflict settings.

This divide is not just philosophical in nature, however, as it has had a number of important methodological consequences as well. This has become apparent especially in the discussions about income inequality which a number of CS authors have engaged in. These discussions have revolved around the fact that income inequality is most commonly measured by means of the Gini-coefficient. This coefficient measure inequalities among *individuals*, however, and disregards inequalities among *groups*. If there exist, therefore, systematic inequalities between different groups within a society (say, between white, Creole, *assimilado*, and black African groups in Angola) the Gini-coefficient will not pick up on this (Cramer, 2006:161-162). This is not, of course, a problem for proponents of a (consistent) methodological individualism, but does create a number of important problems for authors who think it necessary to make reference to distinctly *social* forms of determination (Stewart, 2009). If we accept the idea that groups and/or social structures matter, after all, the Gini-coefficient is of limited use. This illustrates, importantly, that the philosophical ontology we adopt has important consequences for the concrete ways in which we approach the study of conflict as well.

The same also applies, importantly, to the two final methodological issues which will be discussed in this section as well. These are (i) the relationship between *empirical data* and *theory*, and (ii) the *types* of evidence which are considered admissible in the CS literature. With regard to the first of these, it is important to note that the *empiricism* which is characteristic of the positivist approach has increasingly been problematized by authors who stress the need for *theoretical reflexivity*. While such authors are still relatively few and far between in the CS literature, it should be noted that critics like Nordstrom have argued that our claims about violence are often more likely to reflect our own presumptions about it than the world outside of us. These claims, she argues, should be understood as ‘embedded in a spiral of personal, social, and cultural histories and experiences’ (1997: 118), and engaging in research about conflict therefore requires commitment to theoretical reflexivity. This is in profound contrast with the research practices which are favoured by positivist approaches, and therefore has the potential to become one of the most important factors which divides the CS literature.

This same applies, however, to the divide between the *types* of evidence which different approaches consider admissible. This concern relates, in particular, to the divide between those researchers who stress the importance of subjective factors, and those that stress the importance of objective (and usually *quantifiable*) factors. Collier, in one of his articles concerning the ‘greed vs. grievance’ divide, has for instance stated that ‘since both greed-motivated and grievance-motivated rebel organisations will embed their behaviour in a narrative of grievance, the observation of that narrative provides no informational content to the researcher as to the true motivation for rebellion’ (2003: 92). He contends, therefore, that we must make use of objective indicators only, and this paves the way for his adoption of an econometric/statistical approach to CS. This seems to discount the idea that interviews with Rwandan genocidaires (Fujii, 2009), participants in the Colombian, Sudanese and Turkish

conflicts (Metelits, 2010), or interviews with female ETA fighters (Hamilton, 2007) may provide us with useful information. Indeed, more broadly, it seems to discount the idea that *interpretive/hermeneutic* methods are of use to our investigations. Such claims are countered, however, by the broad range of authors who have continued to make use of such methods. In addition to this, however, they are also countered by authors like Cramer, who has argued that it is not at all clear that statistical research does provide us with a more objective picture, as these forms of research are ‘just as tainted by empirical fragility’ as many subjectivist approaches (2006: 93). Richards, as well, has contended that ‘Collier seems to be basically misinformed about how other social scientists approach their research. Anthropologists and others who take what people say seriously are not as naive as he assumes. Different interests tell untruths in different ways, and it is a standard part of anthropological method to reconstruct a more ‘objective’ picture through careful cross-referencing of ‘versions’ and ‘interests’ (2005: 11; see also Metelits, 2010: 9). Such arguments have not, however, diminished the divide between objectivist and subjectivist approaches to CS in practice.

It should be clear, therefore, that the way in which we are in fact likely to develop robust knowledge about violent conflict is extremely uncertain. As Goodhand has shown, in fact, the aforementioned kinds of methodological problems/questions have at times led to something of ‘a crisis of theory as well as a crisis of practice’ (2006: 42). While statistical/econometric work has, to some, seemed rather ‘like trying to remove splinters with an oven glove’ (Cramer, 2006: 110), others have professed serious doubts about the scientific status/merits of non-statistical, interpretive and/or small-scale research. It is these methodological concerns, therefore, that the next chapter will seek to address. Before doing so, however, we now turn to the second section of the current chapter, which reviews a number of the most important *social theoretical* debates which have occurred throughout the post-Cold War CS literature.



### 3.3 Social Theoretical Debates in Conflict Studies

As will become clear, however, the debate about methodological issues and the debate about social theoretical issues are not in fact fully separable. This is the case because the methodological choices which CS authors have made have often impacted on the social theoretical debates which they have engaged in as well. In particular, these methodological choices have underpinned (i) the *contrasting* conclusions which many studies have come to with regard to the *same* questions, and (ii) the *intractable* nature of many of the social theoretical debates which CS authors have engaged in. This is not to say, however, that the conclusions of these debates are fully determined by the methodological choices which CS authors have made. Rather, a number of additional issues have had an effect on the ways in which intra-state conflict has been understood as well. This section focuses on two of these issues in particular. The first of these issues is the ongoing debate among proponents of *materialist* and *idealist* approaches, while the second concerns the debate between *rationalist* and *affective* approaches. Both of these debates have proven to be extremely divisive in nature, and will therefore be addressed in fifth chapter of this project. Before doing so, however, it is essential that they are described in some detail. It is to a description of the first of these debates, therefore, that next few sections will turn.

In order to make sense of this debate it is, however, necessary to clarify what is meant by materialism and idealism first. These terms have, after all, been given various – and sometimes conflicting – meanings. Throughout this project I therefore opt for both fairly *broad*, and fairly *commonsensical*, understandings of both terms (Ryner, 2006). Materialism, as a philosophical position, is understood to underlabour for *political economy* approaches to the social sciences. This label is here used, again, in a fairly broad manner, and is understood

to contain not just modern-day *economics* and *political science* (as self-contained disciplines) but also a range of more interactive approaches (*political economy*, as the study of economic production/consumption and their relationship with politics/the state). Idealism, on the other hand, is understood as concerned with the realm of mind, (intersubjective) ideas, social construction, and meaning. As regards its focus, it is here understood as concerned with the realm of culture, and as embodied in disciplines like cultural studies, cultural anthropology, etc. These are, of course, common distinctions throughout social theory, and have proven to be extremely influential throughout the CS literature as well. As will be shown, most of the authors working in this discipline have strongly favoured one side at the expense of the other. This is not to say, however, that there is substantial agreement even *within* the two camps. Indeed, many debates have occurred between authors which are arguably on the same side of the idealism/materialism divide. As will be shown, however, this does not take away from the relevance of this distinction as one of the factors which underpins many CS debates.

The section which follows will therefore (i) review the most important claims which have been made by *idealist* approaches to CS, and (ii) review the most important claims which have been made by *materialist* approaches to CS. It is to the ideational side of the CS literature, however, that we direct our attention first. This is, perhaps, the side which was most influential during the immediate post-Cold War period, and has been responsible for a variety of influential claims about the causes/nature of intra-state conflict. Perhaps the best known among these, however, are claims about the effects of cultural – generally *ethnic* or *tribal* – difference. Such differences are stressed, for instance, in what is sometimes referred to as the ‘new barbarism’ thesis. This thesis claims that ‘the Super-Power balance of nuclear terror kept the lid on many local conflicts, but, once Cold War competition ended, endemic

hostilities reasserted themselves' (Richards, 2005: 6).<sup>50</sup> This assumes that the causes of conflict lie in the existence of innate or long-standing cultural (linguistic, religious, etc) differences between clearly demarcated ethnic/tribal groups, and that the very existence of these differences is responsible for what are commonly referred to as 'identity conflicts'. Such claims are perhaps most closely associated with the work of Robert Kaplan, who famously argued that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was a manifestation of ancient hatreds (2005 [1993]).<sup>51</sup> They are also apparent, however, in the work of the military historian John Keegan, who claimed that the war in Bosnia represented 'a primitive tribal conflict [which] only anthropologists can understand' (Keegan in Cramer, 2006: 99).

Such analyses are rooted particularly in early (especially colonial-era) anthropological accounts of non-Western societies, which generally understood the tribal or ethnic forms of affiliation which they encountered as the primary and most basic units of social organization. In addition to this, however, they clearly resonate with different forms of nationalist discourse as well, which have claimed that states and (historically-/culturally-/genetically-defined) identity groups should always be co-extensive. Most important, however, is the fact that these analyses resonate with the claims of certain *participants* in violent conflict. As Kaldor has shown, for instance, some of the parties that were involved in the Yugoslav conflict made

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<sup>50</sup> As Patrick Porter has written: 'After the Cold War, new communal conflicts again fascinated the West. This time, the focus was on mass murder in Africa, in the Caucasus and on Europe's doorstep. Television screens in the 1990s showed graphic images of ethnic cleansing and 'tribal' wars. As the Cold War ended, and with it the constraints of bipolar world order, a range of war erupted in Africa and the Balkans. Public commentators and state officials 'culturalised' these wars as pure, 'ethnic' struggles, inevitable eruptions of 'ancient hatreds'. The fall of the Soviet Union and Titoist Communism, which had contained these undying conflicts, now enabled their release. Non-Westerners from the former Yugoslavia to Rwanda fought each other not primarily because of immediate security crises, but because their ancestors did [...] Lawrence Eagleburger, a US adviser on Yugoslavia, insisted in September 1992 that the Bosnian war was 'not rational. There is no rationality at all about ethnic conflict. It is gut, it is hatred; it is not for any common set of values or purposes. This fatalism helped prevent international military intervention. General Colin Powell, his influence and prestige heightened by the 1991 Gulf war, staked his opposition to intervention on the idea that war sprang from 'deep ethnic and religious roots that go back a thousand years' (2009: 53)

<sup>51</sup> Kaplan's book on the Balkans (2005 [1993]) was partly responsible for the Clinton presidency's dithering on Bosnia (Richards, 2005: 6). Cramer notes, as well, that Kaplan's article, '*The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet*' 'was supposedly placed, on the orders of Bill Clinton, onto the desks of every US ambassador round the world' (2006: 30)

claims as to the primacy of long-standing cultural identities in causing and/or sustaining conflict. Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic, for instance, argued that Serbs, Croats and Muslims were ‘like cats and dogs’, ‘while Tudjman, the Croatian president, repeatedly emphasized that Serbs and Croats could not live together because Croats were Europeans while Serbs were Easterners, like Turks or Albanians’ (2007a: 36).

Such claims are, however, only one part of a much broader post-Cold War trend towards cultural explanations of war. A second example of these sorts of explanations is apparent in the in/famous ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis, which was developed by Samuel Huntington. Huntington claims that the ‘fundamental source of conflict’ in the post-Cold War era will ‘not be primarily ideological or primarily economic’ (1993: 22). Rather, ‘[t]he great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural’ (ibid). Although we are accustomed to grouping countries ‘in terms of their political or economic systems’ or according to ‘their level of economic development’, Huntington argues that those divisions will be much less relevant in the post-Cold War era. ‘Populist politicians, religious leaders and the media’, he claims, will be decreasingly able ‘to mobilize support on the basis of ideology’ and will therefore ‘increasingly seek to mobilize support by appealing to common religion and civilizational identity’ (ibid: 29). The fault lines *between* civilizations will therefore ‘be the battle lines of the future’, and will replace ‘the political and ideological boundaries of the Cold War as the flash points for crisis and bloodshed’ (ibid). At a micro-level, Huntington argues that ‘adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations [will] struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other. At the macro-level, [however,] states from different civilizations [will] compete for relative military and economic power, struggle over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their particular political and religious values’ (ibid).

Such claims have often been framed in terms of the *irrelevance* of Clausewitzian thought for understanding contemporary war. This is the case because *cultural* approaches have generally sought to position their claims as providing an alternative to the *political* understanding of war which Clausewitz is argued to represent (though see Schuurman, 2010; Kaldor, 2010). This sentiment is echoed, for instance, by Kaplan, who claims that ‘to see the future’ we need to ‘look back to the past immediately prior to the birth of modernism’ (2001: 46). This is the case because ‘[b]ack then [...] there was no politics as we have come to understand the term, just as there is less and less politics today in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, the Balkans, and the Caucasus’ (ibid; see also van Creveld, 1991). While such claims were popular in the immediate post-Cold War period, it should be noted that they have experienced something of a resurgence after the invasion of Iraq as well. These events have ‘shaken the naïve utopianism of the 1990s, whether the dream of the peaceful global village, post-national cosmopolitanism, or the ‘end of history’’ (Porter, 2009: 2). Indeed, it is now increasingly common to claim that in order to wage war we need to ‘become an anthropologist’, ‘[l]ose the fetish for Clausewitz, and embrace culture as the way to understand conflict’ (ibid: 55).

Serious questions have remained, however, about the explanatory power of broad concepts such as culture and/or ethnicity and tribe. As Duvesteyn (2000: 97) has argued, for instance, ‘ethnicity is a problematic term. It has a very broad definition, in which culture, religion, race, language, tradition, tribe, heritage, history and myth are all used to define and delimit ethnicity’. Various statistical studies concerning the link between ethnicity and conflict have, furthermore, come to conclusions with regard to its assumed analytical salience which seem to debunk culturalist arguments. Both Collier and Hoeffler (2002) and Fearon and Laitin (2003), for instance, have found that there is no clear relationship between ethnic fractionalization and intra-state conflict. Others, such as Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005),

have purported to show that it is not so much ethnic *fractionalization* as ethnic *polarization* that has an important effect on the occurrence of violent conflict. Cederman and Girardin (2007) and Wimmer, Cederman and Min (2007), however, have challenged the analytical salience of the Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization Index (ELF) which the results of these studies are based on. These studies have argued that the ELF ‘does not distinguish between politically salient versus politically nonsalient cleavages [...], that it ignores the religious and racial dimensions of ethnicity in favor of its linguistic dimension, and that it misspecifies the mechanisms linking ethnicity and conflict’ (Kalyvas, 2008: 1044). Numerous case-studies have furthermore come to conclusions which seem to debunk the explanatory importance of ethnic forms of affiliation. Duyvesteyn, in a study of the conflicts in Somalia and Liberia, for instance finds that these wars ‘were ethnic or clan wars [only] to the extent that they were made so by the factions. Ethnic and clan identity were highly flexible and fluid and the invaders consciously choosing an area where an appeal to ethnic identity might find fertile ground, were proven wrong’ (2000: 101).

It seems clear, therefore, that the explanatory power of ethnic or tribal identities is likely to be more nuanced than has often been presumed in the post-Cold War period. Certainly, it can be shown that these are not the ‘primordial’ forces that many earlier perspectives seem to have assumed it was. The increasing use that was made of terms such as ‘ethnic conflict’ and ‘identity conflict’ in the post-Cold War period is therefore potentially worrying, as it seems to entail that this label is simply ‘being used to describe all kinds of primitive looking conflicts in the world for which no other term is available’ (ibid). As a number of authors have shown, however, this does not mean that culture does not matter. Indeed, recent years have witnessed the rise of more nuanced approaches to understanding the role of culture in violent conflict. These approaches are particularly associated with the increasing influence of different forms

of social constructivism (ranging from ethno-symbolism to post-structuralism). These approaches have been particularly influential in the study of nationalism (Armstrong, 1982; Smith, 1988; Hutchinson and Smith: 1994), but have also begun to make an impact throughout the CS literature (Kaufman, 2001; Kalyvas, 2008; Fearon and Laitin, 2003). In doing so they have illustrated that the relationship between culture/identity and violent conflict is in fact much more complex than was previously assumed. This is the case for a number of reasons, but of particular importance are the fact that (i) identity groups are not always the primary social groups that they were presumed to be, and (ii) that they do not always command the high degree of loyalty/identification which some models assume. In addition to this, however, authors like Nordstrom (1991) have shown that the social construction (and reconstruction) of cultural life is essential not just to understanding violence itself, but also to the ways in which people *recover* from violence.

It should be noted, however, that even these more nuanced approaches have often been rejected by materialist forms of political economy. This is the case because these approaches have tended to adopt either *instrumentalist* or *reductionist* notions of identity/culture. That is to say, they have tended towards the idea that (i) culture/identity is something which is used instrumentally by elites in order to stir up violent conflict and/or maintain their grip on power, or (ii) that what are commonly understood as cultural entities can be better understood as vehicles for the achievement of various political or economic aims. Kaldor, for instance, has argued in favour of the *instrumentalist* position that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia – along with the aforementioned statements by Karadzic and Tudjman – should be understood ‘in terms of the struggle, on the part of increasingly desperate (and corrupt) elites, to control the remnants of the state’ (2007a: 37). Collier, however, has argued for the *reductionist* position that kin groups are best understood ‘as efficient responses to problems of information

and contract enforcement in traditional economies' (2001: 131). Whichever of these approaches is favoured, however, it should be noted that both are unified in their desire *to reduce culture/identity to other social (political or economic) forces*. This does not mean, however, that the materialist side of the debate has been united in terms of the claims which it has sought to make. Indeed, this side of the debate has been characterized by a number of important debates as well, and it is therefore to an overview of the materialist literature that the chapter will turn at present.

A major concern in this literature – often developed in conscious contradiction with the culturally-oriented literature – has been the *economics* of intra-state conflict. This orientation has extended from a concern with global economic changes (notably globalisation) for the *funding* of violent conflict (Kaldor, 2007a; Münkler, 2004) to the economic *causes* of violent conflict as such. A major figure in initiating this orientation has been Jack Hirshleifer (1994, 2001), who is a proponent of what he has termed 'muscular economics' (1994: 2).<sup>52</sup> This approach holds that, throughout history, individuals have consistently faced a choice between *production* and *appropriation/confiscation*. This means, importantly, that the whole of human history can be understood as 'a record of the tension between the way of Niccolo Machiavelli and [...] the way of Ronald Coase. According to Coase's Theorem, people will never pass up an opportunity to cooperate by means of mutually advantageous exchange' (ibid). The Machiavelli Theorem, however, claims that 'no one will ever pass up an opportunity to gain a one-sided advantage by exploiting another party' (ibid). It is the latter, Hirshleifer argues, that we must come to terms with if we are to understand conflict. Indeed, Hirshleifer contends that

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<sup>52</sup> Hirshleifer is decidedly dismissive of the efforts of other disciplines. He states, for instance, that as economists come to explore the 'continent' of CS, they 'will encounter a number of native tribes – historians, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, etc. – who, in their various intellectually primitive ways, have preceded us in reconnoitring the dark side of human activity. Once we economists get involved, quite properly we'll of course be brushing aside these a-theoretical aborigines' (Hirshleifer, 1994: 3). 'When these researchers do good work', he argues, they're doing economics!' (ibid)



‘with a few obvious exceptions’, cooperation ‘occurs only in the shadow of conflict’, and that when people do cooperate, ‘it is generally a conspiracy for aggression against others (or, at least, is a response to such aggression)’ (ibid).

Not all economic approaches have been quite as forceful in their economism as Hirshleifer however, and neither have all of these approaches adopted his methodological individualism. It is clearly the case, however, that there has been a dramatic increase of interest in the study of economic agendas throughout the post-Cold War period. Various authors have sought to prioritize the explanatory importance of economic agendas in explaining the occurrence and persistence of intra-state conflict. Collier (1999, 2000, 2003) – who clearly does favour a methodological individualist approach – has for instance claimed that it is ‘greed’ rather than ‘grievance’ which explains the occurrence of violent conflict. After providing statistical evidence which purports to show that grievance-based approaches to violent conflict are incorrect, Collier contends that ‘the reason that the grievance theory is so at variance with the actual pattern of conflict is that it misses the importance of what social scientists call the ‘collective action problem’. Justice, revenge, and relief from grievance are ‘public goods’ and so are subject to the problem of free-riding’ (2003: 98). Such collective action problems, he argues, play a much less significant role in greed-based violence as (i) ‘the benefits of the rebellion can be confined to those who participate in it’, (ii) violent activity ‘does not need to be so large as to be victorious nationally in order to gain spasmodic control of some territory and so be predatory on the export trade in primary commodities’, and (iii) ‘rebel recruits can be paid during the conflict’ rather than having to wait for political promises to materialise at some future date (ibid: 100). This line of argument allows us to characterize violent forms of rebellion as a quasi-criminal forms of activity (Collier, 2000), or – as Herschel Grossman (1999) has described them – as the result of kleptocratic forms of rivalry.

It is not only by linking it to the interest maximization of individual humans beings, however, that CS authors have increasingly sought to explore the economics of intra-state conflict. Drawing on the *systems* logic of the complexity sciences approach, for instance, Keen has argued that conflicts in the Global South have often persisted ‘not so much *despite* the intentions of rational people, as *because* of them’ (2005b: 11). The apparent chaos of civil war, he claims, ‘can be used to further local and short-term interests’, and these are ‘frequently *economic* [in nature]: to paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz, war has increasingly become the continuation of economics by other means’ (ibid). Such arguments are echoed by William Reno, who has written – in the context of a chapter on the war in the Central African Republic – that warfare may be understood as ‘an instrument of enterprise and violence as a mode of accumulation’ (2000: 57). These claims have become part of a broader argument in the economics of intra-state conflict, which – like the cultural approaches discussed above – have claimed that we have now entered a *post-Clausewitzian* era of warfare. This is the case, it is argued, because post-Cold War conflicts have not been driven ‘by a Clausewitzian logic of forwarding a set of *political* aims, but rather by powerful *economic* motives and agendas’ (Berdal and Malone, 2000: 4, emphasis mine).

Such arguments have, among a number of other things, resulted in an increasing focus on the role of natural resources in (causing/extending) violent conflict. As for instance Le Billon (2001: 562) has stated, there is now a ‘growing concern that whereas resources were once a means of funding and waging armed conflict for states to a political end, armed conflict is increasingly becoming the means to individual commercial ends: gaining access to valuable resources’. This concern has led many to embrace the idea that resource-rich countries in the Global South are *particularly* likely to experience violent conflict. As Cramer points out, the so-called ‘resource-curse’ argument ‘is accepted by many people simply because of the

dramatic association between countries with huge natural resource wealth and warfare. The standard examples are Angola, seen as a play-off between oil and diamonds, Sierra Leone with its timber and diamonds, and Congo with its copper, gold, coltan (columbite-tantalite) and other precious minerals' (2006: 191). It should be noted, however, that the evidence concerning these kinds of claims issues provides us with a much more uncertain picture.

Although numerous case-studies seem clearly to support the idea that natural resources have fuelled (if not necessarily caused) intra-state conflict, for instance, many econometric/statistical studies have shown contradictory results with regard to the existence of a more systematic relationship.<sup>53</sup> Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2004), for instance, find evidence that there is a strong relationship between natural resource-dependence in exports and the occurrence of violent conflict. Fearon, however, shows that this result is extremely fragile and illustrates that '[m]inor changes in the sample framing and the recovery of missing data undermine it' (2005: 483). He argues, instead, that any association is likely to be related to oil production, as 'substantial oil production does associate with civil war risk' (ibid). Di John (2007: 975), however, finds (i) that 'there are substantial grounds to suggest that significant correlation between oil abundance and civil war is not robust', and (ii) that 'there are also grounds to doubt, even in the case that there is a correlation, whether oil causes civil war'. Le Billon (2001), as well, rejects the existence of a relationship between violent conflict and natural resources *as such*. He argues, instead, that more attention needs to be paid to whether resource production is 'diffuse' or 'centralized' and whether it takes place in areas which are easily controlled by governments. These issues, he argues, have a significant impact on the *type* of violence which is likely to occur. Where resources are both diffuse and distant, he contends, 'conflict between warlords is likely [...] Where resources are diffuse but close,

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<sup>53</sup> See Michael L. Ross's *What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War?* (2004) for an early overview of the statistical literature on this topic.

rebellions or riots are likely [...] Where resources are concentrated and distant, secessionist conflicts are likely [...] And where resources are concentrated and close, coups and other forms of state takeover are likely' (Wood, 2003a: 248). The evidence on the role of resource abundance in *systematically* causing/extending violent conflict is therefore highly contentious.

Indeed, arguments about resource *abundance* may be contrasted with popular arguments that have stressed the importance of resource *scarcity* and/or environmental degradation in causing intra-state conflict. This argument is most closely associated with the neo-Malthusian writings of Homer-Dixon (1991, 1999), but has also been adopted by authors like Kaplan. Homer-Dixon argues that, at an analytical level, the social sciences 'need to bring nature back in' (in Kaplan, 2002: 23). Indeed, he contends that, especially as a result of growing population-pressures, we 'have to stop separating politics from the physical world – the climate, public health, and the environment' (ibid). With regard to conflict, however, he has argued that various forms of scarcity are now closely related to its occurrence/continuation. There are, according to Homer-Dixon, two main ways in which conflict is generated by the scarcity of natural resources. The first of these concerns the fact that, in situations of scarcity, elites will attempt to capture resources, thereby marginalizing less powerful groups. This argument is complemented, however, by the claim that resource scarcity results in an 'ingenuity gap'. This means that, as countries face the increasing scarcities which characterize their situation, these scarcities themselves start to 'overwhelm efforts to produce constructive change' and undermine 'a country's ability to deliver reform. Consequently, environmental scarcity sometimes helps to drive society into a self-reinforcing spiral of violence, institutional dysfunction, and social fragmentation' (in de Soysa, 2000: 117).

Such claims are echoed by Kaplan as well, who states that we need to begin to understand the environment as ‘a hostile power’ (2002: 19), and has argued that ‘it is Thomas Malthus, the philosopher of demographic doomsday, who is now the prophet of West Africa's future (ibid: 9). ‘For a while’, he claims, ‘the media will continue to ascribe riots and other violent upheavals abroad mainly to ethnic and religious conflict. But as these conflicts multiply, it will become apparent that something else is afoot’ (ibid: 19). It is important to note, however, that – once again – serious questions have remained about the extent to which such claims are in fact scientifically supportable. De Soysa, in an econometric study, has for instance argued that – although there is evidence to support the claim that ‘countries with an abundance of mineral wealth are likely to suffer greed-motivated rebellion’ – there is ‘little evidence to suggest that scarcity of renewable resources is a significant predictor of armed conflict’ (2000: 113-14; Gleditsch, 1998). Cramer, as well, has claimed that famines – perhaps the archetypal examples of scarcity – ‘are more often a *consequence* than a *cause* of warfare. Most famines in Africa during the twentieth century, for example, were the direct or indirect product of political conflict and war’ (2006: 116, emphases mine). Such contradictory claims have left the relevance of resource scarcity, like the relevance of resource abundance, unclear.

This applies to another major issue of concern for approaches with an economic orientation as well. This issue has revolved around the claim that (extremes of) poverty and/or income inequality have important conflict-promoting effects. There are two main varieties of this argument. The first of these revolves around the idea that conflict results from *utility maximization* by the poor. According to Hirshleifer, for instance, ‘the poor have a *comparative advantage* in conflict as opposed to production’ (1994: 7). This is the case because ‘[p]oor people do not forego much by selecting violence, precisely because there is little else on offer for them anyway. So, where there are lots of poor people with few

opportunities for peaceable employment there is a greater likelihood that they will make for an aggregate choice of collective violence' (Cramer, 2006: 126). A second approach, however, stresses the importance of *economic grievances*. As authors like Goodhand have pointed out, most donor policy is 'underpinned by the assumption that poverty and social exclusion cause violent conflict. Poverty eradication programs are therefore justified [...] as a form of conflict prevention or management' (2003: 629).<sup>54</sup>

While the latter assumption may seem like common sense, the evidence concerning this issue is – again – ambiguous. A number of case-studies, for instance, have supported the idea that there is indeed a strong relationship between poverty/income inequality and the occurrence of intra-state conflict (Binswanger [et al], 1995). Marginalized populations as well, have often been perceived to be (more) 'likely to turn to organized banditry. Particular social conditions, such as a surplus rural population or an economic crisis' are also held to be 'conducive to the development of predatory violence' (Goodhand, 2006: 636). Such claims are supported by a number of econometric/statistical studies, which have shown that there is indeed a strong correlation between high levels of income inequality and conflict (Nafziger and Auvinen, 2002). The 2003 World Bank report *Breaking the Conflict Trap* (written predominantly by Paul Collier), however, purports to show that explanations which are rooted in the conflict-promoting effects of income inequality *do not* in fact sit comfortably with the statistical record (2003: 53). Collier (along with Anke Hoeffler) had previously argued, in fact, that 'greater [income] inequality significantly *reduces* the risk and duration of war' (1996: 7, emphasis mine). In a later model of theirs (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998), however, the effect of income inequality (whether negative or positive) seems to disappear entirely, while Fearon

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<sup>54</sup> This sentiment was echoed by the former president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn. Asked what he thought the causes of terrorism were, Wolfensohn answered that it was caused by '[p]overty and inequality. Failure to understand this means closing our eyes to the origin of the resentment of the poor against the north' (Wolfensohn quoted in Cramer, 2006: 90).

and Laiton's study (2003: 85) finds that 'estimates of income inequality do not come close to either statistical or substantive significance'. This seems, therefore, to undermine the claim that economic inequality/poverty promote conflict, leading some to conclude that 'quantitative and statistical studies have failed to prove the existence of any event regularity, any empirical pattern connecting quantifiable indicators in repeated and predictable patterns' (Cramer, 2006: 93). Indeed, the fact that 'equally dramatic degrees of income inequality can be associated with very different political outcomes across countries' seems to confound 'effort to prove an empirical law of the kind: whenever inequality is so high then the following will happen' (ibid: 94).<sup>55</sup>

If the evidence in favour of asserting that economic factors are decisive in causing conflict has remained ambiguous, therefore, it is important to note that there are a significant amount of authors who have purported to show that non-economic agendas play an important role in intra-state conflict. Cramer (2006: 132), for instance, has shown that economic models (particularly those making use of methodological individualist/rational choice assumptions) seem to lead to a problematic understanding of rebel recruitment/organization. With regard to the FARC in Colombia, for instance, he shows that (i) 'neat economic motives cannot explain the membership and sustainability' of this organisation, and (ii) that the collective action problem which, as we have seen, is emphasized by Collier is 'not resolved simply by allowing individuals to loot' (ibid: 132). Indeed, joining the FARC is not 'a straightforward labour market substitute for farming or agricultural wage labour', as it 'does not pay its soldiers or

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<sup>55</sup> Such problems are only made worse, however, by the fact that research concerning the effects of inequality on violent conflict is arguably plagued by the effects of problematic coding rules. This is the case because the econometric literature depends on coding a country as either at war or peace, and thereby assumes that there exists a neat separation between the two. Such a separation is however arguably rather *too* neat. This is the case because many countries, like South Africa and Brazil, are not officially described as being in a state of civil war. They are, however, characterized by both staggering levels of income-inequalities and large-scale/widespread forms of violence. The aforementioned statistical/econometric studies, however, will not pick up on such violence. Income inequalities may therefore very well be playing an important role in causing/sustaining violence in non-war settings but, because of the coding rules which are applied in statistical/econometric studies, such information will not filter through (Cramer, 2006: 74)

cadres and they are explicitly forbidden to take booty from their attacks. Yet most recruitment is reportedly voluntary and there is little defection to the paramilitary groups that do pay their troops' (ibid: 132-33). In addition to not getting paid, however, the life of a FARC recruit is likely to be extremely harsh as well, as 'an onerous moral code prevails, family ties are cut, and the high personal risks involved in membership are reflected in a poor statistical record in military encounters with government forces and anti-rebel paramilitaries' (ibid: 133). Such evidence is, of course, potentially damning for authors who favour the adoption of an economic approaches to CS.

The same applies, however, to culturally- and economically-oriented approaches which favour the idea that we have entered a post-Clausewitzian era of warfare. Authors like Duyvesteyn (2000, 2012), for instance, have claimed that political agendas remain prominent features even of contemporary wars. In particular, she has argued that – in the cases of Liberia and Somalia – war was still clearly used by the various factions as a political instrument. These factions, she argues, 'are potential states in the making. They are political units which use armed force to promote their aims and rely on people to fight in their ranks' (2000: 105). This is the case because, in both countries, the factions 'moved for the capital, which was seen as the seat of power, and whomever could control this, would be in control of the country. The right to rule lay in the occupation of the presidential mansion. The disagreements over who should rule, more than how the country should be ruled, provided an important impetus in keeping the war going after the presidents were removed from power. War was initially a creator of politics and later on once a political arena had been created, war was a continuation of the fight over the exclusive control of politics' (2000: 108). Such claims are echoed by authors like Richards (2005), Porter (2009), and Schuurman (2010) as well. Richards, for instance, has argued that '[w]ar, like peace, is organised by social agents' and – in



contradiction with the claims of post-Clausewitzian approaches – claims that it should therefore be understood as a ‘long-term struggle organized for political ends’ (2005: 4). This is echoed by Porter, who argues – with regard to cultural understandings of the Yugoslav conflict – that ‘ethnicity was not an inherent disease of these cultures. It was a totem and a vehicle for violence, but the conflicts had politics at the core’ (2009: 53). Such claims lead Schuurman to reject the distinction between Clausewitzian (political) and post-Clausewitzian (economic or cultural) periods of warfare, as he claims that they show that Clausewitz’s ‘trinitarian concept of war has withstood the test of time, being as applicable now as it was during the Napoleonic era’ (2010: 97).

This trinitarian approach to understanding warfare is, however, important for another reason as well. Concretely, this approach matters because it provides us with an interesting perspective concerning another debate which has divided the post-Cold War CS literature. This is the debate between those who have stressed the *rationality* of violent conflict, and those who have stressed its *affective* nature. The trinitarian approach which Clausewitzian authors adopt has always stressed that warfare necessarily *combines* reason (instrumentality), affect (passion/hostility), and chance. This embraces both sides of the aforementioned debate. This is not the case, however, when it comes to a number of other prominent approaches to CS. Proponents of the idea that contemporary forms of conflict are manifestations of a ‘new barbarism’ or of ‘ancient hatreds’, for instance, clearly favour the explanatory importance of affectivity. This applies to many approaches to understanding the 9/11 attacks as well. As Porter has written, it is often claimed that Bin Laden’s mass-casualty terrorism ‘was senseless, [and] inspired by religious fury without [a] rational, political purpose’ (2009: 2). To commentators who have adopted this perspective the 9/11 attacks have appeared to be ‘the work of a death cult, staging a theatre of horror for its own sake’ (ibid).

Other affective factors which are commonly attributed to those who have engaged in violent acts, however, include a sense of powerlessness and the ‘impulse to restore self-respect’, as well as ‘group pressures, regard for comrades, respect for leaders, concern for reputation and the urge to contribute to the success of the group’ (Goodhand, 2006: 42). Goodhand, indeed, argues that ‘conflict generates and is sustained by a certain type of emotional economy’ and ‘may provide a language that is meaningful and empowering for those involved’ (ibid). Central to Al Qaeda’s ideology, he claims, ‘is the idea of cosmic struggle, the history of mankind being seen as a ‘perpetual war between belief and unbelief’ (ibid). ‘Violence, language and symbols are’, in this context, ‘skilfully deployed to build emotional bonds between ‘brothers in arms’’ (ibid). Such claims are echoed by Van Creveld (1991: 161-162) as well, who argues that ‘[j]ust as it makes no sense to ask ‘why people eat’ or ‘what they sleep for’ so fighting in many ways is not a means but an end. Throughout history, for every person who has expressed his horror of war there is another who found in it the most marvellous of all the experiences that are vouchsafed to man, even to the point that he later spent a lifetime boring his descendants by recounting his exploits’.

Violence may therefore be understood as rooted in important affective mechanisms. A key author in developing this analytical orientation has been the psychiatrist James Gilligan (2000), who – after decades of working with violent inmates in US prisons – argued that violent behaviour results predominantly from feelings of shame. This is echoed by CS authors like Keen as well, who argues that ‘[o]ne of the most important roots of violence is a sense of having been *humiliated*. Combatants have frequently harboured some sense of humiliation, whether arising from wartime or peacetime, and this can feed their own violence’ (2008: 50). Indeed, violence in wartime ‘has often been designed to humiliate the victims, and this offers a significant clue to understanding the importance of humiliation in *producing* (or at least

contributing to) that violence' (ibid). As he goes on to show, forms of humiliation were key to violence in places like Sierra Leone and Cambodia, and often involved demands for respect by the perpetrators, forms of status inversion, and the humiliation of victims. In Sierra Leone, for instance, violence involved 'attempts to compel 'approval' of, or indifference towards, atrocities from the relatives of those directly abused – as if the rebels were staging a bizarre drama with a script that made them, for once, look like 'big men'. In some instances, chiefs were made to dance naked, to plant swamp rice, to crawl about on the floor, or to act as 'waiter' to the rebel invaders' (ibid: 52).

This perspective makes for an interesting contrast with the claims of rationalist approaches to CS. Indeed, it makes for an interesting contrast with Keen's earlier claims as well, as his work previously emphasized the *economic rationalities* which underpin contemporary violent conflict. This means, as we have seen, that it focused on the *functions* of violence, and that – by drawing on the aforementioned complexity sciences approach – it likened conflict to a self-renewing social system. This resulted in an understanding of violent conflict as a phenomenon which reflects 'a rational analysis of cost and benefits' (Keen and Berdal, 1997: 796), which seems strangely at odds with his later emphasis on affect. Or, to turn this claim on its head, Keen's later emphasis on the importance of affect seems strangely at odds with the functionalism which is inherent to the complexity sciences approach. More consistent are economists like Hirshleifer and Collier. These authors have, quite clearly, favoured the explanatory importance of rationality with regard to explaining violent conflict. As Goodhand points out, the models of conflict which they favour have built on 'the idea of players making choices', as it is assumed that 'actors will choose conflict when it is more profitable' (2006: 38). This has led, for instance, to Hirshleifer's (1994) aforementioned claim that violence must be understood as resulting from the choice which people make between production and

appropriation/confiscation. It should be noted, however, that the adoption of such a rationalist strategy has not been systematic throughout the economics discipline. Other economists have ‘associated sectarian conflicts with pre-capitalism’ and have therefore expected them ‘to fade away with the development of markets, modern technology and capitalist institutions’ (Bardham in Goodhand, 2006: 36). Conflict, instead of *already* being characterized by the making of rational choices, was therefore treated as something of a ‘black box’, ‘an irrational but temporary distortion that was likely to be alleviated through trade and industry’ (ibid). The idea that rational choice/economic models apply irrespective of the activity concerned (production *as well as* appropriation/dispossession by means violent conflict) was indeed developed in quite conscious contradiction to affective analytical models.

The claim that intra-state violent conflict is an irrational distortion which is likely to be alleviated by means of trade and industry, however, is perhaps more representative of the consensus which developed in the post-Cold War period. This is the case because this period witnessed the rise of a number of ‘neo-modernization’ approaches (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2002). These approaches are rooted in the modernist/liberal triumphalism which characterized the immediate post-Cold War context, and have ‘increasingly reimagined [modernization] as a *global* process’ (ibid: 103). This reimagining has, importantly, involved ideas about the expansion of a liberal/modernist zone of peace to states in the Global South in a prominent manner. In International Relations (IR) – and hence at the level of *inter-state* warfare – this has resulted in various debates about the de/merits of what is often termed the democratic peace theory. Within CS, however, it has resulted in debates about whether ‘development’ (towards a modern/liberal/capitalist/democratic/etc society) is beneficial for/necessary to ending violent conflict.

These debates have resulted in a number of distinctive positions, both *modernist* and *critical* in orientation. It is these positions which the last few sections of this chapter will discuss, beginning with the modernist perspective. This position is perhaps best described by the World Bank report *Breaking the Conflict Trap* (Collier, 2003), which argued that war should be understood as ‘development in reverse’ (ibid: ix), and thereby gave voice to what was increasingly becoming a commonsensical notion after the Cold War. That is to say, it gave voice to the idea that conflict is destructive and results in underdevelopment and, in turn, that underdevelopment results in increased risk of (recurring) violent conflict. As the report states, its main contention is that ‘[w]ar retards development, but conversely, development retards war. This double causation’, it argues, ‘gives rise to virtuous and vicious circles. Where development succeeds, countries become progressively safer from violent conflict, making subsequent development easier. Where development fails, [however] countries are at high risk of becoming caught in a conflict trap in which war wrecks the economy and increases the risk of further war’ (ibid: 1). Warfare therefore reflects ‘not just a problem *for* development, but a failure *of* development’ as well (ibid). Such sentiments have been echoed throughout the entire development studies literature. Indeed, as Mark Duffield has shown, the claim that ‘development requires security, while security is impossible without development’ has, throughout the post-Cold War period, been ‘repeated to the point of monotony in countless government reports, political statements, UN documents, NGO briefs, academic works, and so on. Indeed, it now qualifies as an accepted truth of the post-Cold War era’ (2005: 142).

Implicit in this understanding of violent conflict is the idea that modernization is inherently pacifying. If wars are driven by ‘antiquated, unenlightened attitudes and motives’, after all, the obvious way forward is ‘to tackle them with the instruments of the Enlightenment; the overcoming of irrationalism, and the gradual shifting of behaviour from passions to interests,

from traditional ties to individual purposive rationality, should help a peace orientation to gain general acceptance' (Münkler, 2004: 91).<sup>56</sup> Such sentiments are echoed by *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, which bases its argument on the pacifying effects of *economic* development. Its modernizing impulse has, however, been echoed by authors who have adopted a broader definition of the concept as well.<sup>57</sup> These definitions incorporate concerns with decidedly 'modern' developmental themes like constitutionalism, electoral democracy, the building of effective (centralized/bureaucratic) states, and the securing of human rights<sup>58</sup> into the analysis of what causes/resolves violent conflict. As the UN's *An Agenda for Peace* stated in the immediate post-Cold War period, for instance: 'The sources of conflict and war are pervasive and deep. To reach them will require our utmost effort to enhance respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to promote sustainable economic and social development for wider prosperity, to alleviate distress and to curtail the existence and use of massively destructive weapons' (Boutros-Gali, 1992).

This is echoed by authors like Kaldor as well, who favours a *human security* approach to understanding and resolving conflict (2007a, 2007b). This approach involves the spread of cosmopolitan values across the globe, in order to counter the particularistic identity claims which she holds responsible for causing violent conflict. These cosmopolitan values, Kaldor argues, tend 'to be more widespread in the West and less widespread in the East and the South' (Kaldor in Barkawi and Laffey, 2006: 342), and – as Barkawi and Laffey have pointed out – 'Europe and the West [therefore] show to the rest of the world its cosmopolitan and

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<sup>56</sup> Kaplan states, for instance, that '[p]hysical aggression is a part of being human. Only when people attain a certain economic, educational, and cultural standard is this trait tranquilized' (2002: 45).

<sup>57</sup> The World Bank's more recent World Development Report (2011) on *Conflict, Security and Development*, for instance, broadens its developmental concerns beyond economic development, and towards institutional legitimacy, investment in security, justice, jobs, etc.

<sup>58</sup> Alfredo Sfeir-Younis – Senior Adviser at the Managing Directors' Office of the World Bank – argues that human rights are not just 'exogenous legal and regulatory constraints' but instead should be understood as a form of capital which forms 'an integral part of the institutional framework ('rules of the game') that defines the process of sustainable development' (2004: 386)

peaceful future' (ibid). This frames Kaldor's analyses of conflict in terms of a number of important oppositions. These include, in particular, the oppositions of *cosmopolitanism/particularism*, *peace/violence*, and *the west/the rest*, in which cosmopolitanism/peace/the west are understood as broadly equivalent, and particularism/violence/the rest are as well. Kaldor's work therefore consistently frames the causes/continuation of violent conflict in terms of the *absence* of modern social arrangements. In doing this she is not alone, however. Indeed, this kind of framing is a feature of a substantial amount of the (modernist) literature which appeared in the post-Cold War period. Of particular importance in this regard is the literature on 'statelessness', 'quasi-states' and/or 'failed states' (Jackson, 1993; Rotberg, 2004). This literature, like Kaldor's work, consistently frames discussions of conflict in terms of a failure to (fully) achieve modern forms of statehood.

The truth of this assumed relationship between conflict and modernization/development has not, however, remained beyond dispute throughout the CS literature. Indeed, numerous *critical* authors have sought to challenge the assumptions of the 'development/modernity = peace' thesis. Collier and Rohner (2008: 531), for instance, argue that democracy – rather than enhancing the peaceable nature of societies – may in fact reduce 'the technical possibilities of government repression', and therefore makes rebellion easier. Indeed, after providing econometric evidence which seems to support the aforementioned thesis, they claim that 'both Stalin and Saddam Hussein were able to maintain peace through intense repression despite manifest reasons for popular grievance. In both societies, more democratic successor governments have faced more violence because accountability to the law has limited what security services are permitted to do. Democracy thus generates *technical regression in repression*' (ibid). In Collier's more recent work he has found, however, that this effect is only apparent in *low-income* countries as, 'in countries that were at least at middle-income

levels, democracy systematically reduced the risk of political violence' (2010: 20). These conclusions are supported by the results which a number of other studies have provided as well. The econometric study by Hegre (2003), for instance, has also found that democracy is correlated with peace only in rich countries. Such results seem, therefore, to reinforce the idea that *economic* development – if not necessarily political development – has pacifying effects.

This view is disputed, however, by a variety of authors who have taken a much longer view of the development/conflict nexus. In particular, this category includes proponents of perhaps the two most prominent forms of historical sociology: *Marxian* approaches to CS and *Weberian* approaches to CS. Christopher Cramer, who draws particularly on the insights of Marxian accounts of development<sup>59</sup>, has for instance argued that '[I]urking beneath all of these arguments [about the pacifying effects of economic development] is an implicit assumption, the counterfactual fantasy of a nice and smooth form of capitalist development' (2006: 95). He argues, however, that capitalist development – rather than being pacifying in nature – has historically almost invariably been violent in nature. This is the case because '[b]efore any possible violence *of* capitalism, there is conflict and often violence in the ruptures in societies undergoing a transformation *to* capitalism' (ibid: 206). Indeed, Cramer claims that the history of capitalism 'has entailed more than the gradual accretion of market transactions', as economic history shows that 'capitalist social and economic organisation is not an eternally 'natural' propensity of humanity, but [rather] is a historically specific form of organisation that was resisted by many groups of people before it triumphed' (ibid: 207). Such claims are echoed by Goodhand (2006: 36) as well, who has argued that 'processes of development involving a hesitant transition to capitalism have rarely been smooth and conflict-free. They have involved bitter struggles between competing groups over material interests. [...] Such

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<sup>59</sup> See for instance Scott (1976), Moore (1966) and Wolf (1971) for influential accounts which draw on Marxian insights concerning the nature of capitalist development.



processes have been accompanied by violent conflict with war-making often being the midwife for wider economic and societal changes'. Such a 'tragic view of history'<sup>60</sup>, he contends, 'challenges the liberal assumption that all good things come together, or in other words, that the diffusion of capitalism and liberal democracy will lead to the Kantian ideal of perpetual peace' (ibid). Marxian approaches to CS have argued, instead, that - if we are to make sense of violent conflict – it is necessary for us to come to terms with the violence which is often inherent to transitions from pre-capitalist modes of production to the capitalist mode of production. This involves, in particular, coming to terms with notions like primitive accumulation, the (often violent) separation of labourers from the means of production, etc.

This focus on transitions in economic production is problematized, however, by Weberian approaches to historical sociology. These approaches – though they share a critical orientation towards modernist approaches with Marxian authors – have tended to stress the importance (and autonomy) of the state/politics instead. Drawing particularly on the work of Tilly (1985, 1993, 2003), Mann (1986, 1993, 2012), and Skocpol (1979, 1994), Weberian approaches have argued that (i) there is nothing *inherently* pacific about liberal modernity<sup>61</sup>, and (ii) that (international) war has historically been essential to both state-formation and the achievement of economic growth. Münkler (2004), for instance, has argued that it is predominantly the

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<sup>60</sup> See also Jeffrey Vogel's 'The Tragedy of History'. Vogel argues that '[m]odern social and political thought has inherited two fundamental values from the Enlightenment: a belief in human rights or human dignity, and a belief in human progress or human destiny. Marx's theory of history emphasizes that these fundamental values of modern political consciousness historically have been and still are in irreconcilable conflict. Marxism is noted among Enlightenment theories of human progress for emphasizing that this progress is unavoidably painful and conflict-ridden' (1996: 36).

<sup>61</sup> Mann argues, for instance, that 'the association of liberalism, constitutionalism or democracy with pacifism is a complete and utter fabrication' (1996: 234). He claims, instead '[t]hat the great modern ideologies, of nationalism, of liberalism and – including the Soviet experience – of socialism, should have committed such systematic near genocidal atrocities exactly as they were achieving their greatest successes seem more than bad luck. Their great mobilising drives, their universalistic and inclusionary drives towards the nation, towards Europeans or towards the proletariat were all associated with the emergence of a great, evil, sub-human Other – traitors to the nation or the class and 'coloured' or 'heathen' peoples. Universalism and comradeship within, militarism and near-genocide without. Is this the essential paradox of Western civilisation? And if a more pacific liberalism may be at last triumphing over the West, is this mainly because it violently defeated its nation-statist and socialist rivals, annihilated its own Other in the settler colonies, and retreated from its own Other in the remaining colonies? I fear the answers are positive' (ibid: 237).

increasing costs of war (both human and material) that has resulted in the pacification of Europe. This ‘began with industrialization and continued at first gradually but then at an exponential rate’, and has resulted in a dramatically increased prioritization of peaceful interaction over the pursuit of war. Although parallel transformations towards purposive (economic) rationality and the development of institutional arrangements (particularly representative democracy) – essential features of most arguments in favour of the supposed pacifying effects of modernization/development – played a role as well, Münkler argues that it is the increase in the costs of warfare that ‘has been the essential precondition for the effectiveness of the other two elements, and for the decline in the will and capacity to fight wars’ (ibid: 118). If this argument is correct development/modernity as such did not result in the increased peacefulness of the Global North. Rather, it is the tendency of modern states towards increasingly large-scale industrialized aggression (‘total wars’) which eventually resulted in a situation which was unsustainable, and has therefore allowed for a transition towards a more peaceful situation to take place.

Such sentiments are echoed by Dannreuther (2007) as well, who has argued that, when we consider the contemporary reality of an internal peace in Europe, ‘it is important to keep in mind’ the legacy ‘of a highly competitive and war-prone historical past. The influential ‘democratic peace theory’’, he argues, ‘tends to skirt over this longer-term historical evolution’ (ibid: 314). This theory can, according to Münkler, more accurately be described by the statement that democracies do not fight *symmetrical* war, ‘because a population that pursues its own interests and influences political decisions through its voting behaviour has not been willing [...] to accept the high losses predictable in such a conflict. On the other hand, democracies are perfectly willing to enter into asymmetrical wars, provided that they do not incur excessive casualties or economic damage’ (2004: 124).

Such scepticism has also been echoed by approaches which have argued that the relationship between economic development, state-formation and war is not as simple as has often been assumed by modernist analysts. Rather than assuming war to be simply development in reverse, for instance, Münkler has argued that ‘from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century onward, war and preparations for war in Europe always gave an impetus to technological development and economic modernization’ (ibid: 76). Indeed, war and violence may have even contributed to creating orderly societies. As Kalyvas [et al] have argued, for instance, it is often assumed that there is ‘little that binds the study of order and the study of violence and conflict. Bloodshed in its multiple forms [...] is often seen as something separate from, and almost unrelated to, the domains of “normal” politics that constitute what we think of as order. Students of political, social, and economic institutions simply assume that violence is absent and order established, never considering that the maintenance of such institutions might involve the ongoing management of conflict and the more or less direct threat of violence’ (2008: 1). To the extent that the state can be held responsible for the creation and maintenance of order, however, violence cannot be simply understood as antithetical to development/modernity.<sup>62</sup>

Even the supposed pacifying effects of purposive rationality – often assumed to be typical features of peaceful capitalist/modern societies – have been open to dispute. As Münkler has claimed, wars in developing countries are ‘in many respects the *result* of economically purposive rationality’ as ‘people pursuing economic objectives play a major role in them as

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<sup>62</sup> Such arguments are particularly rooted in a famous argument which was made by Charles Tilly (1985). Tilly argued that the historical process of European state-formation do not bear much resemblance to traditional ideas about (i) ‘a social contract’, (ii) ‘an open market in which operators of armies and states offer services to willing consumers’, or (iii) ‘a society whose shared norms and expectations call forth a certain kind of government’ (ibid: 169). Rather, he claimed, the process of state-formation qualifies ‘as our largest examples of organized crime’ as the idea of ‘state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives’ (ibid).

entrepreneurs, politicians and, not least, fighting men. The figure of the warlord [...] may be defined precisely as a combination of entrepreneurial, political and military logic in a single person' (Münkler, 2004: 91, emphasis mine). The notable presence of warlords in many conflicts may therefore be interpreted as a sure sign that, in the Global South, 'war is once more worthwhile – at least when it can be waged with light weapons and cheap fighters, and when there is scope for linking up with global big business' (ibid). 'The directness of this correlation is shown', Münkler argues, 'by the fact that the scale and duration of the new wars mainly depend upon a dramatic lowering of the direct costs of warfare. While peace and war studies have been seeking to devise institutional rules for a lasting peace, the strategists of violence have found ways and means of making war cheaper' (ibid: 118).

If war and instrumental rationality are not simply opposites, however, it should also be noted that development does not necessarily lead to individualization and the reduction in group-identities which many theories of modernization predict either. The importance of ethnic identity, for instance, may increase rather than decrease, as such identities are 'crystallized via mass literacy and public education' (Kalyvas, 2008: 1050). Indeed, a recent survey has 'found that if people are educated they are *more* likely to identify themselves through their ethnicity. The same is the case if they have a wage job as opposed to the traditional occupation of farmer. The same is the case if they have experienced political mobilization. So development, with the attendant education, jobs, and electoral competition, is increasing the salience of ethnic diversity rather than erasing it' (Collier, 2010: 178). It should furthermore be noted that peace is not necessarily developmental either. As a Crisis States Research Centre report – written by James Putzel and Jonathan Di John (2012) – has shown, for instance, it appears perfectly possible for states to be both peaceful and completely stagnant at an economic level. The question remains, however, how we might square these *critical* insights with the results

of the aforementioned econometric studies. These studies, as we have seen, have come to the opposite conclusion with regard to the pacifying effects of modernization/economic development. Much continues to depend, therefore, on what *kinds* of methods we are willing to accept as providing us with robust forms of knowledge.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated that, many of the social theoretical issues which have been discussed throughout the CS literature have remained extremely controversial. The findings of large-scale econometric/statistical studies have often contradicted the findings of other large-scale econometric/statistical studies, while the findings of small-scale, comparative, and/or qualitatively-oriented studies have often been at odds with positivist/critical rationalist studies as well. Methodological issues have played an important role in both creating and sustaining these divides. Before moving on to discuss more substantive issues (in the fifth chapter) it is therefore of key importance that such methodological issues are addressed first. It is this which the next chapter aims to do, by arguing in favour of a Critical Methodological Pluralist (CMP) approach to CS. This approach is, of course, rooted in the philosophical framework which was developed in the second chapter of this project, and – as will be shown – is particularly at odds with the *positivist* and *complexity sciences* approaches to CS.

**CHAPTER IV:**  
**TOWARDS A CRITICAL  
METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM**

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter has both a *critical* and a *constructive* aim. This is the case because (i) it engages in a critical discussion of the various methodological approaches which have been adopted throughout the CS literature, and (ii) it aims to provide CS with a new methodological orientation which is rooted in the philosophical tenets of CR as well.<sup>63</sup> As was illustrated in the previous chapter, the CS literature has been characterized by a number of important methodological divides. Much – in terms establishing which *substantive* findings are reliable – has furthermore depended on which methodological approaches we have reason to trust. If CS is to develop as a discipline it is therefore of key importance that such problems are resolved. It is at this point as well, however, that we encounter an immediate problem: the *specialist* methodological literature is just as deeply divided as the CS literature when it comes to these issues. Again – as before in the literature on the philosophy of science – we consistently encounter various dualisms. These revolve, in particular, around the persistent split between *positivist* (generally empiricist, causal, nomothetic, objectivist, explanatory, and quantitative) and *hermeneutic* (generally theoretically reflexive, non-causal/constitutive, idiographic, subjectivist, interpretive, and qualitative) approaches. This split is rooted in the *Methodenstreit* which characterized the late nineteenth century social sciences (Crompon, 2008: 17), and – as was shown in the previous chapter – has featured prominently throughout CS debates as well. How are we to resolve this situation?

One prominent response – advocated in particular with regard to the quantitative/qualitative divide – has been an explicit move *away* from a focus on the supposed philosophical incompatibilities of the various approaches involved, and *towards* an emphasis on pragmatic,

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<sup>63</sup> Inevitably, in chapter/project of this length, only a limited overview of the main issues can be provided. For introductions with both greater depth and a larger word-count see especially Sayer (2010) and Danermark [et al] (2002).

mixed-method research (MMR) (see in particular Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Bryman, 2006, 2007). Such approaches have advocated a shift from abstract philosophical reflection – and the so-called ‘paradigm wars’ which the focus on philosophical issues has resulted in – in the direction of pragmatic forms of research which emphasize the importance of the research question. Empirical research should, in other words, be *problem/question*-driven rather than *philosophy*-driven. Such claims have obvious appeal, especially when the fact that the *Methodenstreit* has been raging for more than a century now is taken into consideration. It should be noted, however, that it is not the approach which this chapter will adopt. Instead, the chapter aims to show that the divides which characterize both the specialist and the CS literatures are (i) based on problematic philosophical premises, and (ii) that these problems can be overcome by means of an engagement with the CR framework.

This is the case, concretely, *because this framework steps out of the philosophical problem field which caused these methodological divides to occur in the first place*. This allows it to develop resolutions to the various problems which these approaches have resulted in, and paves the way for a more coherent methodological approach to scientific enquiry. This approach involves, in particular, a rejection of the *positivist* idea that engaging in science necessarily entails engaging in ‘hard’ science, and therefore attempts to move the human/social sciences beyond what is sometimes referred to as ‘physics envy’ (the attempts by the ‘softer’ sciences to replicate the mathematical precision which is associated especially with physics). In addition to this, however, it also involves a rejection of *hermeneutic* claims about the non-causal/constitutive and necessarily idiographic and subjectivist nature of enquiries into the human/social realms. Indeed, one of the central aims of this chapter is *the reconstruction of methodological foundations for engaging in scientific enquiry*, after the consistent attack on such foundations by proponents of the so-called ‘cultural turn’. This



reflects the fact that CR is not just a philosophy *of* science, but is arguably also a philosophy *for* science.<sup>64</sup> If this is indeed the case, however, this chapter will need to draw out the methodological implications of the philosophical framework which developed in the second chapter.<sup>65</sup> This involves, in particular, drawing out the implications of the CR theorization of the transitive and the intransitive dimensions of knowledge. As will be shown, these theorizations result in a methodological orientation which is *modest, historical, interdisciplinary, reflexive, and pluralistic* in nature. As it provides science with a clear philosophical grounding for its methodological orientation, however, the CR framework does not result in an *unprincipled* form of pluralism. This means that it is perhaps best described as underlabouring for a *critical* methodological pluralism (CMP) (Danermark [et al], 2002: 152).

This CMP approach is firmly at odds with the positivist approach to science. Indeed, it illustrates the need for CS to go beyond the *technical* critiques which have been levelled at positivist CS studies in order to develop an entirely new approach to the study of violent conflict. There can therefore be no return to the kind of large-N statistical/econometric studies which have dominated the literature in the post-Cold War period, irrespective of how sophisticated these studies may become at a technical level. This does not mean, however, that we should also throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. It does not follow from

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<sup>64</sup> Sayer notes that '[o]ne of the main difficulties in the existing literature on social theory and the philosophy of the social sciences is that few *constructive* contributions have been made on the subject of method in empirical research, while texts on methods have reciprocated this lack of interest by ignoring developments at the philosophical level and in social theory. [...] The result is that even where the philosophical critiques have been accepted in principle they have failed to make much difference in practice; indeed the lack of work on alternative methods has actually discouraged some of the critics and their supporters from even venturing into empirical research. Meanwhile, many of the empirical researchers whose work has been under attack have been content to conclude that the debate is not really relevant to them, or else that philosophical discussions in general threaten empirical research and should therefore be avoided' (2010: 1).

<sup>65</sup> There has, throughout especially the last fifteen years, been much discussion with regard to the methodological implications of the CR framework. Whereas, in the late nineties, Yeung was still able to declare that CR was 'largely a philosophy in search of a method' (1997: 70) such claims are now no longer accurate. An increasingly rich literature has attempted to bridge 'the gulf between the more philosophical debates and the literature on how we should do social research' (Sayer, 2010: xiii). This is not to say, of course, that there is full agreement on these issues. This chapter aims to reflect both the vibrancy of the aforementioned debate (including the progress that has been made) and the remaining controversy which surrounds the topic.

the failures of *positivist* science, for instance, that it is necessary to (i) resort to the functionalism/organicism of the *complexity sciences* approach to CS in order avoid mechanistic/linear models of cause and effect, or (ii) collapse/invert the distinction between science and common sense. This is the case, concretely, because CR allows us to reconstruct the idea of science in an anti-positivist manner, which – though it acknowledges the fact that there is no hard-and-fast criterion for demarcating science from non-science – maintains that discontinuities between scientific knowledge and common sense may indeed occur. This does not mean, however, that it simply reinstates the forms of epistemic hubris which have characterised the ‘priestly’ classes of modernity. Nor indeed, does it mean that science and common sense should be understood in binary terms. Rather, the CR approach suggests a notion of science which is neither ‘conceited’ (as in modernism) nor ‘defeatist’ (as in postmodernism), but is best understood in terms of qualified differences. This orientation is clearly reflected in the fact that, as part of its ‘holy trinity’, CR adopts the criterion of *judgmental rationalism*. This notion is intended, importantly, as an attempt to shift debates *away* from misleadingly absolutist notions of truth (positivist verificationism) and falsity (critical rationalist falsificationism), and *towards* much more productive – and much more *modest* – debates about the relative weight of evidence which supports competing theories.

This shift is necessary for a number of reasons. Perhaps most important among these, however, is the fact that the kind of absolute certainty which is now often associated with the notion of science is, in fact, only very rarely available to its practitioners. This is the case because the development of this level of certainty is dependent on achieving a kind of systemic closure which is – with only very rare exceptions – only available in experimental settings. It is only in experimentally closed settings, after all, that we are capable of isolating/separating individual causal mechanisms, and shielding their operations from the

counteracting mechanisms which would otherwise interfere with/cancel them out. This kind of isolation/separation of causal mechanisms is simply not possible, however, in most of the human/social world. Indeed, as Ted Benton (1998) has shown, *it is not in fact possible for many of the natural sciences either*. Situations in which different theories can be proven to be *definitively* true or false are therefore extremely rare, and the search for such ‘hard’ theories should therefore be abandoned in non-exact disciplines like CS.

This is not, however, the only reason that the notion of judgmental rationalism provides us with a more realistic aim for scientific explanation. This also results from the fact that – against common presumptions, and in line with CS authors like Nordstrom (1997) – CR explicitly embraces the reflexive imperative which is characteristic of many critical approaches. As Tony Lawson has argued, there is nothing about the CR framework which presumes that knowledge *‘is other than fallible, partial and itself transient, or that scientists or researchers are other than positioned, biased, interested, and practically, culturally and socially conditioned’* (2003: 220). Scientific practice therefore requires that we consistently look *inward* in order to look *outward*, and that we engage in persistent efforts to become more aware of the psycho-social determinants of our claims. This should inspire modesty with regard to the level of certainty which is in fact attainable to most of the sciences, and – as will be shown in the later sections of this chapter – provides us with an understanding of its processes which is at odds with the critical perspectives which were discussed in the first chapter of this project as well. These perspectives range from dualistic approaches, which have argued that culture/meaning cannot be studied scientifically, to critics who have claimed that science is modernist or masculinist in nature. Against such perspectives this chapter will argue that science is in fact *incompatible* with modernist assumptions, and that its practices are more adequately described as *androgynous* in nature.

In developing this particular orientation it is not enough, however, to simply repeat the arguments which other CR authors have already made. This is the case for two main reasons. First among these is the fact that a number of important thematic issues have unfortunately remained almost entirely absent from CR discussions about the practical applications of its philosophical framework. In particular, this chapter will draw attention to (i) the importance of taking into consideration the *identity* of the researcher and the researched, (ii) the importance of being reflexive about *power differences* between the researcher and the researched, and (iii) the possible *unintended consequences* of developing scientific knowledge (including, in particular, the politicization and ‘weaponization’ (Price, 2011) of scientific knowledge). It is not just because these themes have been lacking from CR discussions, however, that it is not enough to repeat what other CR authors have said in the past. This is also the case because our methodological orientation must always be specific to the nature of the discipline we study. This specificity applies to CS in two distinct ways. The first of these concerns the fact that researching countries which are, or have been, affected by conflict poses a number of very distinctive *practical* challenges. These range from the predominance of extremely unreliable data, to the challenges of gaining access to areas of conflict, and working in extremely unstable and dangerous environments. Such challenges place a number of very unique demands upon students of conflict, and make the imperative to adopt *modesty* as a guiding principle of our methodological orientation particularly applicable to CS.

In addition to this, however, a second specificity derives from the fact that – at least in the contemporary era – the study of intra-state conflict involves primarily the study of various non-western ‘others’. That is to say, it largely involves the study of those areas of the world which have often been described as traditional, primitive, pre-modern, and/or underdeveloped. This, again, poses a number of very distinctive methodological challenges

for authors working in CS. These range from the fact that there are often important linguistic barriers to understanding a particular social context, to a range of ethical and political challenges. These include, in particular, the challenges of trying to avoid the destructive role which forms of scientific (especially anthropological) investigation played during colonial times. Such investigations were essential to justifying and/or sustaining colonial forms of occupation, and – as authors like David Price (2011) and Henry Giroux (2007) have shown – it would be misleading to claim that links between the social sciences and imperial power are now simply a thing of the past. Rather, scientific investigations of non-western ‘others’ must be particularly cautious when it comes to the reproduction of a dark past in the present. This applies as well when there is no *direct* link between imperialism and the sciences, as ‘even when the Western Academy turns its attention towards the ‘outside’, it is often documenting the fruits of its own (idealized) intellectual labours’ (Shilliam, 2011: 16).

While such methodological issues/challenges are, therefore, particular to disciplines like CS, there are also a number of more general features to engaging in CR-based research. Importantly, however, these features *do not* include the specific methods which are to be used by scientific research. This is the case because CR rejects ‘any ambition to develop a specific method for scientific work’, and there can therefore be ‘no such thing as the method of critical realism’ (Danermark [et al], 2002: 73). This argument derives, in particular, from its emphasis on emergence/ontological stratification, as these notions results in a *critical* form of naturalism which claims that we should align the methods we employ with the nature of our objects of enquiry. This means, concretely, that the methods which are suitable for studying *particles* are likely to differ from the methods which are suitable for the study of *people/politics*. Rather than assume that mathematics/quantitative modelling provides us with a *universal* language for engaging in scientific enquiries, therefore, CR argues that numerous

languages will be required in order to make sense of the varied phenomena of the world. As Wight has argued, this ‘can be understood as an endorsement of Paul Feyerabend’s methodological claim that ‘anything goes’ (2006: 25), and means that that the CMP framework is highly suited to both MMR and forms of methodological triangulation (Downard and Mearman, 2007; Zachariadis [et al], 2010). Its adoption of this analytical orientation does not mean, however, that nothing can be said about engaging in CR-based research which applies at a more general level. Indeed, the next section will provide an overview of those features of the CMP approach which apply at such a level.

#### **4.2 The Logic(s) of Scientific Explanation**

In order to make sense of these features, however, we must begin by briefly returning to the CR critique of empiricism. As was shown in the second chapter, this critique takes issue with the idea that the world is transparent to us in our experience. Experimental activity presupposes, in fact, that the world is generally opaque to us, and illustrates that we must engage in various practical interventions into the world in order to discover its nature. In addition to this, however, it also presupposes that the world is not exhausted by what we experience/are capable of experiencing, and shows that one of the most central practices of the sciences does not just seek to go *beyond* experience (trans-phenomenality) but may also result in knowledge-claims which directly *contradict* experience (counter-phenomenality). This results in the claim that it is the ability of the sciences to transcend and contradict experience which makes them necessary in the first place. Without ‘the contradiction between appearance and reality’, after all, ‘science would be redundant, and we could [simply] go by appearances’ (Collier, 1994: 7). If this is indeed the case, however, it suggests a very different logic for science than the logics which are commonly adopted by *empiricist* approaches.

The positivist approach, for instance, has argued that the logic of science is one of *inductive* generalization (or the development of ‘covering laws’) on the basis of limited numbers of empirical observations. Critical rationalism, however, has claimed that the mode of inference which is most characteristic of scientific enquiry is *deduction*. This involves, as we have seen, the conjecture and refutation (empirical falsification) of postulated scientific laws. Whether we favour the positivist or the critical rationalist approach to science, however, it should be noted that both remain strictly at an empirical level. From a CR perspective this means that they systematically commit the epistemic fallacy, that they are anthropocentric in nature, and that they neglect the *actual* and the *real* dimensions of the world. In addition to this, however, it also means that they are only of very limited use, as the point of science is exactly the transcendence/contradiction of experience.

How, though, do we actually go about doing this? In (some of) the natural sciences it has been possible to achieve this goal by means of experimental activity, which has allowed scientists to isolate and test the powers/effects of various structures/generative mechanisms. In the human/social sciences, however, such experimental activity is generally impossible. Proponents of CR have therefore emphasized the importance of making use of *retroductive* logic. The retroductive mode of inference, in short, refers to the process of building hypothetical models of the structures/generative mechanisms which *produce* empirical phenomenon, and therefore involves working back from manifest phenomena to possible explanations of those phenomena. A key question in this regard concerns what it is that makes a particular phenomenon possible? What, in other words, are the necessary conditions for this phenomenon to exist and be what it is? It is these types of questions which, CR has argued, constitutes the *central* (although by no means the *only*) logic of science.

This is, it should be noted, a controversial claim, as it undermines the (inductive/deductive) inferential claims which have been made by classical philosophies of science for centuries. This controversy is fuelled, in particular, by the fact that retroduction is a mode of inference which does not fall within the realm of *formal* logic. It is, in other words, not a particularly ‘scholarly’ mode of inference, as the hypotheses/conclusions which flow from employing retroductive logic do not follow from its premises *necessarily*. This is the case because – when we ask the aforementioned types of questions – it is likely to result in various competing hypotheses, all of which *may* (but do not *necessarily*) account for the phenomenon/event in question. This is made more controversial still by the fact that – rather than relying exclusively on formal logic – retroduction is likely to draw upon a much wider range of psychological/social influences. As Lawson has argued, it ‘is likely to operate under a logic of analogy or metaphor and to draw heavily on the investigator’s perspective, beliefs and experience’ (1997: 212). This does not take away, of course, from the fact that retroduction is a key feature of science. Indeed, the need for retroduction is arguably just another illustration of the fact that real scientific practice tends to be messy, and that progress is often unsure. Embracing the need to incorporate this form of logic into our enquiries is, therefore, simply a way of placing science ‘within history, and so to allow that it shares the impurity and questionability of’ all human history’ (Collier, 1994: 56).

If it is true, however, that science seeks to move from *experience* to those structures/mechanisms which *produce* experience, this also means that documenting the former is an important starting point for our investigations. This applies to all realms of enquiry, and – importantly – has always been one of the key strengths of the hermeneutic/interpretive tradition. This tradition has consistently stressed that enquiries into the human/social world should seek to understand how participants themselves experience (understand/conceptualize)



their lives. This has generally resulted in (i) the subjectivist claim that in order to understand human action we must understand their motives/reasons for action, and (ii) the hermeneutic claim that enquiries into the social world must take place by means of either a ‘fusion of horizons’ (Gadamer, 2013) or a logic of immersion into Geertzian ‘webs of significance’ (1977). The focus on these concerns is replicated in the CR framework, and the CMP approach therefore aligns itself with ethnographic/interpretive approaches which are critical of positivist (objectivist) negations of interpretive (and qualitative) data. Such negations are dangerous, as an *external* description of a violent act is generally<sup>66</sup> not enough for us to make sense of it. This is the case, again, because it is perfectly possible for instances of the *same* behaviour to express an entirely *different* meaning. If we wish to come to terms with this meaning it is therefore essential that we make use of hermeneutic/interpretive (and qualitative) methods in order to provide an *internal* description of the act as well.<sup>67</sup> This provides a prominent place within CS for forms of enquiry like those which are favoured by Fujii (2009), Metelits (2010) and Hamilton (2007), who have made use of interviews with perpetrators of violent acts in order to make their claims.

Indeed, it also provides a prominent place for CS authors with an *active* (‘fieldwork’) orientation to engaging in CS research. This is the case because the CMP approach requires that scientists go and *speak* to people about their experiences/the meaning of their actions. This mirrors the fact that – in experimental settings – we are often required to intervene in the world in order to establish what exactly is going on, and means that the CR/CMP approach is at odds with a number of classical (and much more ‘scholarly’) philosophies/methodologies of science. These have stressed the importance of ‘observation’ (empiricism) and/or

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<sup>66</sup> While the meaning of consistently eating large amounts of chocolate may be relatively clear in most circumstances, this does not mean that it is also legitimate to argue – as Collier (2000: 92) has done – that the same applies to violent conflict in its entirety.

<sup>67</sup> This is of *particular* importance when it comes to understanding cultures that are fairly alien to us, as the meaning of particular forms of behaviour may be especially obscure to the investigator.

‘contemplation’ (rationalism) instead, and have therefore systematically undervalued the scientific importance of *engaging with/intervening in* the world.<sup>68</sup> The CR/CMP approach, instead, echoes Raewyn Connell’s claims, who has argued that – when it comes to engaging in research – ‘the most useful equipment is a stout pair of boots’ (2010: 206). If speaking to people is indeed the essential feature of investigation which this section has claimed it is, however, this also puts into sharp focus the scientific importance of developing strong relationships with the people and places we study. Indeed, more substantively, it puts into sharp focus a number of the important issues which have often been stressed by hermeneutic approaches. These include, in particular, the importance of (i) long-term engagements with (the history of) particular peoples/places, (ii) mastering local languages, (iii) reflexivity about the possible effects of power differences between the researcher and the researched<sup>69</sup>, (iv) considering the potential effects of the identities of the researcher and the researched, and (v) developing trust and empathy among the researcher and the researched.

Such concerns flow more-or-less directly from taking the hermeneutic focus on documenting people’s experiences seriously. As mentioned, this focus plays an important role within the CMP approach as well. It should be noted, however, that this approach differs from hermeneutic/interpretive approaches in a number of important ways as well. In particular, it differs with regard to both the *scientific* and the *epistemic* status of interpretive/hermeneutic data. This is the case for three main reasons. *First* among these is the fact that, from a CR perspective, making use of interpretive methods does not contradict the methodological unity which positivist/critical rationalist approaches have often assumed to underpin ‘real’ science. In particular, the use of such methods does not contradict the positivist idea that science must

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<sup>68</sup> This is not to say, however, that contemplation is unimportant for the social sciences. The dominance of empiricism has, indeed, led to a situation which unduly privileges observation over contemplation.

<sup>69</sup> As Paul Farmer has put it, the kind of investigations which CS engages in will often involve studying down steep gradients of power (1996: 277).

speak in the universal language of mathematics/quantitative modelling. This is the case, again, because CR rejects the idea that it is the use of a particular method which unites scientific practice. Rather than adopt an unqualified form of naturalism, CR proposes a *critical* form of naturalism. This involves, as we have seen, the Feyerabendian claim that ‘anything goes’ at a methodological level, and therefore allows for the incorporation of interpretive data into ‘real’ science. Indeed, the incorporation of such data is arguably of key importance for the human/social sciences, because of the *second* difference between interpretive/hermeneutic approaches and the CMP approach. This difference concerns the fact that interpretive/hermeneutic approaches have generally understood their enquiries solely in terms of establishing the meanings which actors give their actions. That is to say, they have *not* understood their work in terms of engaging in causal forms of scientific explanation. If it is true, however, that reasons *are* in fact causes – as CR has claimed – then the separation between causal (scientific) and non-causal (interpretive/hermeneutic) approaches collapses. Indeed, by inquiring into the reasons for someone’s actions, and trying to *understand* their motives, we would be engaging in scientific *explanations* as well.

None of this is to say, however, that the CMP approach is in fact fully *subjectivist* in nature. This is the case because – in line with the philosophical framework which was set out in the second chapter – the accounts which agents provide of their experiences remain both fallible and corrigible. As for instance Mannathukkaren has argued, the way these experiences are conceptualized ‘may be inadequate and/or distort what is going on’ (2010: 310-311). Indeed, ‘aspects of social reality may not have been conceptualized at all’ (ibid: 311), and scientists may therefore be able to play an important role in correcting/improving interpretive accounts. In particular, scientific enquiries may need to shed light on those *social, psychological* and *material/natural* determinants which are lacking from the interpretive accounts that are

favoured by hermeneutic approaches. With regard to the first of these, for instance, scientists may need to shed further light on the *unintended consequences* and *unacknowledged conditions* of people's actions. At the level of psychology, scientific accounts may need to shed light on the *unconscious motivations* and *tacit skills* which inform people's actions. And finally, scientific accounts may need to explore the causal role of the natural world in which both agents and social structures are necessarily embedded (Bhaskar, 2011: 93).

This is not to claim, however, that agents are *necessarily* incorrect about their own experiences. Indeed, the accounts which they provide may be correct as well as incorrect, complete as well as incomplete, coherent as well as incoherent, adequately conceptualized as well as inadequately conceptualized. etc. The point of the CMP approach, rather, is the fact that – where these accounts *are* found to be incorrect/incomplete/incoherent/inadequately conceptualized – the role of scientists is to correct and/or complete them. Science may therefore play a cognitively enhancing role, and this allows the CMP approach to sidestep the 'interpretive fundamentalism' (Hartwig, 2007: 232) which certain hermeneutic approaches have tended towards. This is the case, concretely, because it illustrates that forms of social immersion/a fusion of horizons may be both necessary *and* insufficient when it comes to adequately understanding a particular situation. Indeed, this formulation grounds the importance of both subjective experience and its corrigibility, and hence overcomes the objectivist/subjectivist split which has been such a prominent feature of positivist/hermeneutic debates. Importantly, however, it also places the study of the human/social worlds within the broader logic of retroductive forms of inference. This is the case because enquiries into these realms involve working our way from experience to the structures/mechanisms which produce experience. This mirrors the logic of experimental activity in the natural sciences, and – like this activity – may result in both trans- and counter-phenomenal claims.

In the absence of experimental closure, however, how is it possible for scientists to ensure that *their* retroductive inferences are in fact better than those which are provided by so-called lay accounts? The definitive test situations which some natural science disciplines have had available to them are, after all, unavailable in the human/social sciences (Kemp and Holmwood, 2003). While it is certainly possible, therefore, to suggest possible/plausible explanations for the phenomenon/event which is our focus, it seems unlikely that the non-exact sciences will be able to definitively eliminate those explanations which are incorrect and/or incomplete. This analysis is broadly correct, at least to the extent that our explanatory goal is described in terms of the verification and/or falsification or rival hypotheses. It is, however, a less convincing line of argument if our explanatory goal is described in terms of the much more modest judgmental rationalist criterion which CR adopts. This is the case because CR authors have shown that there are in fact a number of intellectual strategies available to scientists which allow them to at least alleviate the aforementioned problem.<sup>70</sup>

None of these strategies provide a magic bullet, but they do provide the human/social sciences with ways to (at least potentially) improve upon the lay knowledge which many interpretive/hermeneutic approaches have argued to be definitive. Some of these strategies are, however, part of the standard operating procedures of the human/social sciences, and hence will not be elaborated upon in this chapter. These include, in particular, strategies like *comparing different/similar cases*, the study of *pathological circumstances and extreme cases*, the uses of *counterfactual thinking*, and the applications of *contrastive methods*.<sup>71</sup> These strategies are essential to the explanatory success of the sciences, but are by no means unique to the CMP approach. Instead of discussing these common strategies, therefore, two strategies which are of particular importance for proponents of CR will be briefly discussed.

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<sup>70</sup> For an overview of this debate see Bhaskar (1998), Sayer (2010), Lawson (1997, 2003), Danermark [et al] (2002); Downward, Finch and Ramsay (2002), Kemp and Holmwood (2003), Downward and Mearman (2006).

<sup>71</sup> For an overview of the uses and merits of these strategies see particularly Danermark [et al] (2002: 199-204).

These are, first, the study of situations of quasi-closure, and second, the analytical tool of abstraction. With regard to the first of these, situations of quasi-closure arguably allow for a partial analogue to experimental activity (Downward, Finch and Ramsay, 2002). At the micro-level, in particular, situations of quasi-closure are likely to occur, and this may result in important demi-regularities.<sup>72</sup> Although such regularities are, of course, neither necessary nor sufficient for the establishment of causal relations, powerful causal mechanisms may nonetheless overwhelm counteracting tendencies in restricted spatiotemporal situations. These are therefore likely to result in important (although non-universal) regularities, which may be able to point us in the direction of important causal mechanisms (Kemp and Holmwood, 2003). Arguably, this provides a strong argument in favour of studying the ‘microdynamics’ of violent conflict (Kalyvas, 2006), while working our way up towards an understanding of how these dynamics result in/interact with both meso and macro dynamics. This is the case, of course, because such micro-situations are much more likely to be characterized by the aforementioned quasi-closures and demi-regularities, and hence result in situations which are more akin to experimental situations.

It should be noted, however, that establishing which mechanisms are responsible for the patterns with which we are concerned requires that we do more than just establish regularities. In order to confirm which mechanisms are responsible for a particular event, *qualitative* information about the nature of the objects concerned is always required. If we neglect to incorporate such information, in fact, we end up in situations like the one which we encountered in the first chapter; the situation, that is, concerning the correlation between the rate of inflation and the incidence of Scottish dysentery. The fact that we (intuitively) know that the incidence of Scottish dysentery has nothing to do with the rate of inflation has, of

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<sup>72</sup> Indeed, as Karlsson (2011) reminds us, closure may very well be an aim of the people which populate a certain setting. Because of the unique agential qualities which they possess, people may not only seek to open closed systems, they may also attempt to close open systems.

course, nothing to do with the constancy or non-constancy of the relationship between the two variables. Rather, we immediately know that this is in fact a spurious relationship because there is nothing about the nature of the objects concerned that suggests that they should be in any way causally connected. When such qualitative information *is* incorporated into the search for demi-regularities in quasi-closed circumstances, however, the human/social sciences have an important intellectual strategy at their disposal which allows for a partial compensation of the absence of definitive experimental activity.

The same applies to the second intellectual strategy which proponents of CR have favoured as well. This concerns the method of *abstraction* (that is, the isolation – in thought – of one aspect of an object).<sup>73</sup> This strategy provides us with a partial analogue to experimental situations, as it allows us to isolate (in thought) particular structures/generative mechanisms. As Sayer has argued, '[t]o be practically-adequate, knowledge must grasp the differentiations of the world', and we therefore 'need a way of individuating objects, and of characterizing their attributes and relationships' (2010: 58). It is with regard to such processes of individuation that abstraction is of key importance, as it (i) helps us to develop concepts which 'neither divide the indivisible nor lump together the divisible and the heterogeneous' (ibid: 60), and can therefore (ii) provide us with increasingly precise accounts of the characteristics of the various structures of the world. When this kind of activity is in fact engaged in, therefore, the human/social sciences have a second intellectual strategy at their disposal which allows them to compensate (at least to an extent) for the impossibility of isolating particular generative mechanisms by means of experimental activity.

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<sup>73</sup> As Sayer points out: 'In popular usage, the adjective 'abstract' often means 'vague' or 'removed from reality'. The sense in which the term is used here is different; an abstract concept, or an abstraction, isolates in thought a *one-sided* or partial aspect of an object. What we abstract *from* are the many other aspects which together constitute *concrete* objects such as people, economics, nations, institutions, activities and so on. In this sense an abstract concept can be precise rather than vague [...] And the things to which these abstractions refer need be no less real than those referred to by more concrete concepts. Hence the abstract and the concrete should not be aligned with the distinction between thought and reality' (2010: 59).

If these two intellectual strategies – along with the more common strategies which were mentioned above – illustrate that the retroductive mode of inference is indeed a viable model for a more modest approach to the human/social sciences, however, what remains of the goals which are associated with positivist and critical rationalist approaches to CS? In particular, what remains of the aims of developing *nomothetic* forms of theory, or the broader aim of developing *inductive generalizations* about the causes/nature of intra-state conflict? Does the centrality of the retroductive mode of inference to CR-based research mean that the inductive and deductive modes of inference should simply be retired? As will be shown in the next few sections, this is by no means the case. Rather, the CR framework results in a methodological orientation which is at odds with both nomothetic and idiographic approaches to explanation, and paves the way for an approach which (i) clearly relates the universal and the particular, (ii) rejects misleading presumptions about uniformity and regularity, (iii) eliminates a number of important sources of a-historicism, and (iv) clarifies the *nature, aims and scientific status* of large-N research, comparative research, and case studies

In order to make sense of all of these claims, however, it is necessary to briefly return to the philosophical ontology which CR develops as a result of Bhaskar's analysis of experimental activity. This ontology is of importance as it clarifies the fact that the inductive and deductive modes of inference are valuable scientific tools when they are severed from the *empiricist* and *closed-systems* positions which they are associated with. This is the case because induction and deduction take on a very different meaning when they are attached to the structures ontology and the closed/open-systems logic which CR develops. As was shown in the second chapter, CR claims that events result from the interaction of the various (actualized) causal powers which are possessed by the structures of the world. It is the activation of these causal powers in open and (quasi) closed systems, therefore, that the uses of induction and deduction



apply to as well. Where a generative mechanism/set of generative mechanisms, is actualized, and its operation is both internally and externally stable, for instance, we can *deduce* from this that the observed pattern of events will continue to take place. To the extent that the same mechanism/set of mechanisms is actualized in the same systemic circumstances elsewhere, we may furthermore use *inductive logic* to generalize about events in other times and places. Where such (sets of) generative mechanisms are operational in *open* systems, however, we can no longer generalize at the level of *events*, as counteracting tendencies may alter or block the operation of the (set of) mechanisms in question. We can still, however, generalize about the ways in which structures operate. Structures can, in other words, be said to have capacities to act in certain ways, and this way of acting is universal.

This important distinction between generalization at the level of *structures* and generalization at the level of (empirical) *events* is not, however, one which is clearly made by both positivism/critical rationalism and the CS literature. A clear example of the confusion which at times arises can be found in the work of Kalyvas (2006), who argues in favour of the adoption of a ‘deductive strategy’ which is aimed at ‘producing hypotheses about empirical variation’ (ibid: 9). This seems to suggest the adoption of a nomothetic methodological approach, aimed at prediction and the empirical falsification/verification of various theories. On the next page, however, Kalyvas argues that ‘while contexts may differ, mechanisms recur’ (ibid: 10). Although the latter claim is certainly correct, what is lacking from this account is an appreciation of the fact that mechanism-based explanations and deductive research strategies aimed at empirical verification/falsification are philosophically at odds with one another. We may, for instance, be able to spell out some part of the ‘deep structure’ (ibid: 9) of civil war, as Kalyvas aims to do. Even if we successfully do so, however, we will not be able to reliably generalize or predict at the level of empirical events. Although it is true

that the structures of the world produce the events that take place, such structures tend to operate in open/quasi-closed systems, and therefore interact with counteracting forces which may modify or cancel out the operation of the structures with which we are concerned. Even when we establish the operation of a *universal* mechanism, therefore, we are required to take seriously the effects of the *particular* context in which this mechanism is operational as well.

This way of relating the universal and the particular points us in the direction of further features of the CS literature which are problematic. In particular, it points us in the direction of the explanatory limits of such universalistic explanatory frameworks as ‘globalization’ (Kaldor, 2007a) and/or ‘transitions to capitalism’ (Cramer, 2006) when it comes to accounting for violent conflict. Whatever the explanatory merits of such arguments when it comes to theorizing the *universal*, such frameworks become problematic when they are used to neglect the decidedly *particular* (natural, psychological, social, etc) structures which they encounter and interact with in distinct spatiotemporal locations. Of course, it should be noted that this analytical insight can also be reversed, by applying it to idiographic approaches which consistently stress the particular/unique at the expense of the universal. Just because we cannot usually generalize at the level of (empirical) events, after all, this does not mean we cannot generalize at all. Mechanisms, as Kalyvas correctly points out, do indeed tend to recur. And although their operation in particular settings has contingent results at the level of (empirical) events, this does not entail that the universal can be neglected/does not exist. Both nomothetic and idiographic research strategies – at least as they are conventionally understood – are therefore extremely problematic. The first is problematic because it misguidedly attempts to secure the generalizing aims of science at the level of (empirical) events, while events are actually the more-or-less unique manifestations of the ‘[s]hifting constellations of causal mechanisms’ (Steinmetz, 2004: 383) which operate in concrete

conjunctures. The second is problematic because it mistakenly takes the uniqueness and non-repeatability of (empirical) events to mean that the generalizing aims of the (human/social) sciences are illusory, while in fact we *can* generalize at the level of structures/mechanisms. The approach which CR develops, however, bridges the gap between these approaches, and hence paves the way for a new methodological approach to CS. This approach, instead of stressing the *universal* or the *particular*, seeks to shift our attention towards the *concrete*, which may be understood as the universal and the particular conjoined.

In addition to this, however, CR also paves the way for the problematization of a further assumption which has been extremely prevalent throughout the CS literature. This assumption concerns the positivist/critical rationalist position that, in order to come to terms with the causes of intra-state conflict, we are required to establish those factors which are *regularly* conjoined with its occurrence. This idea is particularly common within large-N econometric/statistical studies, and can be disaggregated into two distinct issues. The first of these concerns the fact that there may very well not *be* such a thing as ‘civil war as a phenomenon’ (Collier, 2010: 125). That is to say, civil war (and intra-state conflict more generally) may not be *a* phenomenon at all, but may be better understood as a *plurality* of phenomena. Although, of course, the various conflicts which CS studies may indeed turn out to have a variety of important characteristics in common, whether or not this is the case remains a contingent matter. There is therefore no legitimate reason whatsoever to simply *presume* that CS should attempt to establish the causal pathways which result in one single phenomenon only. Instead, a CR-based methodological orientation allows us to create the intellectual space which is required in order to (i) dissociate CS from unjustified presumptions of uniformity (what we might term the ‘uniformity fallacy’), and (ii) come to terms with the internal differentiation which characterizes forms of intra-state conflict.

Indeed, it also allows us to address another range of debates which have divided CS throughout the last few decades. These debates are concerned with the question of whether conflict in the post-Cold War period should be understood as *Clausewitzian* (political) or *post-Clausewitzian* (economic or cultural), *organized* or *anarchic*, *functional* (as a system) or *dysfunctional* (as the breakdown of a system), *rational* or *affective*, and *without limit* (total/concentrated) or *without end* (dispersed). Such debates – like the aforementioned positivist/critical rationalist debates – are predicated upon the idea that conflict in the post-Cold War period can be one thing only. As the previous paragraph has already shown, however, this is simply not the case. While it seems likely that tendencies will indeed be apparent throughout different historical periods, and there are undoubtedly family resemblances to be found throughout the various examples of intra-state conflict, this does not mean that CS is engaged in the study of a phenomenon which is entirely uniform in character. As opposed to changing our ‘war story’ (Nordstrom and Quiñones Giraldo, 2002) from one that is now defunct to a more adequate one, therefore, it is essential that we begin to *pluralize* our war stories.

It deserves emphasis, however, that – even if CS *was* concerned with the explanation one single phenomenon – CR clearly illustrates that there is no reason to presume that the causal pathways which result in its occurrence are the same (or even similar) in all cases. Indeed, this is not at all likely to be the case in a universal sense. This assumption remains, however, a feature of particularly the large-N econometric/statistical literature, as authors working within this tradition have their roots in positivist and/or critical rationalist philosophy of science. This has, as we have seen, resulted in attempts to uncover regular relationships (‘covering laws’) between a large number of variables and the occurrence of intra-state conflict in a wide variety of very diverse places. Precluded from consideration in such studies, however, is the idea that any particular variable may indeed be extremely important when it comes to the

explanation of one example/type of intra-state conflict, but not with regard to the explanation of another. The results which emerge from large-N econometric/statistical studies, after all, provide us with the *mean* effect of the various variables which are considered. This, inevitably, does not tell us very much with regard to the causes of any concrete situation. Indeed, such mean values are likely to be – and have indeed shown themselves to be – incredibly poor guides to understanding individual conflicts. Positivist/critical rationalist approaches – and the ‘regularity determinism’ (Hartwig, 2007: 122) which they result in - are therefore to be treated with the utmost scepticism.

This is the case, as well, because their focus on regularity/covering laws effectively eliminates the possibility of developing a more *historical* approach to CS. The development of such an approach requires, after all, that the world is currently different than it used to be in the past. If we assume that the world is governed by unchanging covering laws, however, we essentially effect a merger between *science*, on the one hand, and *a-historicism*, on the other. This is, of course, exactly what positivist authors like Collier, Hoeffler, Rohner, Chauvet, Soderbom, de Soysa, Fearon, Laitin, Hegre, Ross, and Sambanis have done, and is clearly illustrated in the fact that these authors have essentially eliminated history as anything other than a source of data for the testing of nomothetic forms of theory. This kind of a-historicism can be easily avoided, however, by adopting the CR framework. This is the case for two main reasons. First among these is the fact that this framework has theorized the notions of open and closed systems. This allows it to sustain the possibility of change as part of its philosophical outlook, and hence allows it to ground a genuinely historical approach to CS. Indeed, more substantively, this feature grounds both the claim that conflict is likely to change throughout different historical periods, and the Clausewitzian contention that war fighting is likely to be affected by *chance*.

In addition to this, however, the CR framework also avoids the a-historicism of positivist approaches to CS in another important way. Concretely, this concerns the CR emphasis on emergence/stratification, and the fact that human beings – while they are part of the same world as inanimate forms of matter – also differ from ‘natural’ structures in a number of important ways. These differences include a wide range of qualities/powers which – as we have seen – are commonly grouped together as ‘mind’. Importantly, these characteristics include aspects of human beings which are concerned with learning/memory (and anticipation). As opposed to rocks and rivers, we are capable of such things, and this makes a difference with regard to the ways in which the human/social sciences should proceed. In particular, our ability to learn and remember increases the importance of history, as (i) we remember/learn from our personal experiences, and (ii) we are taught about those parts of our community’s history which we have not experienced ourselves.

History is therefore – in a very real (though highly imperfect) sense – cumulative in nature, as memories of past experiences are still a part of/have an impact on the present. We cannot, therefore, exclude memories (whether personal or popular) from the ontology of the situations which we study. Such memories are lacking, however, from positivist studies. As Connell has remarked, the positivist approach inevitably treats history ‘as homogenous and non-cumulative’, because historical events ‘do not change the logical structures of later events’ (2010: 241). This does not apply, however, to the CR/CMP framework, which is capable of grounding a genuinely historical approach to CS. This means, importantly, that it sides with historical sociological approaches like those which are favoured by Tilly (1985, 1993, 2003), while rejecting both Skocpolian (1979, 1994) forms of historical sociology and positivist/critical rationalist approaches to CS.

In addition to this, however, this approach also allows us to develop a unique perspective on the *nature*, *aims* and *scientific status* of large-N research, comparative research, and case studies, as these research formats can now be grounded in an explicit ontology. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the previous sections have already made significant progress with regard to securing this goal. Good research, as we have seen, combines the universal and the particular (into the concrete), avoids the ‘uniformity fallacy’, and rejects assumptions about causation which presuppose that it has anything necessarily to do with regularity. Where, however, does this leave us with regard to more concrete questions about research formats?

The first thing to note is the fact that science aims to be explanatory in nature, and that explanation involves linking manifest phenomena with the structures which cause them to take place. As explanation occurs in this manner, and not by subsuming particular events under universal laws, however, no problem can arise with regard to securing the scientific status of case studies. Although particular cases may not ‘confirm any general theoretical constancy’ (Cramer, 2006: 92), an explanatory science which is rooted in CR *does not require that they do so*. None of this is to say, however, that case studies are exclusively idiographic. Rather, they may very well contribute to the generalizing aims of science. This is the case because, from a CMP perspective, case studies are not *necessarily* concerned only with documenting the unique features of individual cases. Although, at the level of events, the details of case studies *will* generally be unique, this does not mean that they cannot contribute to the creation of a stock of knowledge which enhances our understanding as a whole. This is the case because generalization takes place at the level of structures, not the level of events. Increasing our understanding of the operation of structures by means of case studies is therefore a perfectly legitimate way of increasing our knowledge of violence more generally. Indeed, because of the quasi-closed/open-systemic logic which characterizes much of the

human and social world, case studies are arguably an extremely privileged form of enquiry, which (i) allows us to explore the interaction between the universal and the particular in a concrete settings, and (ii) avoids both the uniformity fallacy and regularity determinism. This applies even more clearly, however, to comparative forms of research, as this format allows us to tease out similarities and differences between the cases we study, and thereby provides us with opportunities for contrastive forms of explanation and counterfactual thinking.

Tellingly, however, none of these advantages apply to the large-N studies which have dominated the post-Cold War CS literature. Although such studies may *seem* the very embodiment of science, they are in fact deeply suspect. This is the case for a number of reasons, many of which have already been mentioned in previous sections. The most important among these, however, are the fact that they presuppose universally closed-systems, implicitly adopt a position of regularity-determinism, and assume that intra-state conflict is uniform in nature. Such problems are not alleviated, importantly, by the incorporation of case-study material, as the large-N studies which have done so (Sambanis, 2004a; Collier and Sambanis, 2005) inevitably treat the data which is derived from case studies as ““idiographic”” raw data waiting to be processed by “nomothetic”” theory machines” (Steinmetz, 2004: 383). *The fundamental premises of these studies therefore remain the same.* These premises are no longer warranted, however, once we adopt the CMP approach. This approach, as we have seen, shifts our attention (i) away from the search for *covering laws*, and towards the explanation of *concrete conjunctures*, and (ii) away from the study of (empirical) *events as such* and towards the structures/generative mechanisms which *produce these* events. The combination of these two principles arguably provides a clear rationale for a medium-range methodological orientation towards the human/social sciences. A methodological orientation, that is, which is fundamentally at odds with the large-N literature throughout CS.



It should be noted, however, that it is not just by clarifying the scientific status/aims of different research formats that the CR ontology contributes to clarifying our methodological orientation. Rather, its notion of *ontological stratification* also provides us with (i) an effective argument against reductionist approaches, and (ii) a clear framework for engaging in interdisciplinary forms of research (Bhaskar and Danermark, 2006; Brown, 2009; Hoyer and Naess, 2008). With regard to the first of these issues, it should be remembered that CR provides us with a philosophical argument in support of understanding both agency and social structures as *irreducible* features of the world. Intentional activities – as we have seen – always presuppose (pre-existing) social structures for their successful completion, and adequate causal explanations therefore require that we make reference to the ways in which they interact. This means that – as opposed to the work of CS authors like Collier (2001), Weinstein (2006), and Hirshleifer (1994, 2001) – the CMP approach does not succumb to trains of thought which result in our own reducibility, ‘via the laws and principles of neurophysiology, to the status of inanimate things’ (Bhaskar, 1998: 29). This approach is therefore in a much better position to do justice to distinctly *social* dynamics, like those which are disregarded by the Gini-coefficient.

In addition to this, however, the notion of ontological stratification also provides us with a way of clearly grounding interdisciplinary (though arguably not *post-disciplinary*) forms of research. This is the case, in short, because it results in the claim that disciplinary divisions are not just *conventional* in nature. Rather, these divisions are theorized as reflecting (emergent) differences in the respective subject matters of various disciplines. Whereas *biology* could be theorized as being concerned with the properties/powers of all living things, for instance, the second chapter has already theorized *psychology* as being concerned with the emergent properties/power of ‘mind’, and the *social sciences* as being concerned with the

powers of social structures (from social relations, to rules, discourses, etc). When a phenomenon results from causal mechanisms which are located at a *variety* of levels, however, the CR framework shows that an integrated (i.e. inter-disciplinary) approach will be required for its study.<sup>74</sup> This is clearly applicable to intra-state conflict, as this phenomenon requires the irreducible qualities/powers of both human agents and various social structures for its realization. Both psychology and the social sciences would therefore play a prominent role in CR-based research about violent conflict.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, even the natural sciences could be provided with a place in CS research, by means of the aforementioned focus on ontological stratification. This is the case, concretely, because both psychological structures and social structures are inevitably embedded within the broader natural world from which they have emerged. The manifold ways in which they have an impact on/depend upon the natural world are therefore of key importance if we wish to make sense of their fate. This means, importantly, that CS research should concern itself with the various ways in which (waged/unwaged) human labour transforms the natural world. In addition to this, however, it also means that CS should theorize the ways in which phenomena like resource abundance, resource scarcity, and/or climate change affect violent conflict *in concrete spatiotemporal settings* (Ewing, 2010). This is in accordance with Homer-Dixon's aforementioned demand that we 'bring nature back in' to our analyses of conflict (in Kaplan, 2002: 23). As the CMP approach also insists on the reality and irreducibility of the psychological and the social strata, however, it avoids the neo-Malthusian tendency to neglect the psychological and social determinants which are at play as well.

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<sup>74</sup> It should be noted, however, that it is impossible to determine in advance of actually undertaking empirical research which ontological stratum (natural, psychological, social, etc.) will prove to be the *most* causally efficacious. As Danermark [et al] point out: 'one cannot predict anything regarding the influence of different mechanisms. Concrete phenomena are complexly composed of powers and mechanisms, which affect, reinforce, weaken and sometimes neutralize the effects of one another. The question of which mechanisms are the most significant for the object under study can therefore only be decided from case to case, through empirical studies in relation to the problem we address' (2002: 62)

<sup>75</sup> This arguably makes the CMP more akin to peace research than to most of the post-Cold War CS literature.

In attempting to develop this inter-disciplinary orientation, however, it is essential that we do not limit ourselves to the *intransitive* dimension of knowledge. This is the case, concretely, because proponents of CR have shown that the production of scientific knowledge does not occur in a voluntaristic manner. Rather, Bhaskar has argued – against the ontic fallacy which is inherent to the positivist approach – that the *transitive* processes of science involve ‘the social production of knowledge by means of knowledge’ (2008: 176). Scientists are therefore always ‘*positioned, biased, interested, and practically, culturally and socially conditioned*’ (Lawson, 2003: 220). At a methodological level this has the important implication that – if we are to more systematically develop *balanced* studies of intra-state conflict – it would be beneficial to incorporate reflexivity, and even elements of informal ‘peer-review’, into the research process itself. Indeed, the aforementioned status of scientists means that good research is much more likely to result from *interdisciplinary* and *pluralistic* forms of teamwork, cooperation, and mutual learning.<sup>76</sup>

These arguments about the transitive dimension of interdisciplinarity draw our attention to another important feature of the CMP approach as well. This feature concerns the fact that the categorical distinction which is often made between theoretical reflection and empirical information/applied work is arguably better understood in terms of *degrees* of difference than in terms of an *absolute* difference. This is the case, first of all, because observation and practical research are both necessarily infused with theory, and theory should therefore be understood as an *active* rather than a *passive* force in such research. In addition to this, however, empirical information and applied work are also capable of informing and correcting forms of theoretical reflection, and these types of research should therefore be

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<sup>76</sup> In the longer term this requires (i) a dismantling of the extreme individuating tendencies which currently characterize the academic enterprise, and (ii) an overcoming of the various social (linguistic, financial, etc.) barriers which have often prevented interdisciplinary forms of research from taking place at all.

understood in equally *active* terms.<sup>77</sup> If this is indeed the case, however, it puts the CMP approach at odds with a wide range of other approaches – ranging from *positivist/critical rationalist* approaches, to *conventionalist* approaches, and (certain) *post-structural* approaches – while implying that most types of research require a continual movement between theoretical and empirical ‘moments’. In addition to this, however, it also implies that a wide range of very different types of research are of potential use when it comes to developing a better understanding of intra-state conflict. These range from simple information-gathering exercises, to discourse analysis<sup>78</sup> (including especially conceptual analysis/critiques of binary oppositions), ‘genealogical’ research (in the Foucaultian sense of the term), and contrapuntal readings (in the Saïdian sense). These types of analysis – and many others like them – are capable of enhancing the analytical tools which are available to us, and hence advance the transitive processes of science in important ways.

If science is indeed the non-voluntaristic/non-humanist/social form of knowledge-production which CR has claimed it is, however, this also has one final implication. Concretely, it means that science, like other social practices, is subject to various cultural, economic, and political pressures. Its findings may therefore reflect the fact that hierarchically-organized academic institutions (and hence career-structures) are likely to only value certain kinds of research. Indeed, it may simply reflect the interests of the bodies which fund it. This means, importantly, that scientists should seek to be reflexive about the social determinants of their work. This includes – particularly in disciplines like CS – the need to ensure that scientific knowledge is not used for parochial forms of self-assertion, exploitation, and/or domination,

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<sup>77</sup> This is perhaps the most important difference between the CMP approach and Grounded Theory. As Danermark [et al] have shown, this approach suffers from a clear empiricist bias (2002: especially chapter 5).

<sup>78</sup> A causal explanation is, after all, simply a narrative in which a number of transitive verbs map a historical sequence of events. This is, in fact, the point of including epistemic relativism as part of the CR holy trinity. While realism and science are often counterposed with storytelling/narration, therefore, the CR framework claims that it is in fact an essential feature of these phenomena. In addition to this, however, the inclusion of judgmental rationalism in this trinity also entails that CR claims that – at least when it comes to the explanatory aims of science – some stories are better than others.

and involves – at an *ethical* level – that we must try to ensure that our work respects standard methodological injunctions about proper research behaviour (from ensuring voluntary informed consent, to providing transparency, avoiding the manipulation of studied populations, etc).<sup>79</sup> At a *political* level, however, it involves reflexivity about our own potential complicity in various types of imperial projects. Taken together, this means that research is likely to be full of contradictions and dilemmas. Indeed, it means – as Said argued more than two decades ago – that ‘[i]nnocence is now out of the question’ (1989: 213).

### 4.3 Answering the Critics

Finally, however, it also means that the notion of science has taken on an entirely different meaning from the one which positivist and critical rationalist approaches have often sought to give it. This has a number of important implications for the critics of science which were discussed in the first chapter of this project. It undermines, for instance, dualist claims that meaning and/or culture cannot be studied scientifically. While these cannot be studied in accordance with positivist criteria, this does not mean that scientists cannot – for instance – explore the *tacit skills* or *unacknowledged conditions* which inform semiotic practices. If this is indeed the case, however, there is no legitimate reason to exclude the study of semiotic practices from the notion of ‘science’, at least as this notion is understood within the CR framework. If dualist perspectives are misleadingly anti-naturalist, however, what can be said about the claims of those critical approaches which have argued that science amounts to a tool of (male, Global Northern/modernist, etc) domination and exploitation? Is there any merit to their suggestion that science necessarily results in a delegitimizing and/or disregarding of the subjugated knowledges which many critical approaches have sought to reclaim?

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<sup>79</sup> Such standards are particularly hard to maintain when studying violent conflict. See Wood (2006) and Cramer [et al] (2011) for further information about research ethics in conflict situations.

Once we adopt the CMP approach there is little reason to think so. This is the case, of course, because this approach *begins by documenting exactly those voices which have long been disregarded/discounted/dismissed by the positivist approach*. The idea that science is *necessarily* engaged in the silencing of non-scientific claims is therefore misleading. Rather, the CMP approach illustrates that scientific research into the human/social realms involves not just learning *about*, but also learning *from*, the people we study.<sup>80</sup> This takes place, again, by means of hermeneutic practices like the Gadamerian ‘fusion of horizons’ or Geertzian forms of social immersion, which are exactly the kinds of practices that are favoured by many critics of science. It might be countered, however, that the CR/CMP approach does replicate a more modest version of the epistemic hubris which characterizes positivism/modernism by insisting on the idea that scientists may be able to better understand a social situation than the (subjugated) people who inhabit it. This is not an entirely unreasonable claim to make, but – for a number of important reasons – it is also quite misleading. Perhaps the most important among these reasons, however, is the fact that the epistemic value of a person’s perspective can never be derived solely from their identity and/or experience. This is the case, primarily, because it results in situations which make disagreements among people with similar identities and/or experiences both *unintelligible* and *irresolvable*.

If particular identities and/or experiences did indeed provide us with special epistemic privileges, after all, they could not possibly result in contradictory claims among those who have similar identities/experiences. When they do in fact result in such contradictory claims, however, we must inevitably resort to epistemic standards which are *independent* of identity

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<sup>80</sup> This feature of the CMP approach also allows us to get beyond the reliance of scientific investigations on the state statistics and elite representations which certain decolonial/postcolonial authors have taken issue with. When the human/social sciences seek to immerse themselves in the social world of a population which they are studying, after all, there is no reason whatsoever to simply exclude ‘records derived from social memory, such as customs, rituals, religious beliefs, proverbs, myths, and oral narratives’ (Ayers, 2006: 159). See also Bhambra (2009: 25-27)

and experience in order to resolve intellectual disputes. These standards include customary notions like logical coherence, philosophical sophistication, empirical credibility, etc, and the independence of these standards from particular identities and experiences provides clear illustrations of at least some of the reasons that scientists may indeed be able to better understand a particular social situation than the (subjugated) people who happen to inhabit it.

If it is not the case that science is necessarily engaged in the silencing of non-scientists, however, what remains of the claims that science is *modernist* or *masculinist* in nature? The fate of the first of these claims should be clear by now. Science, at least as it is understood by CR, is dependent exactly on us *overcoming* the intellectual legacy of the PDM. To the extent that critical approaches have equated science with modernity, therefore, they have fallen into the common trap of assuming that positivism reflects its actual practices. As was shown in the second chapter, however, the positivist approach is incompatible with one of the most characteristic practices of the ‘hard’ sciences (experimentation), thereby making the claim that science is inherently modernist misleading. The same applies, however, to the postmodern feminist claim that science is masculinist as well. This may apply to positivism, but does not apply to the CMP approach. While this approach certainly provides a role for various ‘hard’/‘masculine’ qualities (like logic and reason), after all, there can be little doubt that ‘soft’/‘feminine’ qualities (like empathy and creativity) play an extremely important role as well. If science is to be understood in gendered terms at all, therefore, it is arguably more adequately described as *androgynous* in nature. This has a number of important practical implications. In particular, it means that scientists should not simply give up on trying to make its practices more representative and inclusive. If modernist and masculinist supremacy are not simply woven into its very fabric, after all, its shortcomings can in fact be overcome by means of coordinated forms of social action.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The CMP approach therefore provides hope for the idea of science. This hope is grounded in a systematic critique of the philosophical underpinnings which underpin the *Methodenstreit*, and results in an approach which provides us with an alternative to the stubborn divides between empiricist and reflexive approaches, nomothetic and idiographic approaches, causal and non-causal/constitutive approaches, objectivist and subjectivist approaches, explanatory and interpretive approaches, and quantitative and qualitative approaches. In addition to this, however, it also (i) provides us with an alternative to the idea that science should operate solely on the basis of either induction or deduction (favouring retroduction instead), while (ii) securing the status of these modes of inference (and hence the generalizing aims of science) on an alternative philosophical basis. Finally, it undermines the complexity sciences approach to CS as well, as it illustrates the misleading nature of Duffield's (2001) claim that we need to resort to functionalism/organicism if we are to avoid mechanistic models of cause and effect.

As opposed to all the aforementioned approaches, then, the CMP approach seems capable of providing us with a genuinely new approach to research. This approach, importantly, is neither conceited nor defeatist, adopts modesty, historical understanding, reflexivity, interdisciplinarity, and pluralism as guiding principles of its orientation towards scientific research, and suggests a range of plausible resolutions to the problems, dualisms and oppositions which characterize the critical approaches which were discussed throughout the first chapter. In addition to this, however, it also clarifies the ways in which scientific research should combine the universal and the particular, while grounding a number of research formats in the philosophical ontology which was developed by Bhaskar. In doing so it has argued for scepticism towards especially large-N positivist/critical rationalist studies to CS,



and has claimed that medium-range explanatory research (case studies and comparative research in particular) are more likely to be fruitful. Much more is required, however, if we are to truly 'rethink' CS by drawing on CR philosophy of science. In particular, it is necessary to extend the methodological insights which this chapter has developed into the realm of social theory proper. It is this, therefore, which the following chapter will attempt to do.

**CHAPTER V:**  
**TOWARDS A CULTURAL POLITICAL**  
**ECONOMY APPROACH**

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will – by engaging with various strands of social theory – develop a Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach to CS. This kind of engagement is arguably of key importance for the development of a new approach to CS, as neither the human/social sciences nor policy/practice are theory-free zones. They are, that is, necessarily based on a set of implicit or explicit assumptions about the nature of both human beings and the social world which they inhabit. Scientists and practitioners who ‘dismiss theory as arcane and irrelevant’ are therefore likely to end out the ‘unknowing slaves of someone else’s theories – most likely those of their funders’ (Goodhand, 2006: 45). In order to avoid this kind of situation the current chapter will explicitly engage with a number of key debates between proponents of ideational/materialist and rationalist/affective approaches to the human and social sciences. As was shown in the third chapter, these debates have been the cause of significant tensions throughout the CS literature, and it is therefore essential that this project attempts to develop some kind of resolution to them.

In doing so, the chapter will argue that CS must transcend the aforementioned debates by adopting a more heterodox and interdisciplinary approach to the human/social sciences. That is to say, it will argue that – rather than simply choosing one side over the other – CS must end the continual back-and-forth between materialist/ideational and rationalist/affective approaches. This means, in short, that it must resist all forms of reductionism and instrumentalism, and should recognize the analytical contributions which different sides of the aforementioned debates have made. This is the case, primarily, because different types of scholarship have shown that the distinctions between affect/reason and the cultural, political, and economic realms are – at best – unstable. Indeed, these distinctions mask a reality which

is much more fluid, interpenetrating, and complex. This fluidity and complexity should be recognized, as doing so would allow both CS and the human/social sciences to move from the *thin* accounts of power, identity, personhood, subject-formation, etc. which continue to characterize most scientific accounts to the much *thicker* accounts which are required in order to do justice to both their respective natures.

At a theoretical level, however, the development of this kind of approach requires that we (i) move beyond the unhelpful divides between historical materialism and post-structuralism/constructivism and political economy and cultural studies, and (ii) find ways of coherently combining the traditional fields of the human/social sciences (from economics, to politics, psychology, etc). This is, therefore, what this chapter will attempt to do. It should be noted, however, that it is not alone in arguing for this kind of orientation. Indeed, the CPE approach has numerous antecedents both in recent forms of social theorizing (Best and Paterson, 2009; Ryner, 2006; Babe, 2009; Jessop, 2004; Jessop and Sum, 2001), and certain approaches to intersectionality theory (Yuval-Davis, 2006; McCall, 2005), economic sociology (Polanyi, 2002; Granovetter, 1985), cultural studies<sup>81</sup>, and classical political economy.<sup>82</sup> It should be noted, however, that (i) these approaches have not yet been applied to CS, (ii) the CPE approach which is developed throughout this chapter has a number of distinctive features which are not replicated in these approaches, and (iii) this approach has a clear *philosophical* advantage over (most of)<sup>83</sup> the aforementioned approaches.

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<sup>81</sup> As Robert Babe has shown: ‘political economy was fully integrated in the writings of the British authors commonly acknowledged as inaugurating cultural studies— Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and E. P. Thompson’ (2009: 8). It is only later that these two strands became embroiled in various conflicts.

<sup>82</sup> As Bob Jessop and Ngai-Ling Sum point out: ‘Early students of political economy were polymaths who wrote on economics, politics, civil society, language, morals and philosophy (for example, Locke, Smith, Ferguson, Millar, Montesquieu, Hegel). They examined how wealth was produced and distributed and the close connection between these processes and modern state formation and inter-state relations. Later, political economy was separated into different disciplines: economics; politics, jurisprudence and public administration; and sociology and/or anthropology’ (2001: 90-91)

<sup>83</sup> The articles by Jessop (2004) and Jessop and Sum (2001) are the only ones to explicitly draw on CR.

This advantage derives, of course, from the fact that it is rooted in the philosophical framework which CR provides. This is of significant importance, as perhaps the key challenge which human/social scientists face when it comes to combining a heterodox range of theoretical sources is the risk/accusation of philosophical incoherence. As R.B.J. Walker has argued with regard to one recent attempt (Best and Paterson, 2009) at fashioning a CPE approach, for instance: '[m]uch of the discursive form of contemporary scholarly analysis has been shaped by the delineation of concepts that respond to shared questions about foundational principles [...] while expressing very different answers to these questions and radicalizing these differences as responses over common problems of principle. In very general terms, that is, it is often possible to identify shifts from historical conditions characterized by struggles to articulate and pose questions about foundational values of some [...] kind to a differentiation of categories expressing competing answers to such questions' (2009: 227). Building bridges between the aforementioned divides therefore requires that the 'foundational values' which have *underpinned* them are transcended as well. It is this, of course, which this project has already aimed to do by means of its engagement with the tenets of CR. As will be shown, it is exactly the fact that CR steps out of the problem field within which both positivism and its various critical antagonists are located that allows for the development of a philosophically-coherent CPE approach to the human/social sciences.<sup>84</sup>

Before discussing what this approach entails in more concrete terms, however, it is essential that two important issues are clearly highlighted. First, it should be noted that the transition from philosophy/CR to the human and social sciences/CPE is not one which can be made in a

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<sup>84</sup> This approach should not, therefore, be understood as reflecting a desire to *appease* all sides of the debate by simply taking the middle ground. As Patomäki and Wight have argued, 'the key to any move forward is not simply to take the middle ground, but to engage with and challenge the extremities that constitute the conditions of possibility for a certain understanding of the middle ground' (2000: 215). The CPE approach is therefore more accurately understood as a challenge to *every* side of the debate, as it aims to show that none of the sides on which it draws is able to provide CS with a satisfactory theoretical foundation.

straightforward manner. This is the case because CR – like the first two chapters of this project – engages solely in the practice of philosophical underlabouring. It aims, thereby, to clear the intellectual ground, in order for science to take place. Philosophy cannot, however, *substitute for* science, and there cannot, therefore, be a social theoretical orientation which is *logically entailed* by the insights of CR either. Various scientific approaches remain possible, even among proponents of CR, and – although the links between the CPE approach and CR positions will be clearly illustrated throughout this chapter – it should therefore be noted that this approach is simply one of these.<sup>85</sup> The second issue which deserves emphasis is the fact that this chapter will not seek to develop a universally-applicable *hypothesis* concerning the causes/nature of intra-state conflict. As will be clear from especially the previous chapter, (i) such a hypothesis is quite impossible, and (ii) the idea that such a hypothesis *is* possible is rooted in approaches to philosophy of science which have been thoroughly discredited. Instead of developing a *hypothesis*, therefore, the chapter will develop a broad (interdisciplinary) *approach* to theorizing both personhood and the social stratum.

Of course, the chapter's focus on these theoretical issues entails that it abstracts from the various types of (natural, biological, psychological, inter-personal, social structural, temporal/historical, spatial/geographical) particularities which characterize concrete conjunctures. It therefore *necessarily* (and quite intentionally) does violence to both the 'thick geographical knowledge' (Toal, 2003: 654) which is required in order to make sense of these situations, and 'the contextuality and historicity of all claims to knowledge' (Jessop and Oostelynck, 2008: 5). This does not entail, however, that a resolution to the aforementioned divides is simply irrelevant, as this kind of resolution provides us with a more sophisticated analytical toolbox for when we actually engage in scientific explanations. It is this kind of toolbox,

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<sup>85</sup> For an alternative approach to social theorizing which draws heavily on CR insights see especially the work of Margaret Archer (1995, 1996).

therefore, which the current chapter intends to develop. It will proceed, concretely, by developing a new approach to understanding both the psychological and the social strata. This is the case because previous chapters have shown that concrete causal explanations require the explicit linking of agents and social structures in both time and space. It is therefore essential that both strata are re-theorized if this chapter is to develop a coherent alternative to existing CS approaches. It is to the first of these concerns that the project will turn at present.

## **5.2 Theorizing Personhood**

What, then, could a CR-based approach to theorizing the psychological stratum contribute to the CS debates which were discussed in the third chapter? These debates, as we have seen, have centred predominantly on whether violent conflict should be understood as reflecting *rational* or *affective* principles. Whereas the *first* of these groups has stressed the importance of instrumental reason, the economic rationalities involved in appropriation/confiscation, the functions of violent conflict, and the centrality of cost/benefit analyses, the *second* group has stressed the importance of humiliation, frustrated desire, emotional bonding, hatred, and the desire to restore self-respect. A CR-based approach could contribute to this debate in three main ways. The *first* of these concerns the fact that – as was demonstrated in the previous chapter – the CMP approach illustrates that there is no legitimate reason to simply assume that violent conflict is entirely uniform in nature. While one form of conflict may involve predominantly the application of (instrumental) rationality, therefore, other forms of violence may reflect frustrated desires and/or systematic forms of humiliation. When it comes to the issue of rationality and affect, therefore, it is essential that CS authors pluralize their war stories as well. In addition to this, however, CR is able to contribute to the aforementioned CS discussion in a *second* way as well. This contribution derives from the kind of discourse

analysis which was advocated in the previous chapter, and concerns the binary organization of the reason/affect opposition. Such binary oppositions, as was shown in previous chapters, tend to suppress the ‘ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories, so that any overlapping region that may appear [...] becomes impossible’ (Ashcroft [et al], 1998: 23).

This claim applies to the rationality/affect opposition which is employed throughout the CS literature as well. Authors like Andrew Sayer (2007, 2011) and Martha Nussbaum (2001), for instance, have shown that the sciences should come to terms with ‘the cognitive aspects of emotions’, and avoid ‘counterposing emotion to reason’ (Sayer, 2007: 245). This is the case, concretely, because emotions are perhaps best understood as ‘evaluative judgements of circumstances believed to affect or to be likely to affect our well-being or that of others or things we care about’ (ibid). They cannot, therefore, be so easily divorced from conceptions of what is rational. The same ambiguity applies, however, to instrumental rationality, as even this (extremely narrow) understanding of reason is never simply detached from the issues we feel strongly about. Perpetrators of violent acts may, for instance, seek to eliminate a passionately hated and/or feared adversary by means of instrumentally rational forms of genocidal violence. Such examples undermine the binary opposition which has organized the aforementioned CS debates, and – as Sayer (2011) has shown – undermine much of the modernist tradition in social theory as well. This includes, importantly, the trinitarian framework which is favoured by the Clausewitzian approach to CS. While this approach has argued that war should be understood as *combining* reason (instrumentality) and affect (passion/hostility), they have also tended to assume that these categories refer to characteristics or qualities which are in fact separate or separable. They fail to take into account, therefore, the various ways in which (instrumental) rationality and affect are in fact mutually entwined.



It should be noted, however, that even the adoption of such a non-binary understanding of affect and rationality would only amount to a modest improvement on the analytical frameworks which CS authors have employed in the past. This is the case because the exclusive focus on these two dimensions provides us with a conception of personhood which is arguably radically incomplete. In order to show that this is indeed the case the following few sections will draw on notions like emergence/ontological stratification, open/closed systems, and the critical humanism which was developed in the previous chapters of this project. As will be shown, these CR notions allow us to ground an approach to personhood which is more *coherent*, more *sophisticated*, and much *richer* than the accounts which have generally been provided by materialist (economic and political) and ideational (cultural) approaches to both CS and the human/social sciences more generally.

This is the case, first of all, because the CR notion of ontological stratification allows us to avoid both the *voluntarism* which is inherent to humanist perspectives and the *reification* which is inherent to anti-humanist perspectives. The ‘critical humanism’ which results from CR can therefore be used to counteract the social theoretical manifestations of these perspectives as well. These range from the reifying tendencies of Althusserian (2008) structuralism and Foucaultian (1991), Derridean (1998) and Butlerian (2006) post-structuralism to the voluntarism and ‘nomothetic determinism’ (Porpora, 2001: 264) of rational choice theory, utilitarianism, liberal political economy and large swathes of the economics literature. While the former two groups have had few adherents throughout the CS discipline<sup>86</sup>, the latter category has been extremely influential. It is not just because they are voluntaristic in nature, however, that these perspectives are problematic.

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<sup>86</sup>The adoption of such anti-humanist perspectives would be extremely limiting, as CS could not talk about the psychological causes and effects of violence at all. Gilligan’s (2000) work on shame would be meaningless, as without a self there would be no one left to experience a shame and (lack of) self-respect. Keen’s remarks on humiliation as both a source and a means of violence (2007: 50-51) would also be redundant, and Nordstrom’s

In addition to this, they arguably adopt extremely misleading theorizations of personhood as well. This is the case because human beings are clearly not the coherent and stable entities which such perspectives purport them to be. Rather, we are reflexive creatures, who change our minds (and therefore our course of action) frequently. We get bored and tired, and our motivations, beliefs and identities are often far from coherent, clear, or consistent in different contexts. This makes the aforementioned types of approaches seem implausible. An adequate critique requires more than such anecdotal evidence, however. This is the case because, in addition to this, such a critique also requires that we transcend the philosophical assumptions which make these approaches seem appealing. It is here that the CR approach to open/closed systems is able to make a distinctive contribution to the theorization of personhood, as it illustrates that the appeal of the aforementioned approaches derives to a significant extent from the appeal of orthodox philosophies of science. Concretely, the appeal of the aforementioned approaches derives from the fact that they provide scientific models with a stable structure (an atomistic human being) with permanently actualized causal powers (aimed exclusively at the maximization of some objectively-defined 'good'). This (i) allows these models to satisfy the intrinsic conditions for closure, and (ii) portrays human action as predictable/deductable/determined. Such a concern with notions of closure and prediction/deduction/determination is, of course, typical of orthodox philosophies of science as well, and the philosophical 'match' which this results in therefore provides the aforementioned approaches with both the appeal and the credibility of 'hard science'.

The CR framework is able to make much better sense of the changing ways of being and acting which characterize human personhood, however, and it therefore takes the philosophical sting out of the aforementioned perspectives. This is the case, as Archer has

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observations about the indignity which is felt by many people during times of violent conflict (1997: 166) would be entirely redundant.

shown, because ‘the one factor which guarantees that social systems remain open [...] is that they are necessarily peopled. [...] [T]here are properties and powers particular to people which include a reflexivity towards and creativity about any social context which they confront. If, *per impossible*, we could shut the door of any social situation against the intervention of extraneous factors (thus effecting extrinsic closure) we would only have closed in those whose innovativeness enables them to design a new exit or creatively to redesign their environment (absence of intrinsic closure)’ (in Karlsson, 2011: 150). The intrinsic closure which the aforementioned approaches require for their models of human personhood to work is therefore largely unavailable in the psychological realm, which makes them unhelpful when it comes to engaging in scientific forms of explanation.

How, though, might we go about applying this approach to open/closed systems to the notions of personhood which have been employed throughout CS? The first thing to note in this regard is the fact that many of the aforementioned critiques can be straightforwardly made use of in order to reject or qualify positions which have been adopted by dominant approaches to CS. Much of what has been said about the limitations of approaches to personhood which are rooted in orthodox philosophical positions is equally applicable, after all, to a variety of CS approaches. These kinds of insights apply, for instance, to Hirschleifer’s ‘muscular economics’ (1994: 2), Collier’s emphasis on the collective action problem (2000), and economistic/rational choice approaches to CS more generally (Grossman, 1999; Weinstein, 2007). Such approaches clearly tend towards models of personhood which suffer from both the voluntarism and the ‘nomothetic determinism’ (Porpora, 2001: 264) which was discussed above. Indeed, they tend towards accounts of personhood which only look credible if we also accept problematic philosophical assumptions about intrinsic closure, atomism, deduction, etc. They are, therefore, clearly part of the ‘problem field’ which CR transcends.

It should be noted, however, that the potential contribution of CR to conceptualizing personhood is not limited to this theorization of open and closed systems. Indeed, two further contributions can be derived from the approach which it has developed concerning the materialism/idealism divide. This divide, as we have seen, is rooted in problematic forms of philosophical monism and dualism, and can be resolved by means of the CR appeal to notions of emergence and ontological stratification. These notions have been shown to have significant potential when it comes to resolving notorious dualist and anti-naturalist questions about the philosophical intelligibility of agency. The current section will show, however, that the same concepts can also be made use of in order to develop a much richer account of human personhood (O'Mahoney, 2011).

It is, in this regard, important to briefly remind ourselves of an argument which was made in the second chapter. As was shown, Bhaskar argues – against the ways in which monistic forms of materialism/positivism and dualistic critical approaches have theorized human beings – that the materialism/idealism divide is misleading in nature. The qualities and powers of ‘mind’, although they are clearly both *rooted in* and *dependent on* the brain/body/matter, are better understood as *emergent from* their combination. This is of the utmost importance with regard to our understanding of personhood, as it allows us to combine a concern with both the purely physical/embodied/corporeal elements of being human, and the complex collection of emotions, (religious) beliefs, (sexual) desires, habits, capacities, vulnerabilities, memories, needs, subconscious motivations, values, etc. which make up a concrete person. As Christian Smith has argued, the idea of emergence allows us to come to terms with ‘the intangible, mental, subjective, “spiritual” aspects of human being’, while also insisting that none of this ever exists ‘apart from the corporeal materiality of living flesh and blood’ (2010: 63).

This position is productive for two main reasons. The first of these concerns the fact that the CR theorization of ‘mind’ allows us to adopt a much richer account of personhood than has generally been made use of in the post-Cold War CS literature. Arguably, human beings are much more than a simple combination of (instrumental) rationality and affect, irrespective of whether these qualities are conceptualized as separate or entwined. Rather, human persons possess a much wider range of qualities and powers which have so far been largely neglected in CS discussions. These range from our ability to learn/memorize, to our ability for creativity, fellow-feeling/empathy, symbolization/language use, and the forming of moral/ethical opinions. Such qualities/powers – along with a wide range of others which do not fit neatly into the rationality/affect nexus – are arguably of significant importance when it comes to developing a better understanding of intra-state conflict. They should therefore be incorporated into the studies which CS authors develop. Indeed, CS should seek to more systematically develop the focus of a limited number of authors on the ability of human beings to act on ‘emotional and moral motives’ (Wood, 2003b: 2), feel ‘pleasure in agency’ when taking part in forms of violent struggle (ibid: 235), and experience/recall/anticipate feelings of shame (Gilligan, 2000), humiliation (Keen, 2007: 50-51), resentment (Girard, 1979), and (in)dignity (Nordstrom, 1997: 166).

In addition to allowing us to develop this much broader account of personhood, however, the aforementioned framing of the materialism/idealism debate also paves the way for an approach to CS which transcends the most important divides between both political economy and cultural studies, and historical materialism and post-structuralism/constructivism. This is the case because the notions of emergence and ontological stratification allow us to do justice to the areas of concern which all of the aforementioned approaches have sought to draw our attention to. While it should be clear, for instance, that human beings are indeed material

things with various material needs and interests, this should not lead us to neglect the various emergent qualities and powers which distinguish us from simpler material things (and which are generally grouped together as ‘mind’). As Smith has argued, people are ‘all the time both material body and immaterial “soul” existent in singular unity’ (2010: 63), and it is arguably high time that both the human/social sciences and CS come to terms with the fact that this is the case. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that the CR framework provides us with a philosophically coherent way of escaping from the intellectual blackmail that is inherent to the either/or choice which is supposedly to be made.

It might seem, however, that adopting this kind of inclusive approach amounts to the easy way out, a simple refusal of choice which does not require us to commit to any behavioural emphasis whatsoever. The fact remains, however, that human beings are characterized by *all* of the powers/qualities which have been discussed so far, and it is only the problematic philosophical assumptions which underpin other approaches which keeps us from incorporating this fact into our scientific studies.<sup>87</sup> Of course it remains true that – despite the universal qualities and powers which are possessed by all human beings – there exists enormous diversity both among and within human populations. It therefore remains extremely dangerous to presume – in the way that orthodox forms of political economy have often done – that particular models of human behaviour can be employed in a spatiotemporally invariant manner. The aforementioned diversity can be easily taken account of within the CR framework, however, by means of its emphasis on the stratified nature of the world. This illustrates that some of these differences may be best understood as originating at a biological level, while others may be better understood as resulting from psychological or social

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<sup>87</sup> This also entails that, where extremes of human behaviour (whether instrumentally rational, affective, or whatever) are indeed systematically displayed, such behaviour must be problematized. That is to say, systematic displays of just one dimension of human behaviour must be *explained*, generally by referring to the social circumstances in which people find themselves.

determinants. Contrasting social circumstances, in particular, result in the differential development of human potentialities which are otherwise universal. This is of significant importance, as many scientific approaches have disregarded or denied the existence/analytical importance of this stratum. As will be shown in the next section, however, even those approaches which *have* incorporated a concern with the social dimension of human existence tend to be subject to serious analytical limitations.

### **5.3 Theorizing the Social Stratum**

This is the case, primarily, because these approaches have made systematic use of the narrow disciplinary frameworks which result from modernist forms of social theory. This is clearly apparent, for instance, in the persistence of the split between cultural, political, and economic approaches to the social sciences. Instead of simply adopting/defending one of these approaches, however, the current section will make the case for a CPE approach. This approach aims to show that, in order to do justice to the social stratum, the social sciences must end the continual back-and-forth between materialist and idealist approaches. Indeed, they should resist/avoid all forms of reductionism and instrumentalism, and recognize the analytical contributions which different sides of the aforementioned debates have made. This is the case because different types of scholarship have clearly shown that the distinctions between the cultural, political, and economic realms are – at best – unstable. Indeed, more strongly, these distinctions mask a reality which is much more fluid, interpenetrating, and complex. This should be recognized, as doing so would allow the social sciences to move from the *thin* accounts of power, identity, personhood, subject-formation, etc. which continue to characterize most analytical approaches to the much *thicker* accounts which are required in order to do justice to the nature of the social world.

Such a shift is facilitated by the philosophical and methodological frameworks which were developed in the second and fourth chapters of this project. As will be shown in the next few sections, it is exactly the fact that the CR and CMP frameworks step out of the problem field within which both positivism and its various critical antagonists are located that allows for the development of a coherent CPE approach to the social sciences. Of particular importance in this regard is the fact that these frameworks provide the social sciences with (i) an alternative (non-deterministic and inclusive) understanding of causation, (ii) a resolution to the debate between humanism/voluntarism and anti-humanism/reification, (iii) an alternative to dualistic notions of materialism and idealism, and (iv) a way out of the various methodological divides which are rooted in the *Methodenstreit* (including especially the divides between nomothetic/idiographic and interpretive/explanatory approaches). These features are of key importance for engaging in social theoretical reflection, as it is exactly the aforementioned issues and divides which have underpinned the split between both political economy and cultural studies, and historical materialism and post-structuralism/constructivism (Ryner, 2006; Babe, 2009). Indeed, it is these issues and divides which have underpinned much of the split between proponents of cultural, political, and economic approaches to CS as well.

In the next few sections I will begin, however, by making the case for a CPE approach at a general social theoretical level, before illustrating the various ways in which this approach might be usefully applied to the CS literature in the second part. In both of these sections I will draw on what, in the second chapter, was referred to as the ‘critical realist embrace’ (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010: 77-78), and extend this inclusive/heterodox philosophical orientation into the area of social theory. In doing so I will draw on a wider range of critical sources than is perhaps common for a proponent of CR. Many of its advocates have, after all, opted for Marxian/historical materialist approaches, or have drawn on different traditions in



political economy. Throughout the next few sections I will argue, however, that the adoption of these common approaches amounts to a waste of the social theoretical potential which is possessed by CR. This is the case, in short, because it is only when we systematize the CR embrace at a social theoretical level that we can begin to heal some of the rifts which have divided the social scientific enterprise in the past. This section will therefore make use of a broad range of sources instead, and seeks to draw attention to the various ways in which the CR framework accommodates the insights which they have developed. These sources range from recent forms of social theorizing (Best and Paterson, 2009; Ryner, 2006; Babe, 2009; Jessop, 2004; Jessop and Sum, 2001), to forms of intersectionality theory (Yuval-Davis, 2006; McCall, 2005), economic sociology (Polanyi, 2002; Granovetter, 1985), cultural studies (Williams, 1977, 2005), and classical political economy. These approaches, I will argue, provide us with the resources which are required in order to move from *thin* accounts of power, identity, and subject-formation to the *thicker* accounts which are required in order to do justice to the irreducible and intersecting logics which the social stratum contains.

As many others authors who have sought to develop a CPE approach have done as well, however, the following section will begin by discussing the work of Karl Polanyi (2002). Polanyi's work is important, as it challenges one of the most fundamental distinctions which is used by modern forms of social theory. This is the distinction between 'economy' and 'culture'. These terms have long grounded different approaches to social theory, and have increasingly come to be associated with opposite sides of the debate between positivism and interpretive/hermeneutic approaches. As Blaney and Inayatullah have argued, for instance, political economy 'speaks of the globe mostly in terms of the universal laws of economics' (2010: 14), while the idea of culture 'threatens to undermine the nomothetic elegance of general laws' and 'seems to align itself in our imagination as one with the ideographic'

(ibid:19). While Polanyi's work is not explicitly concerned with such philosophical and methodological issues, it does challenge a number of assumptions which are central to most forms of social theory. In order to understand how it does this, we must first discuss the approach to economics which he advances, and which is referred to as 'substantivism'.

This approach argues, in short, that economics should be understood as describing 'human society's interaction with its natural and social environment in so far as this results in supplying it with the means of material want satisfaction' (Dale, 2010: 110). It deals, in other words, with the ways in which human beings make their living *within* their broader social/cultural circumstances. Polanyi showed, indeed, that many ancient societies were not characterized by a separation between what is now often understood as the 'economic' realm and the rest of the social/cultural world at all, and that the various activities which resulted in the satisfaction of material needs were subject to the same cultural (particularly *moral*) and political constraints which applied to other forms of behaviour.<sup>88</sup> These activities were therefore firmly *embedded within* the rest of the social/cultural world.<sup>89</sup> This was only the case, however, until historical transformations to capitalism resulted in the forceful *disembedding* of these activities from their broader social/cultural context. The capitalist system, Polanyi argued, submits 'economic' activities to the impersonal logic of self-regulating markets, and subjects them to the commodification of nature and labour which this involves (2002, esp. part two). This is, he argues, both (i) enormously destructive when it comes to the natural environment, as it involves a move towards its systematic exploitation for the sake of material gain, and (ii) enormously socially/culturally disruptive, as normal standards of behaviour are forcefully destroyed and replaced with the impersonal, egocentric,

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<sup>88</sup> As he argued, the human economy 'is embedded and enmeshed in institutions, economic and non-economic. The inclusion of the non-economic is vital. For religion and government may be as important for the structure and functioning of the economy as monetary institutions or the availability of tools and machines themselves that lighten the toil of labour' (in Block and Somers, 1984: 63).

<sup>89</sup> For similar perspectives see Scott (1977) and Thomson (2013).

and instrumentally rational maximization of material goods in competitive market settings. Such behaviour is not, then, a spatiotemporally invariant feature of human behaviour, but rather reflects the disembedded nature of economic activities in capitalist societies (Block and Somers, 1984: 54; Milner, 1993: 3). This disembedded status is reflected as well, however, in (i) the institutional separation of the cultural from the economic (Dale, 2010: 50; Milner, 1993: 3), and (ii) the appearance of an economics discipline which aims to study the logic and laws of what is now understood as ‘the economy’ (Despain, 2011: 291).

The substantivist approach therefore has the distinct advantage of historicizing the distinction between culture and economy.<sup>90</sup> It does this, importantly, by making use of a number of key contrasts/oppositions. These include, in particular, the contrasts/oppositions between *embedded* and *disembedded* economies, *market* societies and *non-market* societies, *pre-modern moral communitarianism* and *modern amoral individualism*, and *personal relations* and *impersonal relations*. While such oppositions are clearly important when it comes to understanding a number of important differences between pre-modern and modern societies, however, it should also be noted that more contemporary forms of research have shown that Polanyi tended to employ them in a manner which was perhaps a little too clear-cut. As Hann and Hart argue, for instance, half a century after the publication of *The Great Transformation* ‘the dichotomies and typologies served up by Polanyi seem too neat’ (2011: 56).

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<sup>90</sup> Although his theoretical orientation is very different, the focus on the origins of these distinctions is also shared by Foucault (2001). As Jonathan Joseph has written, according to Foucault ‘[t]he science of political economy establishes itself by separating out the state and civil society and the political and legal order, and establishing the importance of the realm of self-interested market-based activity [...] Liberalism is actually about defining boundaries and spheres of regulation. Society is still regulated and governed, but liberalism places emphasis on the role of the market and the private sphere in imposing a discipline that is legitimated as ‘natural’ and free from state interference. Liberalism and political economy also constructs individual subjects as autonomous and rational decision makers[...] It attempts to define a non-political private sphere of private interests beyond the operation of the state and politics and subject to various economic norms, standards and calculations (2004: 156)

This has perhaps been most clearly illustrated by the so-called ‘cultural economy’ literature (Ray and Sayer, 1999; du Gay and Pryke, 2002), which has argued that even *capitalist* economies ‘operate, not in isolation, but in conjunction with various social influences, including ethnicity and gender divisions, forms of regulation, cultural norms and identities’ (Kourliouros, 2003: 784). Indeed, as authors like Sayer (2001: 691) have shown, ‘[m]arkets need nonmarket forms of organisation [...] to make them sustainable and are always embedded in [non-hierarchical/networked] relations of trust, at least at a minimal level’ (see also Graeber, 2011).<sup>91</sup> Economic activities therefore remain significantly embedded within broader social/cultural circumstances even in capitalist societies.

This means, importantly, that the dualistic understandings of culture and economy which are adopted by both orthodox forms of social science and Polanyi’s more historically-oriented work are problematic, as these forms of analysis obscure the continuities which inevitably remain. Indeed, as Blaney and Inayatullah have argued, social science should arguably avoid ‘economizing the economy’ by portraying it as a simple ‘other’ which exists ‘over and against a [cultural] “lifeworld” of social meaning and ethical purpose, thematic ambiguity, and creative contestation’ (2010: 22; see also Sayer, 2001). While it remains of importance, of course, for science to draw attention to the various disembedding tendencies which are inherent to capitalist transformations – and the ways in which the different realms can indeed be run on the basis of contrasting principles – the cultural economy literature also clearly illustrates (i) that ‘the differentiation of modern society into separate spheres is [...] never fully achieved’ (Sayer, 2001: 291), and (ii) that there are therefore important limitations to both economistic understandings of ‘the economy’ and culturalist understandings of ‘culture’.

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<sup>91</sup> As Peterson (2006: 128) has noted as well, the forms of solidarity and caring which characterize family life are required for capitalist economies to function, as it is these characteristics which allows them to produce ‘individuals who are then able to ‘work’ by instilling the ‘attitudes, identities and meaning systems that enable societies to function’.

These conclusions have a number of important implications for the ways in which we understand the ‘discursive and organisational construction [...] of disciplinary boundaries’ (Jessop and Sum, 2001: 89). In particular, they draw attention to the fact that social scientific disciplines do not have fully separable/completely distinct objects of analysis. This has been echoed by economists like Tony Lawson, who has claimed that ‘there is no obvious basis for distinguishing economics according to the nature of its object, i.e. as a *separate* science’ (2003: 162). Rather, Lawson argues that economics should simply ‘take its place as a *branch* of social science, much as high-energy physics, low-temperature physics and radio astronomy each constitutes a branch of physics’ (ibid). This non-dualistic orientation can be usefully extended to a wide range of the issues which have divided economic and cultural approaches. In fact, it can be used in order to break down some of the most important divides between both historical materialism and post-structuralism/constructivism, and political economy and cultural studies. In illustrating that this is indeed the case, however, there are a large number of important issues to choose from. The next few sections will discuss three of the most important. Concretely, these sections will focus on how the non-dualistic orientation which is characteristic of the cultural economy literature might be applied to (i) our understanding of discourse in social life, (ii) the persistent split between economics and moral philosophy, and (iii) the divide between economics and approaches to understanding the social world which stress that it is characterized by libidinosity.

With regard to the first of these of these issues, we might begin by stressing that the concern with *discourse* which is characteristic of particularly post-structuralism and ‘cultural materialism’ (Williams, 1977, 2005) should be incorporated into our understanding of the economic realm.<sup>92</sup> Doing so is arguably consistent with the aforementioned non-dualist

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<sup>92</sup> As Ryner has argued, an ‘intellectually honest response to poststructuralism (compatible with enlightenment ideals) would require IPE [International Political Economy] to take seriously the question of discourse and

orientation as – in opposition to the material/ideational split which is characteristic of orthodox forms of social science – these approaches have illustrated that the economic realm is by no means pre- or non-discursive in nature. More specifically, if the term ‘discourse’ can be understood to refer to (real and emergent/irreducible) signifying/meaning-making systems and processes, the aforementioned approaches have illustrated that it is not just the realm of ‘culture’ but ‘the economy’ as well that is infused with such processes.

This is the case, importantly, not just because economic activities are embedded in social forms (ethnicity/race, gender, etc) which are commonly understood as ‘discursively constructed’ anyway. Rather, this is the case because *social life as we know it would be quite impossible without these processes of signification/meaning-making taking place*. Even if ‘the economy’ *could* be accurately understood as being autonomous from culture *broadly defined*, after all, engaging in any kind of social activity inevitably requires that actors are skilled signifiers/meaning-makers, thereby making economic activities part of culture *narrowly defined*. This aligns the CPE approach with the work of Raymond Williams (ibid), who argued that it is by means of ‘cultural’ signifying systems that ‘a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored’ (in Milner, 1993: 9). Such systems should not, therefore, be understood as deriving ‘from an otherwise constituted social order’ but, rather, should be understood as ‘themselves major elements in its constitution’ (ibid: 8-9). This means, among various other things, that – as numerous post-structural authors have claimed (de Goede, 2003, 2006) – that discursive processes are a key element in the process of rendering economic practices and policies *possible*. As Ryner has shown, for instance, the ‘construction of statistical categories, accounting procedures and the like was a *necessary precondition* for the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) as without

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discursive representation. Hence, any claim that this question amounts to no more than a distraction has to be rejected’ (2006: 139).

them one could not conceptualize a ‘European economy’ that was governable’ (2006: 143).<sup>93</sup> Discursive practices should therefore be understood as ‘*a requirement for material and institutional possibilities*’ (de Goede, 2003: 94), and hence are *internal to* economic processes. Social science should therefore avoid orthodox models of the economy which portray it as simply a ‘material’ realm. Rather, it should seek to conceptualize economic activities as both *dependent on* and *embedded within* the various signifying/meaning-making practices which characterize social life more generally. This is the case, therefore, *however disembodied economic activities may in fact become in particular types of societies*.

Incorporating a concern with discourse into our understanding of economics is, however, only one of the ways in which the social sciences could usefully build on the non-dualistic orientation which is adopted by the cultural economy literature. A second area which is of particular importance for this, indeed, is the reintegration of moral philosophy into the study of economics. As Robert Babe has shown, this unfortunate disciplinary split can be traced back to at least the works of Adam Smith, who ‘taught political economy as a distinct and severable component of moral philosophy’ (2009: 13). This resulted in two completely contradictory lines of argument appearing throughout his work. Whereas *The Wealth of Nations* ‘celebrates “self-love” as the engine of economic prosperity’, for instance, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* ‘lauds empathy (what Smith termed *sympathy*) as the highest of human virtues, and claims that sympathy is in no way compatible with self-love’ (ibid: 14). In writing two ‘separate and essentially inconsistent books’, however, ‘Smith figured prominently in separating political economy from moral philosophy’, and paved the way for an approach to economics which defined it ‘as the study of wealth generation, as opposed to

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<sup>93</sup> Similarly, the realist author Peter Manicas (1988: 40) has argued that the discipline of econometrics is essentially a manifestation of ‘state-istics’. That is, it is a manifestation of the state’s increasing demands for information about ‘economic activities’, information which it then used in order to facilitate the economic development that was necessary for it to enhance its powers, war-fighting capacities, etc.

the study of wealth distribution (economic justice)’ (ibid). This remains, of course, the focus of what is now often termed neoclassical economics. If economic activities are indeed embedded in social/cultural life, however, these dualistic framings make little sense. Rather, the anti-dualistic orientation which is adopted by the cultural economy literature demands that – even when we are concerned with the relatively disembodied economies of capitalist societies – ‘the economy’ is understood as infused with concerns over justice and injustice, fairness and unfairness. It remains a mistake, therefore, to ‘economize’ the economy by attempting to purify it of its various ‘pre-modern’ and/or ‘pre-capitalist’ features.

This applies to the concerns of what Amin and Palan (2001: 566) have termed ‘libidinal political economy’ as well. This approach suggests that we should conceptualize the economy in a way which acknowledges the fact that it too is infused with the ‘flows of desire, the fears and the anxieties, the loves and the despairs that traverse the social field’ (Foucault in ibid). This is, however, in direct contradiction with *rationalist* forms of political economy/historical materialism, which have sought to reduce our economic life to the instrumental maximization of material self- or class-interest. It is also, however, in direct contradiction with a variety of *dualist* approaches, which have incorporated a concern with libidinosity into their analyses by splitting social life in two. That is to say, they have done so by maintaining a distinction between (i) an economic sphere which is dominated by the rational maximization of material self/class-interest, and (ii) a cultural sphere (or “lifeworld”) which is its meaningful, ethical, and libidinal antithesis (Ashley, 1983). Both of these options are, however, problematic, and should arguably be replaced by the analytical orientation which characterizes the cultural economy literature. The aforementioned flows of desire, fears, anxieties, loves and despair cannot, after all, be understood as extraneous to the economic realm either. Although it is important to note, for instance, that certain types of societies do demand that our



behaviour/demeanour is more ‘professional’ than it perhaps would be in our personal lives, we do not simply cease to be the kind of libidinal creatures we normally are just because we happen to be ‘at work’. Even in capitalist societies, therefore, work is not to be understood as simply a location in which labour power is applied to a productive aim in an instrumentally rational manner. As they are peopled – and as ‘the differentiation of modern society into separate spheres is [...] never fully achieved’ (Sayer, 2001: 291) – places of work are *necessarily* characterized by the desires, despairs, fears, status claims, petty annoyances, and forms of (office) politics which characterize human life more generally.<sup>94</sup>

All of this illustrates, then, that libidinosity – along with discourse/meaning-making, moral concerns, and culture more generally – are all elements of a social world which refuses to simply evaporate when we enter the ‘economic’ realm. The dualistic framework that is promoted by the ‘economic’ vs. ‘cultural’ vocabulary of both Polanyi and orthodox forms of social science is therefore misleading, and should be replaced by the emphasis on non-dualism which is characteristic of the cultural economy literature. Developing such an approach requires, however, that the aforementioned types of insights concerning the necessity of enculturating the economy are also reversed. Not only should our understanding of the economy be enculturated, that is, but, our understanding of culture should also be ‘economized’. This is the case, primarily, because – as Marxian/historical materialist approaches have consistently pointed out – all human communities must find ways of (socially) providing for the material needs which characterize our species by means of the work they engage in. ‘Economic’ activities (defined substantively) are therefore both universally-necessary and – as all other social systems are unilaterally dependent on these

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<sup>94</sup> The fact that libidinosity cannot be separated from economics is clearly illustrated by the various techniques which are used in order to stimulate consumption as well. As Ewen (1998; 2001) has shown, the advertising industry is built largely on the insight that appeals to the libidinal side of our personalities (sex, love, status, pride, etc.) are much more effective than appeals to instrumental rationality (price, effectiveness, etc.).

material needs being fulfilled – an incredibly important feature of human existence (Sayer, 1998; Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010: 85). Indeed, what are frequently understood as purely cultural forms, like ethnic or clan affiliations, can often be understood (at least in part) as functional with regard to meeting the aforementioned material needs. These affiliations can facilitate, for instance, the joint cultivation of agricultural land, or collective forms of animal husbandry. In addition to exploring the embedded nature of ‘the economy’ it is therefore important that the social sciences – by economizing ‘cultural’ forms – explore the material processes with which they are infused as well.

Indeed, it is of key importance that the social sciences explore the various ways in which the economic concerns of a society may condition and co-opt its cultural forms. As Sayer (2001) has argued, the logic which characterizes economic ‘systems’ is often able to produce effects which go beyond it, thereby colonizing the cultural ‘lifeworld’ on which it depends. The *economic* logic of a society can therefore affect the values, customs, meaning-systems, etc. which are commonly understood solely in *cultural* terms. Importantly, however, *systematic* forms of cultural colonization depend on the economic system being characterized by a self-expanding logic which is far from universal. Specifically, this has historically depended on the logic of commodification and expanded reproduction which characterizes *capitalism*, an economic system which tends towards the increasing dominance of market over non-market values. It is not until this system takes hold, for instance, that we can sensibly talk about the existence of a ‘culture industry’ (Adorno, 2001) which concerns itself with the production of cultural commodities for the sake of profit. Nor, more generally, can we talk of the increasing importance of economic principles until capitalism takes hold. As Polanyi never failed to point out, one of the most distinctive features of capitalist societies is the fact that economic pressures/imperatives shape human life to a much greater extent than they do in non/pre-

capitalist societies.<sup>95</sup> Although economic activities are therefore a necessary feature of human life it is important to note – against vulgar applications of the Marxist base/superstructure model, and crude ‘modes of production’ narratives – that the causal importance of these activities cannot be presumed upon. While human beings are certainly labouring animals (*homo laborans*) – and economic activities are hence ‘base-ic’ – this does not entail that their social lives can be reduced to this characteristic. The adequacy of ‘economistic’ forms of historical materialism does not, in other words, follow from this (otherwise important) insight.

Indeed, cultural forms are arguably never *completely* reducible to/colonized by economic logics. This is the case because the emergent needs which characterize human personhood *must* be reflected in the social arrangements which seek to satisfy them as well. In addition to the material functions which they often fulfil, therefore, cultural affiliations must also provide the sense of identity, forms of emotional solace, systems of meaning (expressed in symbols, rituals, etc), bonds of mutual trust, moral orientations, etc. *without which human social life would be impossible*. Such affiliations – at least when they are both successful and the primary providers of social needs<sup>96</sup> – are therefore *necessarily* richer than it is possible for economic approaches to account for. While cultural affiliations cannot be fully understood without ‘economizing’ them, therefore, neither can they be made sense of without referring to the various ‘cultural’ features which characterize human psychology/social life. Similarly, economic activities are both a necessary feature of human social life and inevitably dependent on/embedded within cultural forms. The clear-cut distinctions that orthodox approaches to the social sciences between the ‘cultural’ and the ‘economic’ are therefore misleading.

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<sup>95</sup> Raymond Williams, as well, has argued that the priority of economic determinations was specific to capitalist societies. As Milner writes: ‘In *Marxism and Literature* he [Williams] had pointed to Marx’s own distinction between ‘production in general’, that is, the human historical process by which we produce ourselves and our societies; and ‘capitalist production’, that is, commodity production on the basis of wage labour and capital (Williams, 1977a: 90-1). It is the social reality of capitalism itself, Williams insists, which progressively reduces production in general to commodity production in particular’ (1993: 67).

<sup>96</sup>The aforementioned social needs may also be met, of course, outside of these cultural affiliations (for instance by means of family life). The degree of salience of ‘cultural’ affiliations cannot, therefore, be assumed.

If this non-dualistic approach to understanding the social stratum is to be turned into a fully-fledged CPE approach, however, it is important that one final issue is addressed as well. As Best and Paterson have shown, the cultural economy literature on which this chapter has drawn so far has a tendency to underplay ‘the *political* in cultural political economy’ (2009: 4). That is to say, it has lacked a ‘systematic account of the place of politics – questions of authority and power, and the way they are sustained and contested’ throughout the social stratum (ibid). It is this concern, therefore, which the next few sections will address. In line with the approach which has been developed so far these sections will show that (i) the realm of formal politics must be understood as embedded within the social stratum, (ii) the realm of formal politics cannot be understood without reference to those aspects/dimensions of social life that are generally theorized by economic and cultural approaches to social theory/the social sciences, and (iii) that a much broader (and less ‘formal’) understanding of politics is required if we are to do justice to the nature and ubiquity of power. It is to the idea that the realm of formal politics must be understood as embedded within the social stratum as a whole, however, that the next section will turn first.

There are a number of reasons to believe that this contention is in fact true. Rather than removing the state/the realm of formal politics from the social world, for instance, research on state-collapse has increasingly come to the conclusion that a state’s effectiveness is highly dependent on the exact configuration and strength of social forces within a particular area (Khan, 2004). Similarly, states do not in fact appear to be autonomous when it comes to the gender norms, ethnic identities, class relations, religious norms, etc. that predominate within a particular social formation. Rather, these relations, identities, and norms tend to be reproduced both *within* and *by* the state apparatus (Jessop, 2007). The realm of formal politics should, therefore, be understood as existing *within* the broader social world, rather than as

being somehow separate/separable from it.<sup>97</sup> This means, importantly, that this realm cannot be understood without making reference to those dimensions of social life which are generally theorized by economic and cultural approaches to the social sciences. As Best and Paterson (2009: 3) have pointed out, for instance, the oft-assumed purity of the realm of formal politics is in fact ‘constantly destabilized in practice, for example through the invocation of cultural themes [...] such as family values, a particular work ethic or gender norms’. Such claims about ‘the political’ therefore mirror the contention that ‘the economy’ is always (to different degrees and in different ways) embedded within the rest of social/cultural life.

We can radicalize the idea that the political should be understood as existing within the rest of the social stratum as well, however, by noting that both recent empirical research and increasing amounts of social theorizing seem to reinforce the idea that the state should *not* in fact be given the status of ‘sovereign power’ that it often has been by orthodox forms of political economy/science. Scholars in development studies (Bradbury, 2003) have shown, for instance, that so-called ‘stateless’ societies are characterized by alternative forms of authority/regulation, which undermines the presumption that (i) the study of power can be equated with the study of the state, and (ii) that statelessness therefore amounts to the existence of a power-vacuum. Rather, such findings seem to support the Foucaultian claim that orthodox political economy/science obscures ‘the organizational continuity between state and non-state agencies that work *throughout* society’ (Finlayson and Martin, 2006: 166, emphasis mine). Power, in other words, is better understood as something that is exercised by ‘a diverse range of agencies, apparatuses and practices’ (ibid: 167) which do not necessarily have a unified or unifying function.

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<sup>97</sup> This type of argument has also been voiced within the boundaries of other disciplines, particularly history. As Hobsbawm (2003: 288) mentions, for instance, the movement for ‘social history’ has long opposed ‘the traditional bias of conventional historians in favour of kings, ministers, battles and treaties’.

Such claims are reinforced when the question of power is looked at from a *historical* perspective. In particular, it is important to draw attention to the fact that the modern state ‘arose by adapting various techniques – such as the pastoral power of the church – which clearly are not integral to the state’ (Bevir and Rhodes, 2002: 139 on Foucault (1991)). The powers it is currently able to exercise therefore cannot be understood without reference to the actors from whom it has appropriated them (Jessop, 2007), and these should hence be understood as *derived* rather than *unique*. In order to incorporate such claims, the social sciences would need to (i) move *away* from ‘a strongly institutionalist, juridico-political, and state-centric account of power and its exercise’ (Jessop and Sum, 2006: 163), and (ii) *towards* an understanding of power as operating ‘within the systems and subsystems of social relations, in the interactions, in the microstructures that inform the practices of everyday life’ (Holub in *ibid*: 163). Questions of power are therefore important for the ways in which we investigate the aforementioned systems of discourse<sup>98</sup>, libidinosity, and morality as well.

None of this is to say, however, that our focus should be *exclusively* on the exercise of micro-powers, and that studying the macro-powers of the capitalist state is irrelevant. Indeed, one of the most distinctive features of capitalist societies – along with the aforementioned (always incomplete) disembedding of economic activities – is the enormous amount of (repressive, disciplinary, biopolitical, etc) power which has been accumulated by the states these societies spawned. This is in profound contrast with the micro-level at which power operated in most capitalist societies before their historical transformations took place.<sup>99</sup> There is, therefore, an undeniable (though partial) logic – similar to the partial logic which justifies the

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<sup>98</sup> As Foucault argued, to focus exclusively on questions of discourse without relating them to questions of power is problematic, as ‘semiology is a way of avoiding [history’s] violent, bloody and lethal character by reducing it to the calm Platonic form of language and dialogue’ (2002: 116).

<sup>99</sup> Importantly, economic activities (defined substantively) often took place at a much smaller scale as well. As Block and Somers point out, ‘long-distance and local trade within mercantilism were regulated either by the state or by town burghers, who strongly opposed the creation of national markets’ (1984: 53). The scale at which economic activities take place, like the scale at which power is exercised, therefore cannot be assumed.

focus/existence of the discipline of economics in capitalist societies – to the focus which orthodox forms of political science/political economy have developed concerning the realm of formal politics. This logic is especially clear, of course, when we also take into consideration (i) the modern state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, and (ii) the international recognition which control over the state affords. This does not take away, however, from the fact that 'the political' simply cannot be limited to the public realm/state.

Neglecting that this is the case therefore results, therefore, in impoverished forms of social science. As Hay – along with many feminist theorists – has argued, for instance, 'to insist that the political is synonymous with the public sphere is to exclude from political analysis the private arena within which much of women's oppression, subordination and, indeed, *resistance* occurs' (2002: 70). The same applies, however, to a further dimension which – at least in capitalist societies – is typically understood as part of the private realm: the economy. As Peterson (2006: 128) has argued, capitalism 'requires not only that 'workers' accept and perform their role in 'production' but that individuals more generally accept hierarchical divisions of labor and their corollary: differential valorization of who does what kind of work' (see also Marsden, 1999). Questions of power are therefore as deeply entangled in 'private' economic settings and gendered family relations as they are in 'public' state power. Indeed, questions of power are deeply entangled in *creating, maintaining, and contesting* the boundaries between the public and private realms, and good scientific practice therefore requires that we politicize social life as a whole (including both 'culture' and 'the economy'). Politics is therefore best understood as one of any number of elements which characterizes social life.<sup>100</sup> And, similar to the always 'incomplete' disembedding of the economic realm, the concentration/centralization of all power into a separate realm can never be fully achieved.

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<sup>100</sup> Or, as Hay has claimed, as 'an aspect or moment of the social, articulated with other moments (such as the economic or the cultural)' (2002: 75)

It is important to note, however, that these types of arguments must be counterbalanced by an alternative (and decidedly *non-Foucaultian*) understanding of power, which is rooted in the distinct approach to understanding causation which is developed by CR. This is the case because the power to *oppress/exploit/discipline/etc* can only be understood as a sub-category of the power to *do/cause/transform*. That is to say, the latter category is *necessarily* broader than/encompasses the first, as all types of oppression/exploitation/disciplining/etc. involve the exercise of causal powers, while the exercise of causal powers does not logically entail involvement in oppression/exploitation/disciplining/etc. There is no reason to assume, after all, that our powers *to* (put our hand up, express ourselves, produce goods, etc) necessarily involves power *over* others. The aforementioned power of women to *resist* oppression, for instance, provides a clear illustration of power as *agential capacity/transformative praxis* (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010: 139), and thereby highlights the more balanced conception of power that the CR framework provides social theory with.

On the whole it might be argued, therefore, that CPE approach has significant potential with regard to grounding genuinely interesting forms of social scientific investigation, as it provides us with the tools which are required in order to develop genuinely multi-dimensional accounts of the social stratum. Accounts, that is, which reject economism, culturalism and politicalism alike, along with the *thin* accounts of power, identity, and subject-formation which disciplinary forms of social science tend to provide. Instead, the CPE approach develops a much more heterodox account of the social stratum, and is capable of providing us with *thicker* accounts of power, identity and subject-formation. This is the case because, on the CPE account, the social stratum should be understood as a space (or ‘field’, Bourdieu, 1993) of complex interactions/relations (between socially-positioned individuals, groups, etc) which (i) is rooted in the natural world, (ii) is dependent on the various powers/qualities of



human beings for its continued existence, and (iii) is characterized by a variety of irreducible (though overlapping) logics. These range from the cooperative and solidarity-based interactions/relations which are required in order to sustain social life, to various types of ‘intersecting’ (that is, non-additive) forms of conflict, contention (Tilly, 2008), and struggle (over meaning, memory, exploitation, recognition, distribution, status, representation, etc) (see also Fraser, 2000; Yuval Davis, 2006; Crompton on Bourdieu, 2008: 100-102).

In addition to being at odds with narrowly disciplinary accounts, however, this approach is also at odds with liberal/modernist approaches to understanding the social stratum. This is the case, concretely, because these approaches have tended to portray this stratum in ways which are modelled on market exchanges between equal monads (fully autonomous human individuals). This means that they have systematically disregarded (i) social relations which are not in fact based on exchange, but are rooted in solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation and care, and (ii) social relations which are hierarchical/non-reciprocal in nature. Such problems are remedied, however, by the *Transformational Model of Social Activity* (TMSA) which CR advances. This model – because it conceives of social activity as the reproduction and/or transformation of social relations, rules, norms, ideas, discourses, etc. – is capable of sustaining a concern with the reciprocal and solidarity-based interactions which liberalism neglects. In addition to this, however, the TMSA also draws our attention to ‘the *distribution* of the structural conditions of action’, including in particular the ‘differential allocations of: (a) productive resources (of all kinds, including for example cognitive ones) to persons (and groups) and (b) persons (and groups) to functions and roles (for example in the division of labour)’ (Bhaskar, 1998: 45). In doing so, it allows us to ‘situate the possibility of different (and antagonistic) interests, of conflicts *within* society’, and hence avoids ‘the endemic weakness of (market) economics’ by ‘focusing on distribution as well as exchange’ (ibid).

There are, therefore, significant advantages to rooting our social theoretical reflections in the CR philosophical framework. Such advantages are apparent as well, however, in the fact that this framework allows us to sustain the claim that (i) the social world is dependent on/infused with/mediated by discourse, but is not *exhausted by* this conceptuality, and (ii) the social stratum is *existentially intransitive*, and hence remains a potential source of scientific investigation. Social scientific work which employs the CPE approach would therefore, against certain forms of post-modernism/post-structuralism, insist on the fact that (i) '[i]nquiry into knowledge and truth that remains entirely in the domain of discourse is incomplete because knowledge and truth are produced by, and function within, objective social structures' (Reyna and Schiller, 1998: 333; also see Joseph, 2004: 146-147; Ryner, 2006: 148-149), and (ii) we should understand the relationship between the transitive and the intransitive dimensions of knowledge as one of *non-identity*.

This final position entails, importantly, that the CPE approach which this chapter has developed does not succumb to the kind of judgmental relativism which is characteristic of certain types of post-modernism but, rather, maintains the idea of judgmentally rational forms of social science. It can therefore be made use of in order to study the causes and nature of intra-state conflict as well. Indeed, it can be employed in order to (i) resolve the various problems and dualisms which were described in the third chapter, and (ii) provide the philosophical and social theoretical basis which is required in order for CS to develop as a discipline. This is the case, again, because the CPE approach is rooted in the CR subversion of the problem field which underpins rival approaches to social theory. As will be shown in the next few sections, the social theoretical consequences of this problem field are clearly apparent in the CS literature as well.

## 5.4 Towards the Cultural Political Economy of Intra-State Conflict

This is the case, primarily, because the CS literature has very largely replicated the disciplinary distinctions which result from the philosophical split between materialism and idealism. That is to say, it has largely replicated the divides between cultural, political, and economic approaches to studying the social realm. This is clearly apparent, for instance, in the predominance of reductionist and instrumentalist approaches to CS, and is an important feature of the debates between Clausewitzian and post-Clausewitzian approaches as well. Such debates are only intelligible after all, if the liberal/modernist distinctions between the cultural, political, economic, public and private realms refer to spheres which are in fact separate/seperable. As we have seen, however, this is simply not the case, even in the ‘modern’ societies which these categories emerged from. If this is indeed the case, however, it seems unlikely that they will have much relevance outside of ‘modern’ settings. What is required, therefore, is an alternative approach to understanding the social stratum, which recognizes its fluid, interpenetrating, and complex nature. This is, of course, exactly what the CPE approach has already sought to provide. Before discussing the various ways in which this approach might be applied to the substantive issues which were discussed in the third chapter, however, the next few sections will attempt to draw out the main implications of adopting the TMSA for a number of prominent approaches to CS.

This is of importance for a variety of reasons. The first of these concerns the fact that the problems which were identified concerning liberal/modernist approaches to understanding the social stratum also apply to significant parts of the CS literature. There are, for instance, clear echoes of the liberal/modernist emphasis on *exchange* (and hence the systematic neglect of *distribution*) in Hirshleifer’s ‘muscular economics’ (1994: 2). This is the case because his

work explicitly adopts a methodological individualist approach, and therefore disregards the distribution of structural conditions which are stressed by the TMSA/CPE approach. In addition to this, however, Hirshleifer has also claimed that – ‘with a few obvious exceptions’ – cooperation ‘occurs only in the shadow of conflict’ (ibid). His work therefore denies – in typical liberal/modernist fashion – that social life requires different various forms of solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation and care for it to function. It should be noted, however, that Hirshleifer is by no means alone in adopting this kind of orientation. Indeed, the neglect of both reciprocal/solidarity-based and non-reciprocal/hierarchical social relations is common in the work of CS authors like Collier (2001) and Weinstein (2006) as well. The predominance of such liberal/modernist approaches is not, however, the only reason that the TMSA has a number of key implications for the CS literature. This is the case because this model also differs in a number of key respects from the complexity sciences approach which has been adopted by authors like Duffield (2001) and Keen (2005, 2006).

In particular, the TMSA differs from the complexity sciences approach in two main ways. The first of these concerns the fact that – unlike this approach – the TMSA does not require us to commit to the functionalism, rationalism and economism which results from claiming that the social world is best understood in terms of organic, holistic and/or ecological principles. It therefore allows us to open up social scientific investigations in ways which are - at least in principle – unavailable to the complexity sciences approach. While Keen has, of course, sought to incorporate the role of various non-functionalist/non-economic/affective factors into especially his later work, this only means that these claims are at odds with the philosophical presuppositions of the complexity sciences approach. If we are in fact committed to getting beyond a functionalist/rationalist/economistic approach to CS, therefore, an adoption of the TMSA would allow us to increase the philosophical consistency of our work.

In addition to this, however, the TMSA would also allow us to consider alternative mechanisms for the continuation/reproduction of violent conflict. This is the case, concretely, because it does not force us to presuppose that the continuations/reproduction of violent conflict must be anchored in the *functions* which conflict serves. While there may, therefore, be ‘more to war than winning’ (Keen, 2000: 26) – and war may indeed be ‘a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection’ (Keen, 2005b: 11) – alternative (non-functionalist) mechanisms may also be considered. We might, for instance, contend that war between different factions is likely to enhance feelings of in-group solidarity/the salience of (ethnic) identities, and that these forms of social/emotional bonding are responsible for its continuation. Alternatively, we might argue that atrocities during wartime enhance the likelihood that war will continue, as this type of behaviour (i) violates the moral standards which human societies adopt, and (ii) is therefore likely to cause increased anger/hatred/bitterness. Whatever the mechanism may be, however, it deserves emphasis that there are in fact various ways in which war *itself* might increase the likelihood of war continuing. The functionalist explanations which have been proffered by Keen and Duffield are certainly among those, but an adoption of their complexity sciences approach tends to obscure the plurality of possible explanations because of its inherent bias towards functionalist (and rationalist/economistic) explanations. As the TMSA does not result in this kind of bias it is arguably to be preferred as an analytical framework to CS.

The same applies, however, to the broader CPE approach as well. How, then, might we actually make use of this approach in order to study intra-state conflict? And, importantly, how exactly does the CPE approach differ from other approaches to CS? The next few sections will attempt to answer such questions, and stress that this approach (i) avoids the narrow disciplinarity which has characterized much of the CS literature, (ii) avoids the

*reductionism* and *instrumentalism* which has characterized a number of prominent approaches to CS, and (iii) is able to provide much *thicker* accounts of power, identity, and subject-formation than many other approaches. It should be noted, however, that – in making these claims – it is not my intention to suggest that previous approaches to CS have failed to make important contributions to CS. Rather, the point of the next few sections is the much more general claim that these approaches are necessarily incomplete, and that they cannot provide CS with a satisfactory social theoretical basis for engaging in scientific explanations. This clearly applies, for instance, to those parts of the CS literature which have stressed the economics of conflict. One of the most notable features of Collier's (2000) contribution to the greed versus grievance debate, for instance, is the fact that both of the key categories are defined predominantly in economic terms. That is to say, while a few (narrowly understood) 'political' and 'cultural' proxies are included, the main focus is clearly on *economic* inequality and *economic* mismanagement as sources of grievance, while greed is defined as the (extralegal) pursuit of material wealth. Though this focus is, of course, entirely appropriate for a chapter in an edited volume which is concerned with 'economic agendas in civil war' (Berdal and Malone, 2000), it should be remembered that Collier's work has adopted the same economistic orientation outside of this context as well. He has, for instance, likened rebellion to a quasi-criminal activity which is motivated/sustained largely by looting (2000) and has (with Hoeffler and Hohner) argued in favour of the 'feasibility hypothesis', which proposes that 'where rebellion is materially feasible it will occur' (2009: 3).

Such arguments reflect a narrowly economistic (and rationalistic) understanding of social reality and, importantly, are broadly illustrative of a type of reductionist materialism which has been on the ascendancy throughout CS in recent years. The tendency to provide economistic accounts of social reality is also clearly present, for instance, in (i) Hirshleifer's

‘Machiavellian’ understanding of violent conflict as being concerned with appropriation/confiscation (1994), (ii) the systematic focus of some parts of the CS literature on the role of natural resource-scarcity/abundance in causing violent conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998, 1999, 2004; Fearon, 2005; Homer-Dixon, 1991, 1999; Kaplan, 2001), (iii) reductionist accounts of kin groups as ‘efficient responses to problems of information and contract enforcement in traditional economies’ (Collier, 2001: 131), (iv) the consistent emphasis on income inequality as a key determinant in causing conflict, and (v) Keen’s post-Clausewitzian claim that contemporary warfare should be understood as ‘the continuation of economics by other means’ (2005b: 11). From a CPE perspective these types of analytical orientations are clearly problematic. This is the case, again, not because the CS turn towards economic agendas has failed to make important contributions to our understanding of intra-state conflict. Rather, this is the case because these approaches inevitably suffer from the same weaknesses which plague *all* economistic approaches to the social sciences.

In particular, they result in extremely narrow conceptions of both human beings and the social world, as they systematically fail to engage with the emergent properties which characterize these strata. They are therefore incapable of providing CS with an adequate basis for social scientific research, and – if the study of intra-state conflict is to progress – it is therefore essential that we seek to transcend the various limitations which they display. We can begin to do this, however, by drawing on CPE claims about the need to ‘enculturalize’ economic approaches. This means, in particular, that these approaches must (i) put the various emergent properties which characterize human personhood into their social context, and (ii) incorporate the CPE concern with discourse, libidinosity and morality into their analytical framework. Doing so would allow these approaches to develop a much more nuanced understanding of intra-state conflict than is possible when their economistic perspective is adopted.

Incorporating the CPE concern with *libidinosity* would, for instance, draw attention to the important role of fear, hatred, anger, (frustrated/mimetic) desire, resentment, and lust in violent conflict, while an incorporation of its concern with *discourse* would draw attention to the important processes of meaning-making which characterize human social life. In particular, the latter concern would draw the attention of CS authors to (i) the manipulation of symbolic resources by various types of (elite) actors and institutions, (ii) the discursive production/reproduction/transformation of various types of norms, identities, hierarchies, and relationships, (iii) the essential role of ‘othering’ (dehumanization, scapegoating, threat-construction, etc) in both the resort to violent strategies itself and the creation/maintenance of social distance more generally, and (iv) the discursive construction of common interests in mobilization strategies. These are arguably significant analytical advances on the kinds of research which economic approaches often result in.

Such advantages can also be derived, however, from the CPE reintegration of humanity’s moral concerns into the social sciences. At the level of CS this would, for instance, allow us to seriously engage with the role of various types of grievances in causing/extending forms of intra-state conflict. This is, importantly, a key addition to the economistic CS literature, as it is impossible to talk about such matters from the rationalist perspective which has been adopted by many economic approaches to CS. This is the case, in short, because material entities which are defined solely by their rational pursuit of material interests/needs *are simply not capable of feeling aggrieved*. It makes little sense for the economic approaches which have adopted a rationalist perspective, therefore, to discuss economic inequality as a potential source of grievance. It is only if we in fact *have* moral concerns and expectations, after all, that (i) these can be violated, (ii) that their violation can result in the feeling of having been aggrieved, and (iii) that these feelings can play a role in causing/extending violent conflict.



Of course, this does not mean that these approaches cannot test whether economic inequality is systematically *associated with* violent conflict by means of the large-N statistical testing which is typical of positivist approaches. This has, indeed, been the strategy which CS authors who favour rationalist models have generally adopted (Nafziger and Auvinen, 2002; Collier and Hoeffler, 1996, 1998). It does however mean that the adoption of a rationalist approach *precludes these authors from specifying the reasons why people might in fact feel aggrieved when extremes of income inequality occur*. This is perhaps the reason that Hirshleifer (1994, 2001) has sought to sidestep the notion of grievances altogether, by incorporating the concern with income inequality in another manner. From this perspective extremes of income inequality are not so much a source of grievance as they are *an incentive to resort to violent forms of material appropriation by the poor*. The adoption of this analytical strategy – though it suffers from being rooted in a reductionist form of materialism, adopts a problematic individualist methodological orientation, and reduces human beings to non-libidinal/amoral material interest-maximizers – does at least have the benefit of social theoretical consistency.

Studies which are rooted in the CPE approach, however, would need to take grievances seriously, and – importantly – would be able to defend the adoption of this analytical strategy as a result of (i) its rejection of economism and rationalism, and (ii) its reincorporation of humanity's moral concerns into social science. Indeed, as this approach is rooted in an emergentist form of realism rather than a reductionist form of materialism, CPE-based research would need to conceptualize potential sources of grievance in much broader terms than many economic approaches to CS have done. Rather than conceptualizing grievances as phenomena which result solely from income inequality or economic exploitation, for instance, CPE research would have to take seriously the idea that these feelings may arise from forms of cultural misrecognition, forms of political exclusion, violations of (individual/communal)

dignity, etc. In addition to this, however, the claim that human beings are evaluative creatures would also focus our attention on the fact that they are (i) susceptible to the idea of fighting – sometimes at great personal risk – for a state of affairs which they consider to be just, (ii) susceptible to the idea of engaging in violent forms of behaviour in order to defend an existing state of affairs from sources of perceived moral corruption/degeneration, and (iii) potentially hesitant about adopting violent strategies as a result of considering not just the *ends* of their actions (as in consequentialism) but also the *means* by which they would achieve them (as in deontology). There are therefore significant advantages to incorporating the CPE focus on libidinosity, discourse, and morality into our studies of intra-state conflict.

The same applies, however, to the more general CPE focus on the ways in which the emergent characteristics of human beings are likely to be reflected in their social arrangements. This is the case because this focus provides CS with a way of engaging with both the non-utilitarian side of social life and the various roles which ‘positive’ human characteristics play in causing/extending/mitigating violence. These range from the forms of trust/social capital/belonging/camaraderie which are often preconditions for – but may also result from – engaging in forms of violent conflict, to (i) the ‘urge to contribute to the success of the group’ (Goodhand, 2006: 42), and (ii) the various forms of solidarity and cooperation which may develop in order to cope with the conflict-induced disruption/destruction of human life (Nordstrom, 1997). In addition to this, however, this focus also allows us to transcend the reductionist accounts of ‘cultural’ (especially ethnic) affiliations which some CS authors have adopted (Collier, 2001), by anchoring the idea that such affiliations must also satisfy the emergent needs which characterize human beings. Such affiliations – at least when they are both successful and the primary providers of social needs – are therefore *necessarily* richer than it is possible for reductionist approaches to acknowledge.

If these arguments illustrate that economic/rationalist approaches are incapable of providing us with a satisfactory social theoretical basis for CS, however, it is arguably of importance that we adopt an alternative approach to economics. An understanding, that is, which does not attempt to reduce the entirety of social life to economic motives and/or interests. It is this, of course, which Polanyi's substantivist understanding aims to provide, thereby allowing us to make a number of important analytical advances. The adoption of this approach illustrates, for instance, that many economic approaches to CS make an important mistake when they uncritically stress the importance of material goods/wealth in understanding the causes/nature of violent conflict. This is the case because, in typical orthodox social scientific fashion, these approaches place the pursuit of material goods/wealth entirely outside of psychological and/or social life. That is to say, material goods/wealth are presumed to be/defined as objectively good, without enquiring into their actual personal or social utility in particular spatiotemporal settings. The pursuit of such goods/wealth is therefore naturalized, and placed outside of both space and time. A substantive understanding of economics would, instead, seek to place them back into the concerns and desires which characterize human and social life more generally, and would focus our attention on the various psychological and social purposes which material goods/wealth serve in concrete spatiotemporal contexts.

This has a number of distinct analytical advantages. It illustrates, for instance, that people do not generally desire material goods/wealth *as such* but, rather, desire the various 'things' which these provide them with. It is, in other words, their perceived *utility* (broadly defined) that causes people to seek to acquire them. This has important consequences for the ways we approach a number of the debates which were discussed in the third chapter. It shows, for instance, that, even when systematic forms of looting occur, it is problematic to define a conflict simply as greed-based. This is the case because the concept of greed is only sufficient

as an explanation if – like many economic approaches do – we also assume the objective utility of material goods/wealth. Indeed, the concept of greed only provides us with enough information if we assume that the purpose of looting is the material goods/wealth as such. This is clearly problematic, however, as the desire for such goods/wealth only makes sense when we relate it to the various purposes which it serves in people’s lives. It would therefore be more accurate to say that a conflict which involves systematic looting *is about the purposes which are served by this looting*, whether this purpose is personal enjoyment, social recognition, the desire to humiliate those we steal from, or whatever.

This is not, however, the only way in which the adoption of a substantivist approach has important advantages. A further advantage, for instance, results from the fact that it illustrates that the meaning of material goods is not universal. Rather, this meaning is dependent on various spatiotemporally-specific circumstances. Natural resources, for instance, only take on the economic meaning which they are assumed to have *universally* by economic approaches in very *particular* circumstances. That is to say, they will only be thought of as ‘resources’ capable of generating wealth in the context of processes of commodification. Although the presence of exploitable natural resources is therefore a necessary condition for their entanglement in conflict situations their presence itself is never a sufficient explanation for why and when they in fact do so. Rather, it is necessary to engage in the stratified forms of explanation which are characteristic of CR by incorporating psychological and social determinants into our analyses as well. In particular, the entanglement of natural resources in conflict cannot be made sense of without also drawing attention to (i) the *local* processes of commodification which are inherent to capitalist development, and (ii) the integration of local economies into *global* markets. It is necessary, in other words, for CS to come to terms with the dark side of both globalization and development if we are to develop a better picture.

Such arguments clearly illustrate the more nuanced accounts of the social stratum which result when we adopt the CPE approach. In addition to the more general uses of adopting this approach, however, the CPE framework also allow us to make better sense of (case study) findings which contradict the predictions of economistic approaches to CS. Its emphasis on processes of emotional/moral bonding and the discursive construction of common interests, for instance, helps to make sense of the fact that FARC recruitment and operations do not seem to take place according to the economistic/rationalist logic which characterizes many economistic models (Cramer, 2006: 132). Indeed, CPE positions illustrate that *personal* sacrifice and risk-taking for the sake of *public* goods – whether these are defined in terms of larger societal goals (ideological/political struggles) or highly situational logics (a sense of camaraderie/solidarity among recruits) – is not in fact as surprising as it may seem from the perspective of approaches which have stressed the analytical importance of the collective action problem (Collier, 2003). Participation in violent conflict does not, therefore, have to be dependent on straightforward forms of top-down coercion, the opportunity to engage in looting, or even the common interests which result from being positioned in social structures in a particular way (see also Browning, 2001).

This is not to say, however, that problems of coordination and cooperation do not occur in fact when human beings attempt to engage in violent forms of collective action. Nor, indeed, is it to say that categories like instrumental rationality, functionality, strategy, etc. are somehow alien to conflict settings (see Porter, 2009). The CPE approach, as should be clear by now, is not intended as a simple inversion of economic approaches to CS. Rather, the aforementioned arguments aim to illustrate that the categories/models which economic approaches provide – although essential to our understanding of violent conflict – are incapable of telling the whole story. They are therefore incapable of providing CS with an

adequate social theoretical basis. It should be noted, however, that the same diagnosis applies to cultural approaches to CS as well. In order to develop an approach which is more balanced it is therefore necessary to provide a counterweight to the categories/models which cultural approaches have provided as well. In particular, it is essential that we seek to ‘economize’ these cultural approaches, in order to transcend the misleadingly dichotomous treatments of culture and economics which are typical of liberal/modernist forms of social science.

In the context of CS this means, in particular, that we should problematize purely ideational accounts of ‘ethnicity’, as from a CPE perspective, culturalist understanding of ethnic affiliations (as being *exclusively* a source of identity, meaning, mutual trust, morality, etc) are extremely suspect. This is the case, as we have seen, because (i) all human communities must find ways of (socially) providing for the material needs which characterize our species by means of the work which they engage in, and (ii) ethnic affiliations can often be understood as functional with regard to meeting these material needs. It is therefore important that the social sciences – by economizing ‘cultural’ forms – explore the material processes with which they are infused as well. The fact that this is the case has important consequences for the ways in which we understand ethnic violence. Rather than portraying such forms of violence simply as ‘identity conflicts’ which are caused by ‘difference’ or ‘ancient/tribal hatreds’, for instance, a CPE analysis would explore the various ways in which economic factors play a role as well. More concretely, this type of analysis would explore the role of commercial interests, competing claims over natural resources/land, the effects of ‘developmental’ processes, and the stirring up of ethnic hatred by economic actors in settings which would otherwise be understood solely in terms of ‘identity’. In addition to this, however, the adoption of an economized understanding of ethnic conflict also means that CS should seek to move beyond purely affective accounts of its causes/nature. While hatred, fear, etc. are of course key to

understanding these (and any) forms of conflict it should also be clear that an exclusive focus on these qualities is one-sided. What is required, therefore, is an integration of the concern with instrumental rationality which is typical of economic approaches into our understanding of ethnic conflict. This would provide us with a way of transcending the various limitations which result from primordialist approaches to understanding ethnic violence. Such approaches – in addition to being entirely a-historical, having suspect colonial roots, and simply assuming the salience of ethnic categories – have systematically provided accounts of ethnic violence which are purely ideational in nature. In addition to this, however, the integration of instrumental rationality into our analyses of ethnic conflict would also allow us to transcend constructivist/post-structural approaches to ethnicity, which – though they are clearly much more sophisticated than primordialist accounts – have adopted similar idealist tendencies.

As mentioned previously, however, the re-integration of economic factors into our understanding of ‘cultural’ forms should not result in a simple inversion of our approach to understanding ethnicity. Economistic accounts are, after all, equally problematic. Rather, the CPE approach provides CS with a framework for studying ethnic violence which transcends the culture/economy divide. There have only been very few authors working within CS who have adopted this kind of position. Even when they have in fact done so, however, they have left many of the philosophical questions which are involved in adopting this position unanswered. Kalyvas’s work (2006, 2008), for instance, draws on both constructivist insights and economically-oriented approaches to the social sciences, but fails to engage with the philosophical problems which this involves. In particular, his work suffers from the fact that he (i) draws on both ‘causal’ and ‘non-causal/constitutive’ approaches, without demonstrating that they are in fact compatible, (ii) draws on both idealist and materialist traditions, without providing us with a way of bridging the philosophical gap between them, and (iii) draws on

both ‘scientific’ and ‘interpretive’ traditions, without illustrating how we are to reconcile them. Such problems are overcome, however, by the CPE approach, as this approach (i) is grounded in the CR approach to causation, (ii) is rooted in an emergentist form of realism, and (iii) is rooted in the CMP approach. It therefore allows us to incorporate the insights of both economic and cultural approaches into our understanding of ethnic conflict *without* exposing ourselves to the accusation of philosophical incoherence.

It should be noted, however, that the compatibility of economic and cultural approaches means that economic and cultural concerns must also be *fused* in our understanding of ethnicity/ethnic violence. Rather, these concerns may be relatively separate. This is the case because there is no reason to assume that ethnic affiliations are *always* functional with regard to ensuring material needs. Such needs may, instead, be satisfied by means of a relatively disembedded market economy which operates primarily according to non-ethnic logics, while ethnic affiliations function primarily as providers of religious identities, moral orientations, etc. Economic activities, interests and identities are, in such circumstances, better understood as largely separate from, or even in competition with, ethnic forms of social organization. Of course, this logic may also be reversed. That is to say, ethnic affiliations may play primarily an *economic* role, while the shaping of religious identities, moral orientations, etc. takes place elsewhere (e.g. family life). Whatever turns out to be the case in concrete settings, however, it should be noted that – while economic and cultural approaches *are* philosophically compatible – the social role which is played by ethnic affiliations can range from economic/cultural fusion to largely separated and/or in competition. Its role must therefore always be *explored* in concrete settings, rather than simply *assumed* or *universalized*.



These kinds of explorations should, however, involve reflection with regard to at least *three* additional issues as well. The *first* of these is the level of salience which characterizes ethnic affiliations. This cannot, as has been shown by authors like Kayvas (2008), simply be taken for granted, as it varies according to (spatial and temporal) context in both conflict and non-conflict settings. Even where the level of salience *is* in fact high, however, it remains of importance that we explore the rival forms of (self-) identification and determination (ranging from gender to class, race, age, location, etc) which are likely to characterize a particular social settings. There is no legitimate reason to simply assume, after all, that ethnic affiliations are the sole source of socialization, loyalty and identity in a particular setting. Indeed, more strongly, there is no reason to assume that the concept of ethnicity is coherent and/or has the same referents in different contexts. It is therefore also necessary, *secondly*, to engage in the kind of conceptual reflection which CR-based investigations demand of us, by (i) disaggregating the concept of ethnicity into the various (linguistic, religious, economic, political, racial, etc) components which make it up, and (ii) exploring the extent to which these different elements are applicable in concrete settings. This would allow us to (i) develop a much more nuanced understanding of the role which ethnic affiliations play in particular conflict settings, and (ii) transcend the limitations which are inherent to the focus on *linguistic* differentiation, and which result from using the Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization (ELF) index.

*Finally*, however, explorations of the role of ethnicity must always involve a concern with the extent to which ethnic groups are internally differentiated into various (relatively) independent groups and/or classes of people. Group coherence/unity cannot, in other words, simply be (i) *assumed* to exist in the way that it has been by primordialist approaches, or (ii) *implied* in the way it is when CS makes use of methodological measures like the ELF index. This would have important consequences for the ways we study ethnic conflict. In particular,

it would make us much more cautious about adopting ‘mob’ models of ethnic violence, as a focus on internal differentiation illustrates that the ability of ethnic groups to engage in violent forms of collective action can never be simply taken for granted. This is the case because coherent forms of group-action are likely to always require significant amounts of *work/mobilization/bridge-building/coercion* when internal differentiation is in fact a characteristic of the group in question. As the coherence/unity of ethnic groups can never simply be taken for granted, however, it is – in effect – always illegitimate to assume that collective action problems are either *more* or *less* easily resolvable in ‘ethnic’ forms of conflicts than they are in ‘non-ethnic’ forms of conflict.

It should be noted, however, that it is also of key importance for our analyses to explore the relative *power* of different groups/classes when we are analysing ethnic affiliations. That is to say, it is not enough to come to terms with just their internal differentiation. Rather, it is also necessary that we consider the (non-sovereign/non-Clausewitzian) *politics* of ethnic groups, including the role which these politics play in causing/extending forms of conflict. It is of key importance, for instance, that our analyses explore the role of powerful groups/classes in mobilizing for/stirring up/funding forms of ethnic conflict. This is significant because – in opposition to models which assume that the occurrence of ethnic violence is a reflection of the wishes/actions/grievances/etc. of ethnic groups *as such* – this allows for the idea that some groups/classes may in fact be more causally efficacious than others.<sup>101</sup> Where this is the case an exploration of power differentials would therefore provide us with a much more nuanced understanding of the conflict situation in question.

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<sup>101</sup> This also applies to the idea of social construction as a whole. While ethnicity may indeed be a ‘socially constructed’ phenomenon it is essential that we explore the power differentials which affect such processes. We should therefore always enquire into who is in fact doing the constructing, what their purposes and interests are, and what the relative level of power which they exercise is.

It deserves emphasis, however, that a focus on *internal* power differentials/agendas is only one of the ways in which we can in fact politicize our understanding of intra-state conflict. It is also possible, of course, to politicize our understanding of ethnic conflicts – and conflict more generally – by relating them to the ‘formal’ powers which are exercised by states. Indeed, the CPE approach provides us with a way of doing this which is arguably more sophisticated than previous approaches to CS. Its understanding of formal politics as embedded within the rest of social life, for instance, provides us with a number of reasons to be sceptical about *instrumentalist* approaches to explaining conflict (Kaldor, 2007a). Concretely, this scepticism results from the fact that an embedded understanding of formal politics provides us with a non-dualistic approach to state/society relations which is fundamentally at odds with instrumentalism. This is the case because it illustrates that – while state-elites may indeed attempt to stir up conflict for self-interested reasons – it is crucial to always put their actions/powers into context. This context is important because the state is never simply a self-contained actor. Rather, this ‘public’ institution is highly dependent on/embedded in various forms of ‘private’ power, and must therefore be understood as *primarily* a codification of broader societal power-relations. Although state-elites may therefore use their formal powers in order to stir up violence, it is important to note that their activities must always be contextualized by making reference to the agendas/interests/considerations of the non-formal powers which underpin and make use of the state.

This involves, of course, making reference to the powers of various kinds of elite (but ‘private’) actors to pursue their particular agendas and interests by colonizing the (‘public’) state. Importantly, however, it also involves making reference to the power of non-elite people to engage in self-conscious reflection and pursue their own agendas/interests. The fact that this is the case has important consequences for the ways in which we conceptualize the

causes of violence. In particular, it provides us with reasons to be sceptical about the instrumentalist tendency to assume that ethnic violence occurs because political elites benefit from its occurrence. This kind of formulation clearly underestimates the capacity of non-elite people to make their own decisions/pursue their own agendas, while overestimating the powers of elites to stir up ethnic conflict irrespective of the wishes of the general population. As the work of Duyvesteyn (2000: 101) has shown, for instance, appeals to ethnic identity (even during times of active conflict) are by no means always successful. Instead of making instrumentalist assumptions about the passivity of non-elite people CPE-based research would therefore seek to reinstate 'normal' people as active agents. This involves, in particular, the need to explore why, at times, they choose to support/follow political leaders who seek to stir up violence and why, at other times, they resist/remain unresponsive to such appeals. This requires concrete explorations in concrete circumstances, rather than the simplistic instrumentalist presumption that responsibility/agency is to be located solely at the elite level.

It should be noted, however, that an important element of any answer to the aforementioned questions is likely to come from the non-dualist perspective towards understanding state/society relations which is adopted by the CPE approach. That is to say, a key element in any explanation of the success/failure of state-elites to engage populations in conflict will be the ideas/interests/emotional status/etc. of the population itself. Where feelings of animosity/hostility are essentially non-existent, for instance, it is unlikely that state-elites will be successful in mobilizing the population for large-scale forms of conflict. Where the level of popular animosity/hostility is significant, however, it should come as no surprise if such strategies are more successful. Indeed, we cannot exclude the possibility that, in certain circumstances, it is the population which is the primary driver of violent conflict. There is no reason to simply assume, after all, that violence is never desired by, or in the (perceived)

interest of, non-elite members of the population.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, such observations are fairly intuitive, but serve to illustrate the important point that the instrumentalist focus on elite manipulation is insufficient in order to explain the occurrence of conflict. Rather, it is necessary for us to explore the relationship between elites and non-elites in concrete settings if we are to come to terms with its causes and continuation.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This emphasis on the need for concrete explorations applies, however, to the wider concerns of the CS literature as well: as was mentioned at the start of this chapter, the CPE framework should be understood as attempting to provide CS with an *approach* to social theory, not a universally-applicable *hypothesis*. This approach, importantly, seeks to destabilize a number of the key distinctions which feature throughout modernist forms of thought (by adopting what we might term a ‘principle of impurity’<sup>103</sup>), and allows us to better recognize both the richness of human personhood and the fluidity of the social realm. Indeed, the CPE approach allows us to move from thin to thick accounts of power, identity, personhood, and subject-formation, and transcends the various problems which are associated with reductionist and instrumentalist approaches. In doing so it has (i) drawn on both historical materialist and post-structural approaches, (ii) drawn on both political economy and cultural studies, and (iii) attempted to find ways of coherently combining the traditional fields of the human/social sciences (from economics, to politics, psychology, etc) into a single analytical framework.

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<sup>102</sup> As Michael Howard has written with regard to early-modern British warfare: ‘Cynics might explain British participation in these wars in terms of traditional upper-class obsession with martial glory and middle-class greed or colonial markets, but none of this accounted for the passionate zest with which French armies – and armies composed not of obedient professional soldiers but of French people in arms – flung themselves on their neighbours, overturned their constitutions, and followed Bonaparte to Vienna, to Berlin, to Madrid and to Moscow. Nor did it explain the reaction which this gigantic eruption set on foot in Germany, in Italy, in Russia and in Spain’ (2008: 38).

<sup>103</sup> This term is derived from the work of Hodgson (1999), but is given a different meaning in this project.

In attempting to do all of this, however, the CPE approach has arguably provided CS with a radically new orientation to social theory as well. An orientation, that is, which allows it to better engage with the range of irreducible and intersecting logics which the social stratum contains. In the next chapter I will draw on this feature of the CPE approach in order to focus on one of these logics in particular: the logic of gender. It should be noted, however, that this chapter is only the first in a larger section. This section contains two chapters and aims to *incorporate* the insights of both the gender-studies literature (chapter six) and the decolonial/postcolonial literature (chapter seven) into our reflections about intra-state conflict.

**PART III:**  
**INCORPORATIONS**

**CHAPTER VI:**  
**GENDERING CONFLICT STUDIES**



## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter will argue that it is necessary for CS to be ‘gendered’. That is to say, it will argue that gender concerns are central to violent conflict, and that these should therefore be the focus of serious scientific study by authors working within CS. This kind of study has, however, largely failed to take place. Although a rich specialist literature on gender has developed *outside* the CS mainstream, its insights have not been incorporated into broader theoretical reflections on violent conflict. As for instance Caroline Moser has shown, gender-focused analyses have ‘very rarely been integrated’ into understandings of violence, with the sole exception of ‘gender-based domestic or family violence’ (2001: 33). This situation is closely mirrored by the situation which gender-studies authors in International Relations (IR) continue to find themselves in. As Marysia Zalewski has shown, ‘feminist theorists in IR have rarely achieved the serious engagement with other IR scholars that they desire’ (2007: 306). Throughout this chapter I aim to show that these sorts of exclusions are analytically unjustifiable, and that the gender-studies literature needs to be brought in from the intellectual cold. Indeed, I aim to show (i) that a distinction between ‘CS’ and ‘*gendered* CS’ is untenable, and (ii) that the CS and IR literatures on gender provide us with important intellectual resources when it comes to the study of violent conflict.

At a philosophical/methodological/social theoretical level, however, the chapter will contend that both CR and the CPE approach provide us with an excellent opportunity to incorporate gender-studies concerns and insights into CS. This is the case for two main reasons. The first among these is the fact that CR – in providing a critique of both positivism and its various intellectual antagonists – transcends the philosophical underpinnings of both mainstream (and usually non-gender oriented) approaches to science and the various critical (or ‘post-

positivist’) perspectives which the majority of gender-oriented authors working in IR have drawn on (Tickner, 2005: 2176-2177). In doing this it grounds what I have termed an ‘androgynous’ methodological orientation, which does not succumb to the forms of reductionism which many gender studies authors have objected to, but avoids the anti-science sentiments which have at times accompanied these objections as well. The important (though supposedly ‘non-scientific’) insights which IR/CS gender-studies authors have developed can therefore be incorporated into a CR-based form of explanatory science, with significant potential benefits for a ‘rethought’ form of CS. In addition to merely incorporating the insights of the gender-studies literature into CS, however, this chapter will also attempt to show that the analytical framework which results from CR’s stratified account of reality provides this literature with a superior approach to analysis than has been available to it before. An approach, that is, which provides the gender-studies literature with a more sophisticated basis for engaging in scientific research and, furthermore, is capable of resolving a number of the analytical disputes which have divided the (notoriously diverse) gender-studies literature in the past.

It should be noted, however, that the CR framework itself is only one of the reasons that the current project provides us with an excellent opportunity to incorporate gender concerns and insights into CS. The second reason for this results from the CPE approach. This approach involves, as we have seen, the adoption of an approach to scientific enquiry which conceptualizes the social stratum as consisting of various *irreducible* and *intersecting* logics. This is important when it comes to the incorporation of gender concerns into CS as many gender-studies authors have – especially in recent decades – enthusiastically embraced intersectional forms of analysis (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval Davis, 2006). As for instance Leslia McCall has shown, ‘feminist researchers have been acutely aware of the limitations of gender

as a single analytical category' (2005: 1171). Despite the philosophical differences between the CPE approach and post-structural variants of intersectional analysis there exists, therefore, a clear affinity between their respective analytical orientations. This applies, importantly, to a significant amount of the war -oriented gender-studies literature in IR as well, as a number of prominent authors working within this discipline have explicitly adopted intersectional approaches to enquiry. Cynthia Cockburn, for instance, has argued that 'it makes little sense to seek to isolate the institutions, the structures, of patriarchal gender power', because there are '[f]ew if any institutions [which] do a specialized gender job' (2010: 151). Indeed, she claims that there are few institutions which do 'a specialized economic or other 'power mobilizing' job' as well (ibid). This is the case because economic institutions (corporations, banks, etc), cultural/religious/ethnic institutions (churches, mosques, etc), and family life as a whole all contain 'sets of relations [which are] functioning at one and the same time: they are all economic, ethnic and gender institutions, though differently weighted' (ibid).<sup>104</sup>

It seems clear, therefore, that the philosophical, methodological and social theoretical approaches which were developed throughout previous chapters provide CS with an excellent opportunity (i) to incorporate gender concerns into its enquiries, and (ii) to do this in a more sophisticated and coherent fashion than has been done before. Before it is possible to illustrate that this is in fact the case, however, it is necessary to take a brief detour into the discussions which have characterized the gender-studies literature in the recent past. That is to say, it is necessary to provide an overview of the development of this literature, in order to examine (i) its claims about the (gendered) nature of war, and (ii) the various disagreements which have characterized it. It is this which the next section will do, before moving on to discuss (i) how

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<sup>104</sup> Corporations are generally dominated by men, for instance, while 'churches often mobilize considerable wealth', and 'monotheistic clerical institutions are bastions of male power' (2010: 151). It is not possible, therefore, to simply separate these realms. Rather, Cockburn argues that it is necessary to conceptualize them in terms of *intersecting* forms of social determination (see also Peterson, 2007, 2008).

the CR framework is able to resolve the philosophical disputes which have divided the gender-studies literature, and (ii) what a CPE perspective on the ‘gendering’ of CS would entail in practice.

## **6.2 Gender Studies and the Theorization of War**

Before discussing the possible contributions of the CR and CPE approaches, however, this section will provide an overview of the gender and war literature. In doing so it deserves emphasis that this literature has both expanded exponentially and moved steadily in the direction of ever greater analytical complexity/nuance. Whereas early theorizations of the relationship between gender and war suggested that there was a fairly straightforward (and biologically rooted) relationship between men/masculinity and war and women/femininity and peace (Reardon, 1985), for instance, more recent work has sought to problematize such essentializing notions. This problematization is rooted in a variety of factors. First among these is the fact that there is in fact very little evidence to suggest that differences between men and women, at least in terms of their proclivity to engage in violent acts, are *biologically* determined (Goldstein, 2001). Indeed, evidence from biology seems clearly to foreclose upon the idea that essentialist/reductionist analytical frameworks are analytically viable. In addition to this, however, it deserves emphasis as well that these types of frameworks seem to fail – at least very largely – at an *empirical* level. This can be illustrated in a variety of different ways. With regard to the relationship between women/femininity and peace, for instance, early approaches had described women as (i) participants in peace movements, (ii) pacifistic ‘beautiful souls’ (Elshtain, 1987), (iii) nurturing/life-giving mothers, and (iv) victims of men’s (sexualized) violence. More recent gender-studies work has shown, however, that the analytical picture concerning these issues is significantly more nuanced.

As Elshtain famously argued with regard to the first of them, for instance, the amount of women actually involved in peace work is ‘greatly outnumbered by the majority of their gender who do not enter into pacifist construals as a chosen identification; indeed, women in overwhelming numbers have supported their state’s wars’ (ibid: 140; see also Sjoberg and Gentry, 2007). They have, in fact, contributed to war fighting in a wide variety of ways. These contributions range from direct participation in killing/fighting, to more indirect forms of participation. The latter of these categories includes, importantly, the position which many women occupy as mothers. As authors like Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1998) have shown, their adoption of this position does not always/necessarily predispose women towards pacifist attitudes in the way that many earlier approaches had assumed it would. Rather, Scheper-Hughes shows that maternal thinking ‘can be summoned during times of war, disruption, and political trauma to produce [the] resignation, accommodation, and acceptance of horrible deaths’ that ‘[w]ars and militaries cannot proceed without’ (ibid: 231). Maternal thinking is therefore an essential *precondition* for war fighting.

This has, at least at times, been clearly understood by political leaders as well, who have regularly sought to position women as the bearers of future soldiers. As Lorraine Bayard de Volo has shown, for instance, Sandinista discourses often appealed to women in terms of their powers as ‘patriotic wombs’ (1998: 247). During one International Women’s Day celebration a Sandinista official declared that: “We celebrate women, saying that today you are a thousand times mothers because you gave birth, leaving to the country so many children to defend it and liberate it from the oppressive yoke of tyranny” (ibid). Many Sandinista mothers in fact took great pride in adopting this role, and – instead of offering resistance – played an active role in their sons’ enlistment. De Volo shows, for instance, that ‘they did not simply support their sons’ enlistment’ but ‘*offered* or *gave* their sons to the country’, thereby

portraying the act of sacrifice involved as belonging more to the mother than to the son (1998: 247). It seems clear, therefore, that the maternal forms of thinking which were stressed by early gender-studies approaches are in fact often implicated in war in extremely important ways. This has, importantly, been the case outside the Nicaraguan context as well, as '[w]omen have just as often used the moral claims of motherhood to launch campaigns to support war as they have to support peace' (Scheper Hughes, 1998: 234). In fact, they 'have fought, sometimes fiercely, under the banner of motherhood and in the name of protecting the "female" domains of family, household kindred, and community from a broad spectrum of political loyalties and ideologies' (ibid: 231; see also Neugebauer: 1998). It should be clear, therefore, that the 'motherist' position which earlier approaches had adopted – as well as the dichotomous forms of understanding which the adoption of this position results in – does not provide us with an adequate framework of analysis (see also York, 1998; Hamilton, 2007). Rather, 'motherhood' is better understood as a 'social and fluid category', which is devoted to 'peacekeeping and world repair rather than to war making and world destruction' only 'by intentional design', and not 'by any natural disposition' (Scheper-Hughes, 1998: 234).

This is not to say, however, that motherhood does not matter. Indeed, there are numerous reasons to believe that it does. Not least among these is the fact that mothers are often *perceived* as threats to war by those who organize it. As de Volo shows in her comparative study of mobilization strategies in the United States and Nicaragua, for instance, 'those in charge of mobilizing a nation to war fear mothers' as a result of 'the potential for resistance based upon maternal love' (1998: 251). As she shows as well, however, it often seems possible for organizers to overcome such resistance by means of gendered forms of propaganda. These are used to 'reframe definitions of good versus bad mothers and play off of maternal imagery meant to arouse sympathy for the cause of the fallen or to compel

protective mothers to deliver their sons to induction centers' (ibid: 251-252). For better or for worse, the adoption of such tactics has often proven to be effective in overcoming resistance which is rooted in motherhood. This occurred in the cases of the United States (during the First World War) and Nicaragua (during the Contra War), but is also described by Vesna Nikolic-Ristanović in her essay on the role of motherhood in the former Yugoslavia (1998). When the war began, she shows, 'women protesters from all regions and ethnic backgrounds united around their identities as the mothers of sons serving in the Yugoslav army' (ibid: 234). In doing so, they aimed 'to save their sons from going to battle and from being sacrificed in a conflict that, at that time, made no sense to them' (ibid). As the aim of the mothers ran counter to the interests of nationalist leaders, however, these leaders sought to override the nurturing and protective tendencies of motherhood by stressing these women's position as *citizens* of a nation. In doing this they managed – by employing a mixture of coercion and persuasion – to successfully transform large swathes of mothers/protestors into supporters (whether reluctant or willing) of nationalist politics and war.

In this situation it seems clear that the social positions of women as mothers did matter. That is to say, this position seems to have made a difference with regard to generating the initial anti-war sentiments/protests. In the context of the war in the former Yugoslavia there was, therefore, some truth to the 'motherist' position which earlier gender-studies approaches had adopted. It seems equally clear, however, that other factors – particularly those related to the actions of nationalist leaders – outweighed the causal importance of motherhood in determining the eventual outcome. The fact that this is the case provides a clear illustration of the need to adopt an intersectional approach to scientific analysis, as it is only this kind of approach which is capable of developing the multi-dimensional explanations which is required in order to understand the aforementioned situation.

This is the case for a number of reasons. Most important among these, however, is the fact that Nikolić-Ristanović's analysis clearly illustrates that women are socially positioned in multiple (intersecting) ways: as mothers, as citizens of a nation, etc. These determinants place competing demands upon women, who must choose – in situation which are generally characterized by significant restrictions – which social position(s) they wish to prioritize. In this way their social positioning as mothers may be outweighed, for instance, by the importance which they attach to being Serbian (a national grouping) or a member of the bourgeoisie (a class position).<sup>105</sup> There can be no guarantee, therefore, that motherhood will in fact be the most important determining factor in any particular woman's life.

If this conclusion is correct, and if it is true as well that motherhood should not be understood as *essentially* pacifistic, it would seem to follow that the relationship between motherhood and war is likely to be *inherently* complex. That is to say, it would seem to follow that it is impossible to specify *the* relationship between these two variables, as the relationship between motherhood and war should be understood in a plural rather than a singular manner. The variability which is entailed by this conclusion is made even more pronounced, however, when we take into consideration the fact that many women are not, of course, mothers at all. From childless adults to young girls, it is clear that mothers are inevitably only a sub-category of the larger group of women. The relationship between *women/femininity* and war is, for this reason, likely to be even more complex than the relationship between *motherhood* and war. It should be noted, however, that this variability is not the result of conflicting social determinants alone, but results from the agential powers possessed by women as well. As Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) have shown, however, the most common narratives about women's participation in violence – which they group into 'mother', 'monster' and 'whore'

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<sup>105</sup> As Nikolić-Ristanović makes clear, urban women/mothers were better able to resist national leaders' calls than rural women/mothers, as they were more likely to be educated, and less likely to accept the conservative conceptions of womanhood/motherhood which informed nationalist discourses about citizenship (1998: 235).



narratives – systematically disregard these agential powers. That is to say, these narratives ascribe women’s violence to some kind of (sexual, biological, etc) defect, rather than their willingness to – like men – pursue their socio-political goals in a violent manner. In doing so they deny violent women the humanity which they in fact share with men (see also Hamilton: 2007; Denov and Gervais, 2007), and result in misleadingly dichotomous analyses of men (whose violent pursuit of socio-political goals is considered relatively normal/expected) and women (who must be defective in some way in order to do the same).<sup>106</sup> Once we accept the need to reject these de-agentializing narratives, however, it becomes clear that the incorporation of women’s agency results in yet further complexity when it comes to specifying the relationship between women/femininity and war.

This complexity is, in fact, a feature of war-fighting itself as well. Whereas many earlier gender-studies commentators had stressed the dichotomizing effects of war (Enloe, 1989; Cockburn, 2001) – a phenomenon which these authors argued resulted in the entrenchment of male dominance and binary understandings of men/masculinity/war/battle and women/femininity/peace/the home front – the reality now appears to be more complex. As Dietrich Ortega (2012) has shown in her study of Latin American guerrilla fighters, conflicts can also create situations in which women are able to *subvert* pre-existing gender roles. In the conflicts she studied women’s participation in fighting allowed them, for instance, to gain recognition as heroic combatants and military leaders, forms of behaviour which earlier approaches had argued would be reserved for men and hegemonic/militarized forms of masculinity. A similar conclusion results from Mulinari’s work (1998), who shows that the Contra war in Nicaragua resulted in a deep sense of comradeship among Sandinista fighters. This sense of comradeship helped to override conventional gender norms, and resulted in high levels of participation

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<sup>106</sup> These kinds of narratives are rejected by the female ETA fighters who Hamilton interviews in her *Political Violence and Body Language in the Life Stories of Women ETA Activists* (2007) as well. These women make clear that ‘ETA violence is absolutely political. It’s not about testicles. It’s not about ovaries’ (ibid: 911).

among women. Many of these women viewed themselves as examples of gender equality, and some even rose to achieve high ranks within the Sandinista leadership. This involved commanding groups of male fighters, who learnt to accept this situation. As Mulinari writes, at first the men ‘did resist being under their command’, but this resistance ‘gradually disappeared’, only to be ‘replaced by a deep sense of comradeship where sex was not important’ (ibid: 159). Despite the genuinely important insights of earlier gender-studies approaches to understanding the gendered nature of war it should therefore be noted that the patterns which they described do not appear to stand up to scrutiny as broader (cross-context) generalizations. None of this is to say, however, that the aforementioned dichotomies should be simply inverted or dissolved. This is in fact likely to be unwise, because – despite the aforementioned complexity – there are a number of important generalizations about women/femininity and warfare which do in fact seem to stand up to cross-context scrutiny relatively well. As Kirby has shown, for instance, it is quite clear that ‘[r]ape and sexual violence are acts overwhelmingly carried out by men against women’ (2012: 95). While sexual violence against men does in fact occur (see for instance Zarkov, 2001) – and, tellingly, men often experience being raped as being ‘feminized’ – it is therefore clear that ‘the balance of harm remains starkly unequal’ (ibid).

If the relationship between women/femininity and war has turned out to be much more nuanced and contradictory than early gender-studies approaches had assumed, however, what are we to make of the relationship between men/masculinity and war? As before, the gender and war literature has developed analyses which are increasingly complex and nuanced. This complexity has, however, been theorized in a number of different – sometimes competing – ways. The first among these is the, by now familiar, argument that gender determinants intersect with other types of determinants in complex ways to produce war. This kind of

perspective has been adopted by authors like Peterson (2007, 2008) and Cockburn (2010), the latter of whom argues that economic, ethnic/national, and gender determinants are the most important causes of war (ibid: 150-152). While masculinity remains an important focus in these types of analyses, it is by no means the only – or even the primary – topic of discussion.

The adoption of an intersectional approach has often been accompanied, however, by a second claim concerning the complexity of the masculinity/war relationship as well. This claim mirrors the aforementioned insights about women/femininity, and illustrates that conceptions of masculinity are internally differentiated to a very significant extent. In the context of studies of war this has had a number of implications. Perhaps the most important among these, however, is the fact that it entails the impossibility of specifying a *single* relationship between masculinity and war: the diversity which characterizes conceptions of masculinity means, after all, that this relationship must be understood in a *plural* rather than a *singular* manner. This claim has, importantly, derived significant support from substantive forms of enquiry as well, as these have clearly illustrated that – while it is true that most war fighting is done by men – it is generally only a small minority of men who actually participate. As for instance Ruddick has shown, ‘[i]n all war, on any side, there are men frightened and running, fighting reluctantly and eager to get home, or even courageously resisting their orders to kill’ (in Cockburn, 2001: 20; see also Conway, 2008). Such insights have resulted in (i) more attention being paid to the targeted killing of men (see for instance Jones, 2000) and (ii) attempts to distinguish between different types of masculinity in terms of their proclivity towards war, with numerous gender-studies authors drawing on the distinction between ‘hegemonic’ and ‘subordinate/marginal’ forms of masculinity (see for instance Henry, 2007; Moser, 2001; Conway, 2008; Cockburn and Enloe, 2012).

In making such distinctions it is, of course, implied that the link between *hegemonic* forms of masculinity and war is stronger than the link between war and masculinity *as such*. This has been disputed, however, by Hutchings (2008), who argues that even this more nuanced positions prevent us from (i) asking ‘how and why the characteristics required for war come to be identified as *masculine*’ at all (ibid: 394), and (ii) enquiring into what war in fact *is*. With regard to the first of these issues, for instance, she makes the important claim that ‘the meaning of masculinity in relation to war shifts across a continuum of varied and sometimes mutually contradictory values’ (ibid: 389). That is to say, Hutchings argues that the (hegemonically) ‘masculine’ qualities which gender-studies analysts have identified as essential to war fighting often seem to differ or even contradict according to the cases that are examined. She shows, for instance, that ‘[t]he highly rational, technologically skilled nuclear intellectual (unemotional, rational, calculating) discussed by Cohn (1989) is a very different archetype from the “just warrior” (chivalrous, protective) presented in Elshtain’s (1995) work, and again different from the heroic figure (courageous, strong, death defying) in Hartsock’s (1989) account’ (ibid: 391-392). Despite these differences and contradictions, however, the aforementioned qualities have all been identified as both (hegemonically) ‘masculine’ and as essential to war fighting. This raises a key question: if the referent for ‘masculinity’ is unstable, why is it that all of these qualities have been understood in the same manner?

In order to shed light on this question Hutchings claims that it is necessary to enquire into the second issue which she raised as well. That is to say, it is necessary to enquire into what war in fact *is*. This is of importance, Hutchings shows, because such an enquiry reveals that gender-oriented authors have consistently employed an understanding of war which is rooted in Clausewitzian understandings of its nature. This has had the effect of artificially stabilizing the meaning of the term ‘war’, and – importantly – results in analyses which overstate its

uniformity. The diversity which is masked by using the concept ‘masculinity’ is therefore mirrored by the uniformity which ‘war’ is assumed to have in the gender-oriented literature. This is of key importance, as arguably it illustrates that ‘the link between masculinity and war is not grounded in any continuity of substantial meaning’ (ibid: 399), but should instead be understood in terms of the work which is done ‘by the formal, relational properties of masculinity as a concept’ (ibid: 390).

When the aforementioned plurality of meanings is taken into consideration, after all, both ‘masculinity’ and ‘war’ appear to function as empty – or at least unstable – signifiers, which are capable of accommodating whatever causal link we might suggest. Indeed, it is arguably only because the gender and war literature has presumed to already know the meaning of war – by universalizing a Clausewitzian understanding – that it has continued to attempt establishing a cross-context link with different types of masculinity. If we take their diverse meanings into consideration, however, it becomes clear that it is only *in concrete contexts* – where their specific meanings can in fact be specified – that it is possible to establish the relationship between (particular types of) masculinity and (particular types of) war/conflict. Indeed, more strongly, it is only by studying masculinity/war in this way that it is possible to establish *if* there is in fact a (significant) connection between these two variables at all. Whether or not we accept Hutchings’s argument, however, it seems clear that the relationship between men/masculinity and war/conflict is as complex and nuanced as the relationship between women/femininity and war/conflict. It is therefore of key importance that the social sciences avoid (i) portrayals of masculinity as the ‘transcendentally aggressive force’ (Jones, 1996: 418) which some earlier approaches had made it out to be, and (ii) portrayals of war as simply a manifestation of patriarchy by other means.

This applies, importantly, to the *causes* of war as much as it does to the *nature* of actual war fighting. Though this realm may appear to be the archetypal preoccupation of the militarized and hegemonically masculine warrior – and is often understood in this manner throughout the popular imagination – recent research has shown that this is by no means always the case. Not only do women (increasingly) participate in war fighting but, more importantly, fighting at times results in the development of alternative (non-hegemonic/'feminized') forms of masculinity. Forms of masculinity, that is, which undermine both traditional understandings of masculinity and binary models of the masculinity/femininity divide. As Dietrich Ortega (2012) has shown in her aforementioned analysis of Latin American guerrilla fighters, for instance, 'there are multiple expressions of masculinities beyond 'heroic fighter' that become dominant in accordance with functionality and [the] needs of a specific context' (ibid: 503). This context, at least in the cases which Dietrich Ortega examined, demanded a prioritization of comradeship (and class struggle) over the maintenance of gender consciousness/dichotomies, and hence created 'expressions of guerrilla masculinities beyond the predominant association of men with violence' (ibid: 491). When these expressions are disregarded in our analyses we therefore risk (i) 'ignoring those concurrent aspects of militarized masculinities that incorporate repertoires of tenderness' (ibid), and (ii) reproducing a number of gender dichotomies that were in fact eroded throughout the armed conflicts which Dietrich Ortega studied (see especially ibid: 495-497).

It should be noted, however, that in line with the aforementioned findings of the literature on women/femininity and war, there are a number of important generalizations about men/masculinity and war which do in fact seem to stand up to cross-context scrutiny. In particular, the empirical evidence which the gender and war literature has gathered over the years seems to suggest that '[i]n war, the fighters are usually all male' (Goldstein, 2001: 10). Though, as

mentioned, there are numerous exceptions to this rule – and it seems likely that the participation of women in war fighting is increasing as a result of (admittedly uneven) changes in gender relations across the globe – it deserves emphasis that such ‘exceptions together amount to far fewer than 1 percent of all warriors in history’ (ibid). Opting for a simple inversion/dissolution of the aforementioned kinds of dichotomies therefore seems unwarranted. Rather, what appears to be required is greater attention to context: or, more specifically, the development of an approach to CS which is geared towards exploring the particularities of the relationship between war and gender in concrete social settings.

More generally, however, it seems clear that both the variability of gender roles in contexts of war and the aforementioned fact that there is extremely limited evidence to support the idea that behavioural differences between men and women are *biologically* determined (Goldstein, 2001) seems to foreclose upon the idea that essentialist frameworks are a viable analytical option. This conclusion is clearly reflected in the dramatic increase of gender-studies authors who now identify with constructivist, post-structural and postmodern claims. These approaches seem to offer a way out of the murky waters of biological determinism and materialist reductionism, and have often been accompanied by explicit rejections of positivism and/or science. While, for some, this has simply involved a concern with the ‘social construction’ of gender and the adoption of various interpretivist methodological approaches, others have been decidedly more radical. Authors like Sylvester (1994, 2001), for instance, have adopted analytical approaches which are explicitly informed by postmodern claims. Whether or not this kind of analytical orientation has been adopted, however, it seems clear that gender-studies discussions have taken place very largely *outside* of mainstream forms of enquiry. This situation results from a number of different factors. Prominent among these, however, is the fact that even the most sympathetic mainstream approaches have

generally remained committed to some kind of 'scientific' enquiry (see for instance Keohane, 1998), while most gender-studies authors have either rejected or problematized the kinds of enquiry which are associated with this notion. This has resulted in a situation which, in effect, allows mainstream authors to simply disregard the claims which are developed by gender-studies authors, as these claims are not expected to satisfy the rigorous standards which are associated with 'real' science.

As I aim to show in the next few sections of this chapter, however, such presumptions simply fail to stand up to analytical scrutiny. This is the case, concretely, because mainstream authors have operated on the basis of problematic (positivist/critical rationalist) notions of science, which are both misleading and unnecessarily restrictive. Once these notions are problematized by means of the CR framework, however, it becomes apparent that (i) mainstream approaches have claimed the label 'science' for a number of intellectual practices which are in fact of extremely limited analytical value, and (ii) that the existing gender-studies literature has much to offer a reconceptualised form of science. Indeed, once the CR framework is adopted it becomes apparent that (i) there is no legitimate reason for science to disregard the insights which have been advanced by gender-studies authors, and (ii) no legitimate reason for gender-studies authors to dismiss the idea of engaging in science either. In addition to defending these claims, however, the next section will also attempt to show that the analytical framework which results from CR's stratified account of reality provides the gender-studies literature with a superior philosophical framework than has been available to it previously. A framework, that is, which provides this literature with a more nuanced basis for engaging in scientific research and, furthermore, is capable of resolving a number of the philosophical/analytical disputes that have divided it in the past.



### 6.3 Critical Realism and Sex/Gender

How, then, does CR address the issues which were described throughout this chapter? And, more importantly, what would a CR approach to studying sex/gender entail? In order to answer these questions this section will, first, briefly discuss the importance of reconceptualising the term ‘science’ along realist lines. This discussion will focus, in particular, on (i) the ways in which CR undermines the problematic understanding of science which many mainstream approaches continue to adopt, and (ii) the reasons it rejects regularity-based understandings of causation. As I will illustrate, these features of realist philosophy are key to (i) undermining the restrictive understandings of science which mainstream approaches have made use of in order to justify their neglect of gender-studies claims, and (ii) reincorporating these claims into a causal form of science.

Once these foundations have been laid, however, the section will continue by discussing the ways in which the CR framework allows us to (i) resolve the issues which were encountered in previous sections, and (ii) develop a new approach to the study of sex/gender which overcomes the philosophical problems of previous approaches (see also Hull, 2006; Lawson, 1999; New, 1998; Gunnarsson, 2011). In developing this approach I will draw especially on CR’s stratified account of reality, as it is this account in particular which allows us to achieve these goals. As this topic has already featured prominently in previous chapters, however, I will not discuss these concepts in any significant depth. Rather, this section presumes a familiarity with the framework that was set out in previous chapters, and aims to examine the *implications* of this framework for the study of sex and gender. This strategy is adopted as well with regard to the ‘science question’ and the issue of causation, as these topics have featured throughout this project as prominently as the topic of emergence/stratification.

Before moving on to discuss these issues, however, two matters require further clarification. The *first* of these concerns the fact that this section will engage solely with the *philosophical* issues that underpin different approaches to gender-studies. That is to say, it is not concerned with the issue of violent conflict, which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter instead. The *second* issue is more substantive in nature, and concerns the fact that previous chapters have already developed a number of positions which have a direct bearing upon the development of a CR approach to sex and gender. Although these positions will not be discussed at great length throughout the current section, it should be noted that they do function as the basis on which its claims are made. It is therefore worth briefly re-stating what is perhaps the *main* reason that CR is a particularly suitable vehicle for the grounding of a new approach to the study of sex and gender. This is, of course, the fact that it provides us with a philosophical basis for exactly the kind of context-sensitive explorations of gender dynamics which the previous section has illustrated are in fact necessary. Its rejection of positivist/falsificationist ‘covering laws’, in particular, paves the way for a form of science which makes the nature of gender dynamics a matter of substantive investigation, rather than simplistic forms of inductive inference, and therefore helps to guard against the unwarranted forms of analytical universalism which previous approaches have often tended towards.

It should be noted, however, that this is only the most generic application of the CR framework to gender issues. That is to say, it is both possible and useful to apply this framework to the more specific problems/disputes which have featured throughout the gender-studies literature as well. I will therefore begin by discussing the importance of re-theorizing both the meaning of the term science and the issue of causation, before moving on to discuss the importance of CR’s stratified/emergentist account of reality.

The first of these issues matters, in particular, because large swathes of the gender-studies literature continue to be *implicitly* informed by positivist approaches to (social) science. Tickner, for instance, has consistently argued against the adoption of natural science methodologies in IR, and contends that ‘hermeneutic, historically contingent, sociological, and/or ethnographically based methodologies’ are to be preferred (2005: 2177). When we adopt the CR framework, however, it immediately becomes clear that the kind of oppositions which Tickner employs suffer from a number of underlying philosophical problems. In particular, they suffer from the assumption that (i) there is such a thing as a (single/universal) natural science methodology from which alternative/critical approaches may distance themselves, (ii) that the various practices of the natural sciences employ a methodological orientation which is rooted in positivist philosophy of science, and (iii) that hermeneutic approaches, historical contingencies, and sociological/ethnographic approaches are alien to the process of science. As previous chapters have shown, however, such assumptions simply do not stand up to scrutiny. This is the case, concretely, because (i) the methods which are adopted by the natural sciences are actually extremely *varied* in nature, (ii) positivist philosophy is in fact *incompatible* with the practices of the natural sciences, and (iii) hermeneutic insights, historical contingencies, and sociological/ethnographic approaches are all *consistent with/essential features of* (social) scientific enquiry.

Tickner’s claims are clearly therefore rooted in the ‘incomplete’ critiques of positivism which were discussed throughout the first two chapters of the project. It should be noted, however, that the same conclusion applies to a very significant amount of the contemporary gender-studies literature. This literature, because it has adopted a critical stance towards the contemporary social order, has also tended to gravitate towards the adoption of various ‘post-positivist’ forms of enquiry. This clearly applies to the different forms of third wave feminism

– associated especially with post-structural/postmodern claims – but also applies to the various approaches to gender-studies which have rejected the idea of science in favour of exploring the ‘social construction’ of gender. This places these approaches firmly within the ‘problem field’ which CR seeks to transcend, and results in the counterproductive philosophical dualisms which were described in previous chapters.

It should be noted, however, that none of this is to say that these approaches are incapable of providing us with valuable insights into the gendered nature of social relations. Indeed, this is – for a number of reasons – clearly not the case. Perhaps the most important among these, however, is the fact that the insights which these approaches have developed can be usefully incorporated into science when we conceptualize causal processes in the manner that CR does. This is the case because (i) the claims which ‘post-positivist’ gender-studies approaches have made can be understood as *causal* claims once we reject the ‘covering law’ understanding of this phenomenon, and (ii) these claims should therefore be of significant interest to the kind of scientific approach which CR develops. If the gender-studies literature is of potential use to CR-based forms of science, however, it should be noted that CR is of potential use to the gender-studies literature as well. In particular, its framework is able to provide this literature with an alternative approach to overcoming the exclusion from mainstream science which it has consistently experienced. This is the case because an adoption of the CR framework opens up the possibility of *reclaiming* science for gender-studies, while *undermining* the claims of mainstream approaches to scientific status. As this project has shown, these approaches have consistently claimed the label ‘science’ for a number of practices which are in fact of extremely limited value. Rather than attempting to gain recognition by the scholars/institutions which sustain these practices it would therefore be preferable for gender-studies authors to pursue a *subversion* of their claims to scientific

legitimacy. This has the distinct advantage of reclaiming science for critically-minded approaches to social enquiry, and takes us well beyond the quasi-falsificationist ‘alternative’ which Keohane (1998) has proposed as well.

It should be noted, however, that an adoption of this ‘reclamation strategy’ necessitates the *rejection* of certain features of the aforementioned ‘post-positivist’ gender-studies approaches as well. It would, for instance, be impossible to reclaim science without also rejecting the *relativism* and *dualism* which is inherent to some of these approaches. Indeed, more elaborately, it would be impossible to do this without (i) a rejection of the judgmental *relativism* which some ‘post-positivist’ approaches have adopted, (ii) an adoption of the judgmental *rationalism* which CR has proposed, (iii) a rejection of the dualistic *anti-naturalism* which certain ‘post-positivist’ approaches have adopted, and (iv) an acceptance of the *critical naturalism* which is inherent to the CMP approach. Once such changes have been made, however, the importance of reconsidering both the meaning of the term science and the issue of causation becomes apparent, as the way towards a new (and ‘androgynous’) form of scientific enquiry is now clear. It deserves emphasis, however, that the development of this kind of approach is only the first step within a larger project which aims to re-theorize sex and gender from a CR perspective. This is the case because the aforementioned reclamation strategy can only provide us with the beginnings of a more complete solution to the philosophical problems which were discussed throughout the previous section. In the next few paragraphs I will therefore turn towards the second part of the argument, which focuses on the implications of CR’s stratified/emergentist account of the world for the theorization of sex and gender. These paragraphs will argue that this central feature of the CR framework provides us with a more coherent framework than the constructivism which has been favoured by many ‘post-positivist’ gender-studies approaches.

Perhaps the first thing to note in this regard is the fact that CR's theorization of stratification/emergence provides us with the intellectual resources required to develop an *integrated/inter-disciplinary* approach to the study of sex and gender. That is to say, its theorization allows us to develop an approach which is able to incorporate evidence/insight from both the biological *and* the social sciences. This is the case because the stratified/emergentist account of being which CR develops illustrates that ascribing causal importance to biological or social/cultural factors *does not need to result in biological or social/cultural determinism/reductionism*. Indeed, more specifically, it illustrates that the biological and social strata should be understood as both *irreducible* and *interactive*. This has important implications for the question of sex and gender, as it illustrates that talk of these strata does not commit us to the idea that (behavioural) differences between men and women are determined at *either* a biological *or* a social/cultural level. Rather, sex (corporeality/materiality/embodiment/etc) and gender (sociality/culture/meaning/etc) can be understood in the aforementioned manner, as both irreducible and interactive.

It should be noted, however, that the CR approach is by no means a simple restatement of constructivist claims. While it should be clear that CR's stratified/emergentist conception of being provides us with a philosophical rationale for the idea that gender is a social/cultural construction, for instance, it also allows us to make two distinct advances on the constructivist framework as well. The first of these results from the fact that this framework is capable of philosophically grounding the (second wave feminist) claim that 'biology is not destiny'. This claim is both important and true, but has remained without an explicit *philosophical* rationale in the past. In addition to grounding biology in this manner, however, a second advance on the constructivist framework results from CR's explicit incorporation of agential powers (and hence psychology) into its analytical framework. When this framework is applied to gender-

studies it illustrates the need to add another explanatory layer to constructivist theorizations. Or, more radically, it illustrates the need to *replace* these theorizations with an analytical framework which is fully *bio-psycho-social* in nature. This is the case, concretely, because the constructivist concern with social/cultural construction has the unfortunate side-effect of systematically eliding questions of agency. As agency is in fact irreducible to both biological and social determinants, however, it is necessary to think of the various issues which gender studies concerns itself with as resulting from biological, psychological, and social forms of determination. As I intend to show in the final section of this chapter, however, it is not just within the realm of social theory that it is possible to make the aforementioned kinds of analytical advances. Rather, the CR approach to sex/gender has numerous important applications when it comes to the study of intra-state conflict as well.

#### **6.4 Gendering Conflict Studies**

The first thing to note, however, is the fact that a CR approach to these entails that our reflections about gender and conflict are attentive to the spatiotemporal context which they seek to study. This means, in short, that a CR-based approach to ‘gendering’ CS would have to resist the urge to try and uncover the ‘covering laws’ which link certain types of behaviour – for instance, those associated with ‘hegemonic masculinity’ or ‘maternal caring’ – with the occurrence/continuation/prevention/termination of violent conflict. Such generalizations are likely to prove less than reliable, and obscure the diversity which is inherent to (i) notions/manifestations of masculinity and femininity, (ii) the causes/nature of intra-state conflict, and (iii) the causal pathways which link these phenomena. This means, therefore, that a CR-based approach to gendering CS would be in line with Hutchings’s (2008) critique of feminist approaches to studying war. These approaches, as we have seen, have illicitly universalized a

Clausewitzian understanding of war, and have failed to recognize that the notions of masculinity which they consider war-prone are actually varied and/or incompatible in nature. This leads Hutchings to suggest that ‘the link between masculinity and war is not grounded in any continuity of substantial meaning’ (ibid: 399), but should instead be understood in terms of the work which is done ‘by the formal, relational properties of masculinity as a concept’ (ibid: 390). This is an important insight, and the CR approach can perhaps be best understood as a solidification and extension of its logic. This is the case because (i) CR provides us with important reasons to believe that the causes and nature of violent conflict are indeed much more varied than is presupposed by Clausewitzian perspectives, and (ii) it takes Hutchings’s claims about the diversity of relationships between *masculinity* and war and extends them to include the relationship between *femininity* and war as well.

This results in an approach to the study of gender and war which addresses the problems that Hutchings identifies by systematically *contextualizing* the link between masculinity/femininity and conflict. Importantly, however, it also results in an approach to CS which is at odds with a large amount of the gender and war literature. This is the case because large swathes of this literature have remained firmly within the grip of positivist notions of science *by inverting its logic and adopting hermeneutic/post-structural/postmodern/constructivist alternatives to ‘science’*. This places these approaches firmly within the ‘problem field’ which CR attempts to overcome, and ensures that they are incapable of providing CS with an adequate philosophical framework for the study of gender and conflict. This is not to say, of course, that the concerns and claims of these approaches should simply be dismissed. Rather, it is to claim that these concerns/claims should be incorporated into a framework which (i) is capable of doing greater analytical justice to them, and (ii) overcomes the philosophical problems which result from both positivist and dualist/anti-naturalist approaches.



As this framework requires us to study gender and violent conflict in a contextual manner, however, it might appear to be the case that there is little which a CR-based approach could propose that would hold up at a more general level. This is not, however, the case, for two main reasons. The *first* of these concerns the fact that – as the fourth chapter has shown – the adoption of a CR framework does not result in a rejection of generalization as such. Rather, the CMP approach results in a re-conceptualization of generalization as taking place at the level of *structures* rather than the level of (empirical) *events*. This allows us preserve the important role of induction and deduction for scientific enquiry, and thereby prevents a collapse into the idiographic research methods which have often characterized post-structural/postmodern approaches. In addition to this, however, it also allows us to ground one of the most significant tasks which a ‘gendered’ and CR-based form of CS could engage in: the specification of mechanisms which cause various gendered phenomena to take place during times of conflict. Though these mechanisms may of course differ according to context, it deserves emphasis that there is no a priori reason to assume that they will not also recur. The specification of a mechanism which caused/reduced/prevented wartime sexual violence in one setting may, therefore, be of significant use for the analysis of/interventions in an entirely different setting as well. While this cannot be guaranteed, and context thus remains of key importance, it is worth re-stating the fact that a CR-based approach to gender and conflict is not limited to documenting the completely unique gender-dynamics of individual conflicts.

This conclusion is, importantly, reinforced by the *second* part of the argument as well. This takes us beyond the realm of philosophical speculation, and into the realm of empirical data. Such information is arguably of the utmost importance, as there is now significant evidence to suggest that there are a number of generalizations about gender and conflict which do in fact stand up to scrutiny relatively well. As previous sections have already shown, for instance, it

is widely accepted that '[r]ape and sexual violence are acts overwhelmingly carried out by men against women' (Kirby, 2012: 95). In addition to this, it also seems clear that '[i]n war, the fighters are usually all male' (Goldstein, 2001: 10). Such patterns are important, as they provide support for the aforementioned idea that – despite the variability of violent conflict – it is not simply reducible to pure contingency either. Rather, the existence of these kinds of regularities amounts to clear evidence that intra-state conflict, like all forms of social life, is characterized by various (non-universal) patterns. While these patterns are not, of course, *necessary* or *sufficient* for the establishment of causal relations, this does not mean that no purpose is served by studying them. Rather, this is potentially of significant use, as it may result in the discovery of many more powerful mechanisms which are capable of producing cross-context patterns/regularities.

It should be noted, however, that what is arguably the most important contribution which CR makes to the 'gendering' of CS does not in fact derive from this re-conceptualization of generalization. Rather, it derives from the emergentist/stratified notion of being which CR develops. This notion has significant potential when it comes to advancing the study of gender and conflict, as it provides us with a rationale for the development of a more sophisticated analytical framework than has been available to CS before. This framework is, as we have seen, bio-psycho-social in nature, and is therefore broadly in line with the framework which Goldstein (2001) develops throughout *War and Gender*. In this book Goldstein regularly insist upon the fact that '[c]ausation runs both ways' (ibid: 6) between biological and social determinants, and – like the CR framework – he therefore conceptualizes these strata in *irreducible* and *interactive* terms. This is not to say, however, that Goldstein's work is entirely unproblematic. Rather, it displays a number of key weaknesses, all of which are more adequately addressed by the perspective which this chapter has developed.

The first of these concerns the fact that *War and Gender* simply fails to provide us with a philosophical defence of the aforementioned position. This leaves Goldstein's approach sensitive to counter-attack by both *reductionist* and *dualist* perspectives. If such counter-attacks are to be prevented, therefore, we must provide CS with a satisfactory philosophical framework. A framework, that is, which is capable of accommodating the insights of both the biological and the social sciences at the same time, without reducing one to the other. This is, of course, the kind of framework which CR's emergentist/stratified notion of being provides us with, thereby allowing us to resolve the first problem which is inherent to Goldstein's approach. It is not just at the level of philosophical argumentation, however, that this approach is occasionally problematic. Rather, the bio-psycho-social perspective which this chapter has developed draws our attention to two further problems as well.

The first among these is the fact that – despite his consistent engagement with the tenets of psychology – Goldstein fails to discuss/consider the question of agency. This is clearly apparent throughout *War and Gender*, which consistently (and misleadingly) equates psychology *as such* with *social* psychology. This leaves little room for those features of human existence, like agency, which previous chapters have shown to be irreducible to social determinants. More generally, however, it also results in an approach to the study of gender and conflict which is incomplete, as Goldstein's framework fails to consider the emergent powers/properties which mediate the biological and the social strata. This neglect is not, however, a feature of the emergentist/stratified notion of being which CR provides us with, as this notion underlabours for an approach that explicitly incorporates a concern with these powers/qualities. This makes the CR approach more comprehensive than the one which Goldstein provides us with, and, importantly, means that CS would be better equipped to make sense of gender and violent conflict if it were to adopt it.

It is not just with regard to the issue of agency, however, that Goldstein's approach is insufficient as a basis for social scientific enquiry. The final reason for this concerns the fact that *War and Gender* consistently operates on the basis of relatively narrow/restrictive notions of gender. As Elisabeth Prugl has shown, Goldstein's book focuses on the important question of how men and women are gendered, but fails to examine 'how gender moves beyond the individual level of analysis to organize spaces and authorize conduct' (2003: 339). That is to say, Goldstein's approach does not extend his analysis of gender to include the ways in which notions of masculinity and femininity are used in order to evaluate objects that are not corporeal in nature. This prevents him from analyzing the manner in which these notions are (i) often applied to social groups or non-corporeal entities like nation-states, classes, ethnic groups, etc., and (ii) how they function as de facto forms of governance which valorise and devalorise, punish and reward, identify friends and enemies, etc.

It should be clear that this amounts to a significant analytical loss for social scientific enquiry. A more comprehensive approach to CS would therefore have to broaden Goldstein's analytical framework, by focusing 'less on what women and men do' and 'more on what gendering does' (ibid). This involves, importantly, a return to the kind of second wave gender studies frameworks which have sought to employ gender categories in this extended manner. In addition to this, however, it also requires (i) a defence of the idea that *social* forms of determination are indeed irreducible to other forms of (biological, psychological, etc) determination, and (ii) a richer account of the social stratum than Goldstein provides in *War and Gender*. This is, of course, exactly what the CR and CPE approaches have attempted to provide us with throughout the last few chapters, and CS would therefore arguably be better equipped to deal with questions of gender and conflict if it were to adopt the philosophical and social theoretical frameworks which this project has developed.

Indeed, more strongly, in the final few sections of this chapter I aim to show that it is *only* the kind of bio-psycho-social framework which this project adopts that (i) can do justice to the gendered nature of conflict, and (ii) can accommodate the various insights which the gender-studies literature has developed over the years. In making this argument these sections will provide a number of illustrations as to why the biological, psychological and social strata are all indispensable for our analyses. They will do, concretely, this by discussing these strata in turn, and the current section will therefore begin by examining the biological stratum.

This source of determination should be considered indispensable for the analysis of gender and conflict because it is only when we take into consideration the causal powers which are rooted in biological sex that we can make sense of a number of phenomena which have featured heavily throughout gender studies discussions about war/conflict. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the fact that it would not be possible to account for different forms of wartime sexual violence without taking into consideration the biological differences between men and women. This is the case because we could not make sense of the explicit targeting of women – or the fact that genocidal violence has at times been pursued by means of rape-based impregnations (Turpin, 1998) – *without making reference to the biological properties of female bodies*. The same applies, importantly, to the pro-natalist policies which certain governments have adopted during times of conflict, and which are described by Enloe (1989). Such policies are entirely unintelligible if we do not allow for the fact that it is only female bodies which can in fact become impregnated. If we are to do justice to these phenomena it is therefore essential that we take biology seriously. Indeed, the work of the aforementioned authors can be read as clear illustrations of the fact that biology is absolutely indispensable for a ‘gendered’ form of CS.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> The same point can be illustrated, of course, with reference to the biological properties of *male* bodies, as these are equally indispensable for our analyses. It would be impossible, for instance, to make sense of the

This is not to say, however, that biology is also *sufficient*. Rather, an incorporation of the psychological and social strata is required as well. This is the case because both psychology and the social sciences are concerned with a number of causally/taxonomically irreducible phenomena which are key to developing a better understanding of the gendered nature of violent conflict. Of particular importance in this regard is the phenomenon of agency, which is part of the domain which is studied by psychology. This is a central phenomenon for a variety of reasons. Most important among these, however, is the fact that there are few phenomena that are of concern to the gender and war literature which can be made sense of without the distinction between behaviour and *intentional* behaviour. The aforementioned targeting of women as part of genocidal strategies, for instance, would be unintelligible without it, and – troublingly – claims about moral responsibility for these actions would seem to collapse as well. If we are to do justice to these phenomena – and the gendered nature of conflict more generally – it is therefore essential that we incorporate the phenomenon of agency into our analyses. This would, however, require us to make use of ‘mentalistic’ concepts (like ‘intentions’ and ‘reasons for action’) which are alien to biology, but refer to the psychological properties/powers which emerge from this stratum instead. The aforementioned examples can therefore be read as providing us with clear illustrations of the fact that *psychology* is as indispensable to the development of a ‘gendered’ form of CS as *biology*.

The fact that this is the case can be illustrated at a more concrete level as well, however, as the CR theorization of psychology allows us to prevent an analytical problem which was identified in previous sections from affecting our work. This is the problem which was described by Sjoberg and Gentry (2007), who illustrated that the most common narratives about women’s violence systematically disregard their agential powers. These narratives

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specific targeting of battle-age men during episodes of genocidal violence (Jones, 2000) without also making reference to the greater threat which they pose as a result of their potential for greater physical strength.

ascribe women's violence to some kind of (sexual, biological, etc) defect, rather than their willingness to – like men – pursue their aims in a violent manner. This denies them the humanity which they in fact share with men, results in misleadingly dichotomous analyses of men and women, and is of course at odds with the bio-psycho-social approach which this chapter has developed as well. This is the case, again, because an adoption of this approach commits us to the idea that agential powers are irreducible to both biological and social determinants, and thereby provides CS with an important safeguard against the de-agentializing narratives which Sjoberg and Gentry have identified. Indeed, more substantively, it provides CS with a way to *restore* the analytical status of women (to 'full membership' of the human community), and thereby helps to *undermine* the dichotomous analyses of male/female violence perpetrators of violent acts which these narratives result in.

These are arguably important contributions to the development of a more sophisticated approach to CS, and – in addition – provide us with clear illustrations of the uses of incorporating psychology into our analyses of gender and conflict. It should be noted, however, that this approach remains incomplete if we do not also take into consideration the distinctively *social* forms of determination which shape these psychological phenomena as well. It is at this social level, after all, that people (i) come to know what their particular society means by masculinity/femininity, and (ii) that they are prepared for the various roles which they play during times of war. These roles, importantly, cannot simply be reduced to expressions of biological or psychological factors, but should be understood on their own terms. This can be illustrated in a variety of ways, but perhaps the clearest example derives from the prevalence of 'basic training' around the world. This is important because it illustrates, quite clearly, that soldiers are not simply *born* (as biological and/or psychological beings) but must instead be *socially produced*. These forms of production include, of course,

techniques which are geared towards increasing the physical fitness of recruits. In addition to this, however, they also involve techniques which aim to create/reinforce the militarised forms of subjectivity which are necessary for war-fighting (Belkin, 2012). These subjectivities are highly gendered in nature, and – as the aforementioned study by Belkin shows – can often be understood as reinforcing militarized forms of masculinity in various complex ways. This clearly illustrates the indispensability of the social stratum for our analyses, and – in addition – completes this chapter’s argument in favour of the idea that it is only a bio-psycho-social approach which (i) can do justice to the gendered nature of violence, and (ii) can accommodate the insights which the gender and war literature have developed over the years.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Such arguments illustrate the fruitfulness of engaging with CR philosophy. This is the case because they clearly illustrate that CR provides gender-studies with an approach that is both more coherent and more sophisticated than the approaches which have preceded it. With regard to CS, however, the CR framework provides an almost entirely gender-blind discipline with a number of important ways of incorporating the concerns and claims of the gender and war literature into scientific research. In making the case for the incorporation of these concerns and claims the current project has also been able to rely, however, on the fact that the CPE approach theorizes the social stratum in terms of various *irreducible* and *intersecting* logics. This is important, because this formulation avoids reductionist arguments which deny the relative autonomy of gender-based logics. It is this feature of the CPE approach as well, however, which paves the way for the second *incorporation* which this project aims to achieve. This particular incorporation concerns the claims of the postcolonial/decolonial literature, and is the focus of the final chapter of this project.



**CHAPTER VII:**  
**DECOLONIZING CONFLICT STUDIES**

## 7.1 Introduction

The final chapter of this project aims to ‘decolonize’ CS by developing a postcolonial/decolonial approach to the social sciences. This means, concretely, that it aims to transcend the effects of a number of common analytical presuppositions which have their historical roots in what is often (euphemistically) referred to as the ‘colonial encounter’. In particular, it aims to counteract the analytical presuppositions which are inherent to so-called (neo-) modernization approaches. These approaches have had an important impact on both the contents and the direction of CS discussions, and, as Blaney and Inayatullah (2002) have shown, have increasingly re-imagined processes of modernization in a *global* manner. In problematizing these perspectives the chapter will draw on various types of postcolonial/decolonial thought, which have made a number of important intellectual contributions throughout the last few decades. In particular, these approaches have exposed the profoundly parochial and, at times, wilfully ignorant nature of the Northern social sciences, and have drawn attention to several of its historical erasures and thematic silences.

Underpinning many of these contributions is a critique of a number of the analytical binaries which have grounded the Northern social sciences ever since European states commenced their colonial-era plunder and/or ‘civilizing missions’. Such binaries, as previous chapters have already shown, are often problematic in nature. As various postcolonial/decolonial thinkers have argued with regard to the modernity/tradition binary, for instance, this opposition (i) tends to obscure the co-constitutive nature of (discourses concerned with) the Global North and the Global South, (ii) invoke moral hierarchies which are extremely misleading, and (iii) systematically emphasize ‘otherness’/difference/discontinuity at the expense of recognizing sameness/continuity/hybridity. In this chapter I aim to make use of

these critiques by problematizing the binaries which underpin much of the CS literature. Interestingly – and despite the fact that the relationship between modernity/development and violent conflict has in fact featured throughout CS discussions – this does not seem to have been attempted before.<sup>108</sup> As I aim to show, however, this lack of engagement is untenable, particularly for a field which is (implicitly) committed to (i) producing knowledge which is disseminated almost exclusively among (elite) audiences located in various locales throughout the Global *North*, while (ii) being almost exclusively focused on the explanation of phenomena which take place in the (relatively non-elite) Global *South*. In addition to being *untenable*, however, the aforementioned lack of engagement with postcolonial/decolonial thought is also simply *regrettable*, as doing so would be fruitful for a number of reasons.

This is not to say, however, that the influence of postcolonial/decolonial approaches has been unambiguously positive, or that the insights of this literature can be straightforwardly applied to CS as part of the development of a CR approach. Indeed, previous CR commentators have been largely critical of those varieties of postcolonial/decolonial thought which are rooted in post-structuralism and postmodern (D'Souza, 2007, 2010; Hockey, 2010 and Manathukkaren, 2010). It should be noted, however, that – to the extent that these critiques have *equated* postcolonial/decolonial thought with either its post-structural/postmodern varieties or the work of the subaltern studies collective – they leave something to be desired. This is the case because, as Leela Gandhi has shown, 'the intellectual history of postcolonial theory is marked by a dialectic between Marxism, on the one hand, and poststructuralism/postmodernism, on the other' (1998: viii).

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<sup>108</sup> This is in contrast with disciplines like anthropology and International Relations, which has seen a slow but steady increase in publications which attempt to come to terms with its 'colonized' nature (see for instance Shilliam, 2011; Jones, 2006). Mark Laffey and Tarak Barkawi (2002, 2006) have furthermore provided important contributions to the ways in which we might develop a postcolonial form of International Security Studies. Although the current chapter draws on this important literature, it should be noted that none of these publications have either focused on the CS literature or sought to explicitly ground their efforts at decolonization philosophically.

This dialectic is clearly apparent in much of the decolonial/postcolonial work which has been produced throughout International Relations (Jones, 2006), and is in line with the much more heterodox range of influences which was inherent to the work of early decolonial thinkers like Fanon as well (2001, 2008). There is, therefore, much more to postcolonial/decolonial thought than the problematic manifestations which previous CR commentators have sought to critique. The fact that this is the case is of significant importance, as it opens up intellectual space for (i) more systematic (as well as more *sympathetic*) CR-based engagements with the claims of postcolonial/decolonial thought, *broadly defined*, and (ii) the analytical decolonization of CS which this chapter intends to pursue. Indeed, this chapter aims to show that CR-based forms of analytical decolonization are likely to be *particularly* productive, as CR – along with the CMP and CPE approaches – allows us to (i) edge towards an approach which transcends the split between historical materialism and post-structuralism, and (ii) makes better sense of why both sides of this divide are ‘persuasive in their claims, and compelling in their critique of theoretical opponents’ (Gandhi, 1998: viii).

Essential to such claims is the fact that – as previous chapters have shown – CR can be understood as providing us with a new (and arguably more *complete*) critique of the Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (PDM). From this perspective, the hermeneutic and post-structural/postmodern approaches which many postcolonial/decolonial approaches have drawn on provide useful clues as to what is wrong with the PDM, but remain very much within the philosophical problem field to which it belongs. CR, however, provides us with a meta-critique of both the PDM *and* the various critical approaches which the aforementioned postcolonial/decolonial approaches have drawn on. This allows it to (i) step out of this problem field, and (ii) provide important philosophical resolutions to the positivism/hermeneutics, materialism/idealism, body/mind, humanism/anti-humanism, nature/society,

etc. dualisms which have featured so prominently in decolonial/postcolonial discussions about the PDM's (in)adequacy. As the next section will show, this provides us with the philosophical tools which are required in order to develop an alternative approach to the social sciences. An approach, that is, which transcends the many manifestations of the colonial-era split between the 'modern' and the 'traditional'.

## **7.2 Decolonizing the Social Sciences**

In order to show that this is indeed the case the following section will describe the various ways in which the CR, CMP and CPE frameworks allow us to 'decolonize' the social sciences, before applying the positions which it develops to CS in the third part of this chapter. These initial sections will argue in favour of the idea that these frameworks allow critical (Marxian/Weberian) forms of historical sociology to draw on the insights of postcolonial/decolonial thought, while avoiding the judgmental relativism which is associated with some of its variants. In addition to this, however, these sections will also argue that drawing on the insights of these forms of thought allows us to correct a number of the problems which have characterized these historical sociological approaches in the past. First, however, it must be clearly shown that any kind of analytical decolonization is called for at all. In order to do this the next few sections will provide a brief overview of the main critiques which postcolonial/decolonial approaches have developed concerning the Northern social sciences, while focusing particularly on the importance of the modern/traditional binary.

This binary has a long history in Northern social scientific thought, though enquiries into its origins, veracity and functions failed to make a significant impact until much more recently. Postcolonial/decolonial approaches have played an important role in promoting such

enquiries, and have sought to draw attention to the important role of the ‘colonial encounter’ (and imperialism/empire more generally) in its constitution/maintenance. This focus is, of course, a general feature of these (otherwise varied) approaches, and puts it at odds with much of the contemporary Northern social sciences. As for instance Gandhi has shown, the ‘emergence of anti-colonial and ‘independent’ nation-states after colonialism’ was frequently accompanied by ‘a desire to forget the colonial past’ (1998: 4). Postcolonial/decolonial thought, however, ‘can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past’ (ibid; Slater, 2004: 162).<sup>109</sup> This project has, at times, been extremely revealing, and the claims of its various proponents should make for uncomfortable reading among those who remain committed to both the PDM itself and the various forms of enquiry which it continues to inspire.

This is the case for a number of reasons. Perhaps most important among these, however, is the fact that many of the philosophers and social scientists who are now closely associated with the central tenets of the PDM were profoundly shaped by the ‘colonial encounter’ (Bhambra, 2009; Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010). As Connell (2010) has shown, for instance, the histories of the Northern social sciences and empire/imperialism are closely entwined. Rather than simply an attempt to come to terms with the social revolutions which were sweeping the European continent at the time – still the standard account of the origins of social science – Connell shows that its birth is more adequately understood as embodying an intellectual response to questions which arose from colonialism as well (see also Spivak, 1999). Indeed, nearly *two-thirds* of early social scientific publications were ‘concerned with ancient and

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<sup>109</sup> This focus is, perhaps, what most clearly sets it apart from post-structuralism and postmodernism more generally. As Slater has shown, postcolonial/decolonial thought has systematically taken issue with the ‘occlusion of the colonial and imperial moment in Western post-structuralist thinking’ (2004: 19). See also Ahluwalia (2005).

medieval societies, colonial or remote societies, or global surveys of human history' (Connell, 2010: 7). The fact that this is the case is, she argues, crucial with regard to 'understanding the content and method of sociology, as well as the discipline's wider cultural significance' (ibid: 9), as these publications were organised around one central idea: the fundamental 'difference between the civilisation of the metropole and other cultures, whose main feature was their primitiveness' (2010: 7; Shilliam, 2011: 2-12). Though the social sciences have long since forgotten it, it is this difference – often defined in racial terms – which the concept of 'modernity' was intended to capture, and which casts it in its oppositional role to its conceptual other, the 'traditional' (Bhambra, 2009: 37/77; Buck-Morrs, 2009; D'Souza, 2010: 263-4). The importance of this conceptual innovation for the Northern social sciences can hardly be overstated. Indeed, its impact can be clearly illustrated by drawing attention to the fact that it was *institutionalized* by means of the disciplinary divide between the social sciences/sociology (concerned with the study of modern societies) and anthropology (concerned with the study of traditional societies) (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010: 11).

Of course, proponents of the PDM need not *necessarily* feel troubled by such matters. It should be noted, however, that – even if assertions about the radical distinctiveness of the modern *are* in fact accurate – the aforementioned claims were by no means morally neutral: many of the thinkers that are now associated with the PDM were actively involved in transforming ideas about (societal/racial/continental/civilizational/etc) *distinctiveness/difference* into ideas about (societal/racial/continental/civilizational/etc) *superiority/hierarchy*. Many modernist philosophers and social scientists were not just *shaped by* colonialism, therefore, but were also deeply *implicated in it* by providing intellectual resources for those who were engaged in the subjugation, expropriation and extermination of populations in the Global South. Even when the use of the aforementioned categorizations did

not lead to an understanding of the ‘other’ as *irredeemably* barbaric or *biologically/racially* inferior, however, the hierarchical nature of the modern/traditional binary was often reflected in various types of ‘universal history’ (Buck-Morrs, 2009). These forms of history – whether in their Hegelian, Marxist, or liberal manifestations – portrayed European states and people as civilizing agents which were leading the inhabitants of colonial states towards the adulthood and light of modernity, and away from pre-modern forms of infancy and darkness. This conceptualization transformed the colonial encounter with cultural difference into stadial forms of history, in which the *particularities* of European social developments/arrangements were transformed into a *universal* future goal. In this way the characteristics of traditional/*non-modern/non-capitalist/anti-modern/anti-capitalist* societies could, instead, be framed as *pre-modern/pre-capitalist/etc.*, thereby portraying the world as part of a single developmental narrative which presupposed the eventual elimination of cultural difference in favour of a universalized modernity (Mannathukkaren, 2010: 303-306; Blaney and Inayatullah, 2010: 9-10; Shilliam, 2011: 2; Halperin, 2006: 50)

Whether our analytical allegiances draw us closer to Kant<sup>110</sup>, Hegel<sup>111</sup>, (J.S.) Mill<sup>112</sup> or a variety of other prominent thinkers, therefore, it should be clear that the historical and intellectual legacy of the PDM is decisively tainted. Some kind of analytical ‘decolonization’ therefore seems called for. The fact that we now know that this is the case, however, amounts to something of a rediscovery on the part of the contemporary social sciences, as both the colonial origins of the modernity/tradition binary and its role in justifying various racialised forms of violence, hierarchy and dispossession have long remained obscured by mainstream

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<sup>110</sup> Who declared that ‘Humanity achieves its greatest perfection with the White race’ (quoted in Barkawi and Laffey, 2006: 332)

<sup>111</sup> Who declared that ‘Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained . . . shut up’, and amounted to nothing more than the ‘land of childhood, which, lying beyond the day of history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night’ (quoted in Ayers, 2006: 155).

<sup>112</sup> Who was ‘the architect of the East India Company’s colonial policy during a crucial period in the history of colonialism from 1823 to 1857’ (D’Souza, 2010: 265).



forms of social scientific enquiry. These forms of enquiry almost invariably valorised the PDM, and claimed objectivity, science, rationality, civilization, progress, development, enlightenment, democracy, dynamism, and more for modernity, while ascribing to its various ‘others’ only the ‘traditional’ qualities of irrationality, barbarism, stagnation, backwardness, despotism, darkness, deviance, lack, etc.<sup>113</sup> It has therefore taken numerous postcolonial/decolonial counter-histories – often inspired by Said’s important (though by no means unproblematic) work (2003, 1994) – for such notions to become problematized and/or dislodged. In particular, these histories have advanced critiques of (i) the idealized/sanitized depictions of Global Northern history which are characteristic of mainstream approaches to scientific enquiry, and (ii) the positivist approach to science, with various prominent postcolonial/decolonial thinkers drawing on post-structural arguments concerning power/knowledge and the problems associated with claims to epistemic authority (Bhambra, 2011a: 653-654). Such critiques have provided important insights into how mainstream approaches to the social sciences result in the silencing of Southern ‘others’, promote a lack of reflexivity with regard to the categories which they employ, neglect the socially-situated nature of knowledge-production, develop parochial forms of knowledge, and result in a systematic ‘forgetfulness’ with regard to colonialism, slavery and racial categorizations.

Importantly, however, postcolonial/decolonial approaches have also developed critiques of approaches which are *not* generally understood as part of the social scientific mainstream, but which are more commonly described as ‘critical’ in nature. In particular, postcolonial/decolonial thinkers have developed important critiques of Marxian and Weberian approaches (both in their classical and their contemporary manifestations). It should be noted, however,

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<sup>113</sup> As Blaney and Inayatullah have shown, however, ‘even texts written in a confident age of history speak with multiple voices. They contain not only dominant themes but also recessive elements that transgress the temporal boundaries explicitly or implicitly set’ (2010: 10). We should not, therefore, overstate the coherence which characterizes even explicitly modernist thought.

that a significant number of the problems which result from the unreflexive adoption of modernist assumptions by mainstream approaches *cannot* be said to appear throughout Marxian and Weberian approaches. As a result of their focus on the origins and spread of modern social forms, for instance, contemporary Marxian/Weberian approaches cannot be accused of the ‘forgetfulness’ about empire which has characterised many mainstream approaches. Both schools of thought have, after all, engaged with this issue at significant length. In addition, these traditions clearly do not succumb to the idealized/sanitized portrayals of modernity which are characteristic of many mainstream approaches, as they have provided both scholarly accounts of its development and powerful critiques of the philosophical positions/social forms which are associated with the PDM (Sayer, 1991). These approaches therefore provide us with much more sophisticated analytical frameworks than the kinds of approaches which have dominated the Northern social sciences for the last few centuries. As a number of postcolonial/decolonial authors have shown, however, this does not mean that a number of important problems do not remain. Indeed, these authors have shown that Marxian and Weberian approaches suffer from a number of key analytical problems, and that many of these problems can be traced back to their intellectual roots in the PDM.

The first of these problems results from the fact that these approaches seem rarely to question colonial-era claims about the radical distinctiveness of the modern and the traditional (Sayer, 1991: 11-12). The use that Weberians make of ideal-typical forms of reasoning is, arguably, a particularly egregious example of this tendency: an example, that is, of the adoption of a methodological orientation which reinforces the idea that the modern and the traditional can be adequately understood as characterized by entirely distinctive structuring principles.<sup>114</sup> Whether these structuring principles are understood at an ideational level (characteristic

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<sup>114</sup> See also Connell (2010: 37-38) on how this presumption is replicated in the work of Anthony Giddens.

beliefs or forms of reasoning) or at a material level (distinctive social relations/modes of production), however, it deserves emphasis that Weberian and Marxian approaches have largely failed to question the binary understanding of the modern and the traditional which resulted from the ‘colonial encounter’. They do not, therefore, provide us with the necessary means for a ‘decolonization’ of social scientific analyses either, as – in typical modernist (or ‘Orientalist’) fashion – they obscure all forms of sameness/continuity/hybridity and recognize only ‘otherness’/discontinuity/difference.

The fact that this is the case has had a number of important effects. In particular, it has often resulted in the idea that ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ social forms developed entirely *separately*. That is to say, these approaches have often assumed that the development of modern ideas and social forms resulted solely from *endogenous* processes, thereby abstracting from the global (particularly colonial) context on which these social forms were in fact dependent (Shilliam, 2011: 4-5; Slater, 2004: 10-11). This is clearly the case, for instance, in a number of Marx’s works<sup>115</sup>, which suffer from the methodological nationalism which is inherent to them. This is the case because his formulations portray the historical development of capitalism as resulting almost entirely from local/regional dynamics and, to provide just one indicative example, often fail to mention that the development of the modern enterprise system was dependent on the racialised forms of surplus extraction which characterised slavery and colonialism.<sup>116</sup> More generally, however, Bhambra (2011b) has shown that both Marxian and Weberian approaches to the social sciences have long been stuck in a dialogue among themselves. A dialogue, that is, which consistently ignores the fact that even local

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<sup>115</sup> Though see Sayer (2001, esp. 15-17 and 69-70) for a discussion of the role of slavery in certain of Marx’s works. Also see Anderson (2010) for a discussion of the eventual/gradual development of Marx’s work when it comes to considering these issues.

<sup>116</sup> As Bhambra writes: ‘the capitalist mode of production is said to rest on a singular relation between capital and labour that is argued to be its intrinsic form. This is the ‘purely economic’ wage contract that, as Anderson puts it, paraphrasing Marx, rests in ‘the equal exchange between free agents which reproduces, hourly and daily, inequality and oppression’. No other relations – that is, forms of unfree labour such as slave labour or bonded labour – are allowed to be integral to the emergence and development of capitalism’ (2011b: 10)

developments have – since the start of the colonial era – been part of ‘connected histories’ (see also Chowdhry, 2007). This has allowed these approaches to ‘forget’ the fact that the modernity/tradition binary is rooted in the ‘colonial encounter’. In addition to this, however, it has also led to the assumption that modernity is distinctively ‘Western’ in nature, while – as Hobson (2004) has shown – these regions developed largely by adopting institutions, technologies and ideas which originated in the significantly more advanced ‘Eastern’ regions of the world (see also Sabaratnam, 2011: 7-8; Halperin, 2006, Hutchings, 2011: 2).

The Marxian/Weberian presumption of separateness is more than simply *historically erroneous*, however. Importantly, it also illustrates that even critically-oriented approaches have been complicit in the PDM’s more destructive analytical tendencies. This is the case because the presumption that modernity developed separately lends credence to the misleading idea that the Global South was simply a passive bystander to social developments, and results in the kind of relocation of historical agency to the Global North which is typical of modernist thought. This is perhaps most clearly the case in Marx’s earlier works, which consistently portray non-European regions of the world as stagnant/backward places (Sabaratnam, 2011: 8), and adopt the idea that it is only by means of colonial interventions that these regions will begin to make progress. Characteristically, therefore, Marx’s writings involve the claim that it is only by means of *external* agency that the Global South can be brought into being as an active historical force (Sayer, 1991: 14-15). Such claims illustrate, quite clearly, his failure to transcend the analytical and moral problems which are inherent to the PDM. Indeed, it illustrates that Marx was complicit in promoting hubristic forms of modernism by adopting a number of common nineteenth-century prejudices.

Importantly, all of these prejudices have an extremely suspect premise in common: they draw on a narrative of global development that is common to many types of modernist thought, and which is profoundly Eurocentric in nature. Concretely, many of Marx's works develop a narrative which is centred entirely on European agency and assumes non-European passivity and/or irrelevance. This has a number of destructive consequences. In particular, it (i) invokes problematic claims to epistemic authority, which silence local voices/histories, (ii) constructs periodizations (*pre-modern*, *pre-capitalist*, etc) which have suspect teleologies built into them, and (iii) presupposes the eventual elimination of global difference in favour of a universal state of being (Chakrabarty, 1992: 3). Though contemporary forms of Marxist thought have tried to overcome some of these problems – particularly the problems which result from the methodological nationalism which is inherent to some of Marx's works – by conceiving of capitalism as a 'world system' (Wallerstein: 2004, 2011), Eurocentrism has remained a common feature among these approaches as well. This is the case because – as Bhabra (2011a) has shown – historical materialist discussions of capitalism have consistently identified 'its central dynamic with processes having a *European* origin' (ibid: 7). Such claims are, however, by no means limited to Marxism. Indeed, it is arguably the idea 'that industrial capitalism is/was something which emerged in western Europe and then diffused outwards, that connects Weberian and Marxist accounts most closely' (ibid: 8).

It should be noted, however, that this is only one of the ways in which Eurocentrism has filtered into the social sciences. An additional manifestation of this phenomenon – regularly commented upon by the postcolonial/decolonial literature (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2002; Pasha, 2006: 67; Bhabra, 2009: 72-74; Chakrabarty, 1992) – is discernible in the proclivity of social scientists towards Eurocentric forms of *comparison*. More specifically, the Northern social sciences have tended to adopt an approach to the analysis of societies in the Global

South which evaluates their properties on the basis of their difference from/similarity to modern ideas/social forms. This kind of comparison – even when it does *not* portray these societies as deviant/accepts them as morally and/or formally equal – reproduces Eurocentric ways of thinking by accepting the archetypal features of the North as a touchstone by which to measure Southern ‘others’. When the comparative method is used in this fashion it therefore allows Europe to supply ‘the metric by which all others must be measured’ (Ayers, 2006:157). This is, of course, the very *definition* of what it means to engage in ‘Europe-centred’ forms of social science, and therefore *necessarily* results in depictions of the Global South which are framed in terms of lack or absence. The consistent resort which is made to such forms of comparison therefore provides us with a further illustration of the failure of the social sciences to transcend the various problems which are inherent to the PDM.

On the whole it should therefore come as no surprise that various postcolonial/decolonial thinkers have sought to develop alternative forms of enquiry by drawing on radical post-structural and postmodern critiques of the PDM. These forms of enquiry, while they are diverse, have had a number of concerns and claims in common. In particular, they have sought to (i) draw attention to the fact that ‘the development of Western scientific disciplines went together with the establishment of modern imperialism’ (Slater, 2004: 223), (ii) highlight ‘the mutually constitutive role played by colonizer and colonized’ (ibid: 20), (iii) reclaim the dignity/legitimacy of Southern ways of life by problematizing/subverting the modernist dismissal of cultural difference, (iv) overcome the social scientific silencing of Southern knowledge-producers (whether academic or non-academic) by drawing attention to the politics of representation, and (v) do justice to the local histories of the South by untangling/dissociating them from the grand narratives which result from modernist forms of ‘stadial’ and/or ‘universal’ history.

There can, in light of the troubling historical record of modern states and thinkers, be little doubt that these kinds of intellectual moves are called for. It should be noted as well, however, that many postcolonial/decolonial approaches have had a tendency to throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater. This is the case because, in their (understandable) eagerness to undo the damage which has been done by the PDM, these approaches have rejected the notion of (social) science as well. As previous chapters have shown, however, this is unnecessary, and results from the fact that these approaches are rooted in the philosophical problem field within which the PDM is located. In the next few sections I therefore intend to show that it is in fact possible to reconstruct a ‘decolonized’ form of social science on the basis of the CR, CMP and CPE frameworks. This form of social science can accommodate the insights and concerns of postcolonial/decolonial approaches, while avoiding the destructive analytical implications which result from adopting its post-structural/post-modern variants. Indeed, this provides the social sciences with a way of (i) drawing on the insights of Weberian and Marxian approaches to the social sciences, while correcting the problems which are inherent to them, and (ii) bridging the main divides between Marxist and post-structural/post-modern varieties of postcolonial/decolonial thought.

Central to these claims is the fact that CR is perhaps best understood as providing us with a more complete critique of both the PDM and its various ‘critical’ antagonists. This critique illustrates that, although both of these broad analytical orientations are flawed in a number of different ways, their *concerns* need not be discarded. As Bhaskar has shown, for instance, positivism ‘sustains embryonically adequate concepts of law (generality)’, while hermeneutic/interpretive approaches sustain ‘embryonically adequate concepts of subjectivity, meaning and culture’ (1998: 135). When these approaches are appropriately developed, therefore, the naturalist/anti-naturalist divide breaks down, only to be replaced by the *critical*

form of naturalism which underpins the CMP approach. The most important aspect of this approach, at least for the purposes of the current chapter, is the fact that (i) it illustrates that explanatory forms of social science are indeed possible, and (ii) it illustrates that hermeneutic/interpretive concerns are compatible with (and a *necessary* element of) this form of social science. As I aim to illustrate throughout the next few sections, however, CR, CMP and CPE positions are not just essential with regard to the defence of social science as such, they are also important if we are to ‘decolonize’ it.

With regard to the CR framework itself there are four main reasons for this. The first of these is the fact that CR-based social science must, of necessity, engage in systematic reflection with regard to the social (including the conceptual/theoretical) determinants of knowledge-production. This is the case because the transitive processes of science are, according to Bhaskar, best understood as ‘the social production of knowledge by means of knowledge’ (2008: 185). This entails that the CR framework provides a valuable resource when it comes to the development of a ‘decolonized’ form of social science, as it is exactly the kind of reflexivity which such a formulation promotes – and the critique of positivist/empiricist epistemology which it entails – that has allowed postcolonial/decolonial approaches to develop many of the insights which it has. Connell’s (2010: 7) claim that both the content and methods of the social sciences must be understood as having important intellectual roots in the ‘colonial encounter’, for instance, can be easily accommodated within CR-based forms of social science. The fact that this kind of momentous historical event would have an important effect on these kinds of issues should, after all, come as no surprise to its proponents. In addition to this, however, the CR framework also makes a second contribution to the decolonization of social science. This contribution results from the fact that CR underlabours for an approach to science which, unlike many modernist approaches, is genuinely *historical*



in orientation. This aligns CR with Marxian and Weberian approaches to historical sociology, and (i) paves the way for CR-based social science to develop/draw on the kind of counter-histories which postcolonial/decolonial approaches have advanced, and (ii) makes it naturally inclined towards historical evaluations of the various hierarchies which inform modernist forms of thought.<sup>117</sup> In particular, it makes CR-based social science inclined towards historical evaluations of the hierarchies which are inherent to the modern/traditional binary, and encourages it to question the idealized/sanitized accounts of Western history which inform many mainstream approaches to the social sciences.

The third reason that the CR framework is potentially significant for the decolonization of social science results from the fact that it provides us with an important tool when it comes to correcting the presumptions of separateness and/or endogenous development which – as we have seen – have adversely affected both mainstream and critical approaches to the social sciences. More concretely, the CR framework allows us to overcome these misleading presumptions as a result of its adoption of a *relational* conception of the social stratum. As Barkawi and Laffey have pointed out, this kind of conception ‘provides inherent defences against Eurocentrism because it begins with the assumption that the social world is composed of relations rather than separate objects, like great powers or ‘the West’ (2006: 349). It therefore supplies us with a straightforward way of coming to terms with the fact that even local events should be understood as being a part of globally ‘connected’ rather than ‘separate’ histories (Bhabra: 2011b, 2009). Indeed, more fully, its relational conception of the social stratum provides the social sciences with a way of coming to terms with the fact

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<sup>117</sup> As Jones has argued, ‘the continuity of the imperial imagination is secured in part by disciplining manoeuvres that relegate attention to historical and empirical detail to secondary or “specialist” forms of inquiry, maintaining the heights of theoretical abstraction’ as the proper forms of enquiry (2006: 223). It is, however, ‘[o]nly by examining “other” and much longer histories-by refusing the taboos against history, context, and empirical detail, by insisting on negotiation, on two-way translation’ that ‘the constant reaffirmation of the idealized European as universal be overturned’ (ibid).

that (i) the histories and characteristics of the ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ areas of the world are more adequately understood in terms of co-constitution than in terms of (self-contained) Weberian ideal types/nationalist analytical frameworks, (ii) the development of the Global *North* was dependent on racialised forms of colonial plunder and/or surplus extraction in the Global *South*, and (iii) many supposedly ‘Western’ ideas and/or social forms are in fact ‘Eastern’ in origin (Hobson, 2004). The relational conception of the social stratum which it adopts therefore makes CR-based science much more likely to be historically accurate than non-relational approaches. Indeed, the CR emphasis on relationality and the ‘connectedness’ of historical developments also serves the important purpose of re-inscribing the Global South with the agency which Northern philosophers and scientists have so often denied it.

Finally, however, the process of analytical decolonization is aided by the CR theorization of open/closed systems. As previous chapters have shown, the preponderance of open systems in the social world prevents the social sciences from making reliable predictions. Although it may be able to retroactively *explain* the occurrence of events in open systems, this does not mean that these events could also have also been *predicted*. This ‘asymmetry of explanation and prediction’ (Bhaskar, 2008: 127) is, for a number of reasons, key to the decolonization of social science as well. Most important among these is the fact that the open-systemic nature of the social world undermines modernist presumptions about universal/stadial forms of history, its in-built teleologies, and the grand narratives which have come to be associated with the PDM. This is the case because, from a CR perspective, the direction of historical developments is *necessarily* open, and its ‘end-point’ *perpetually* unresolved. Whether ‘traditional’ societies will in fact become ‘modern’ societies therefore remains an open question. Indeed, it is an open question to which the inhabitants of the *Global South* will, in all likelihood, provide a *variety* of answers. This is the case because (i) developments in the

Global South are, at least to a significant extent, dependent on the agential powers of the people who inhabit these regions of the world, and (ii) there is no legitimate philosophical reason to assume that world history is indeed characterized by a single developmental trajectory which will result in the elimination of all cultural differences (Mannathukkaren, 2010: 309). CR insights into the open-systemic nature of social reality are therefore of significant importance if we are to in fact decolonize the social sciences.

There are, however, a number of features to the CMP approach which was developed in the fourth chapters which are helpful in this regard as well. This approach is, for instance, of key importance if we aim to overcome the silencing of Southern knowledge-producers by modernist forms of social science. This is the case, in short, because the CMP approach makes this kind of silencing essentially impossible by starting from the accounts which are provided by the actors that populate a particular situation. This approach starts, therefore, *by documenting the very accounts which modernist forms of social science have systematically disregarded and dismissed*. This – along with the aforementioned theorization of open systems, and the active (‘fieldwork’) nature of CR-based social science – makes forms of enquiry which employ the CMP approach much more likely to do justice to the local voices which postcolonial/decolonial approaches have sought to reclaim. This is not to say, however, that there is not an important (though unavoidable) tension inherent to scientific research as well. This is the case because CR-based social science would also (at least potentially) seek to transcend these accounts, resulting in the complex questions about epistemic authority which were discussed in the fourth chapter. This does not, however, take away from the fact that a Gadamerian ‘fusion of horizons’ or Geertzian forms of social immersion are key features of the CMP approach. Features, that is, which deal an important blow to modernist silencing tactics, and underlabours for a postcolonial/decolonial approach to social scientific enquiry.

This is not, however, the only way in which the CMP approach contributes to this project. Indeed, it makes at least two further contributions. First among these is the fact that, as a result of its incorporation of the social immersions/the ‘fusion of horizons’ into the methodological procedures which characterize social science, this approach is able to avoid the Eurocentric forms of comparison which have plagued modernist forms of social science. This is the case because the use of this technique entails that, as a necessary feature of the research process, social scientists must grasp the events they are studying *in terms of the vocabulary which local actors employ*. CR-based social science is therefore much less likely to resort to using the archetypal features of ‘modern’ societies as an analytical point of departure, or a touchstone by which to measure (the successes/failures of) Southern ‘others’. Rather, the CMP approach is likely to provide us with accounts that do justice to *local* ways of thinking. This arguably makes it a key resource when it comes to the development of what Blaney and Inayatullah have termed an ‘ethnological politics of comparison’ (2002: 127).<sup>118</sup> Indeed, more generally, it makes this approach a key resource when it comes to the more general aim of developing a ‘decolonized’ forms of social science as well.

The same applies, however, to a second feature of the CMP approach as well. This feature contributes to the development of a decolonized form of social science by helping to break down the colonial-era split between the social sciences/sociology and anthropology. That is to say, it contributes to the project of analytical decolonization by undermining the rationale for the disciplinary separation between the study of ‘modern’ societies and the study of ‘traditional’ societies which resulted from the ‘colonial encounter’. This is the case because of (i) the CMP insistence on the active (‘fieldwork’) nature of social scientific research, and (ii)

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<sup>118</sup> This approach, they show, intends to provide us with ‘a politics of comparison that treats difference neither as the soon-to-be-eradicated opposite of European civilization nor as the soon-to-be-assimilated prior European self’ (2010: 126-127). Such a politics of comparison requires, quite clearly, the CR distinction between open and closed systems for its intellectual sustainability.

its incorporation of the hermeneutic ‘fusion of horizons’ into social scientific enquiry. These features undermine the distinctiveness of anthropology, as they pave the way for social science to engage in the kinds of activities which are often considered typical of this discipline. The CMP approach is, for instance, perfectly compatible with the kind of ethnographic research which is often associated with anthropology. There is therefore no reason that CMP-based social science should not engage in the long-term types of immersion in (foreign) social contexts which are often considered typical of anthropological research. Indeed, if social immersions/a ‘fusion of horizons’ is the necessary element of social science which Bhaskar has claimed it is, and if social science requires the engagement with situational particularities/contingencies which CR claims it does, these types of immersion are arguably key tools in our methodological armoury.

Both CR and the CMP approach are therefore of key importance when it comes to the development of a ‘decolonized’ form of social science. The same is also true, however, of the CPE approach as well. This is the case for three main reasons. The first of these concerns the *intersectional* approach to social science which this approach adopts. This is essential for the ‘decolonization’ of modernist social science as it is arguably only this kind of approach which is capable of bringing to an end the blindness towards ‘race’ which has often characterized both mainstream and critical approaches to the social sciences. That is to say, it is only an approach which, like the CPE approach, transcends the categories and concerns of (orthodox forms of) *political economy* – and provides the philosophical resources that are required in order to develop a more heterodox approach to the social sciences – that can do analytical justice to the phenomenon of ‘race’, whether historically or contemporarily. This transcendence of orthodox forms of political economy is of key importance as well, however, when it comes to the second contribution which the CPE approach makes. This contribution

derives from its claim that the split between rationalist and affective models of personhood is based on misleading assumptions about their nature. Rather than being separate, reason and affect are, as we have seen, understood as mutually implicated or entwined. This is helpful when it comes to ‘decolonizing’ the social sciences because it precludes us from claiming – in typical modernist fashion – that ‘we’ embody ‘rationality/reason’ while ‘they’ embody ‘irrationality/unreason’. From a CPE perspective both affect and rationality are, of course, *necessarily* within both ‘us’ and ‘them’. Or, to put this in postcolonial/decolonial terms, ‘savage’ and ‘civilized’ qualities are necessarily inherent to every single one of us.<sup>119</sup>

Perhaps the most important way in which the CPE approach contributes to the decolonization of the social sciences, however, result from the fact that this approach – as a result of the ‘principle of impurity’ which it adopts – systematically qualifies the modern/traditional binary at the level of social theory. That is to say, it qualifies the binaries of embedded vs. disembedded economies, market vs. non-market societies, moral communitarianism vs. amoral individualism, the public/political realm vs. the private/apolitical realm, etc. which are characteristic of both mainstream and critical understandings of the differences between modern and traditional societies. It thereby provides us with a way of coming to terms with the differences between these forms of social organization, while avoiding the *binary* understandings which many postcolonial/decolonial approaches have objected to. This avoids the ‘Orientalist’ trap of recognizing ‘otherness’/discontinuity/difference while disregarding sameness/continuity/hybridity, and hence allows us to overcome a number of the analytical limitations which are inherent to modernist forms of social science. Indeed, by dissociating the notions of culture, politics, and economics from the particular meaning which they have been given in modernist forms of social theory the CPE approach contributes to creating a

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<sup>119</sup> The CPE approach therefore takes into consideration the ‘pervasiveness of mixed modes of social being’ and avoids ‘purifying the individual in liberalism of its ‘traditional’ features’ (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2002: 127).

form of social science which avoids portrayals of ‘others’ in terms of a lack or absence. From the perspective of this approach, after all, even ‘stateless’ societies have forms of politics, while ‘non-market/embedded’ economies are necessarily infused with various economic concerns as well. It should be noted, however, that the CPE ‘principle of impurity’ requires a form of radicalization if social science is to successfully complete the project of analytical decolonization. This is the case because the modern/tradition binary is not just too ‘pure’ – especially in historical circumstances which are characterized by ever greater degrees of global interaction and social hybridization (Appiah, 1995: 119) – but also invokes a false sense of uniformity *within* the two categories. That is to say, not only are ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ societies never adequately understood as complete opposites, but their categorization as either ‘one’ or ‘the other’ masks a reality which is in fact internally differentiated to a significant degree. The idea that our descriptions of these societies as either ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ is in any way *sufficient* to do justice to their characteristics must therefore be discarded if analytical decolonization is to be fully achieved. Instead, the social sciences should always aim to study ‘traditional’ societies in their own terms, by drawing on the CMP and CPE approaches which have been developed throughout this project.

Whether we are engaged with social theoretical matters (CPE), methodological matters (CMP), or philosophical matters (CR), however, it should be clear that the *concerns* (if not the *philosophical presuppositions*) of the postcolonial/decolonial literature are compatible with the approaches which this project has adopted/developed. Indeed, the CR, CMP, and CPE approaches arguably provide us with a more adequate answer to the ‘colonial question’ than has been provided by previous forms of postcolonial/decolonial thought. As will be shown in the following section, however, these approaches are of key importance if we are to decolonize the CS literature as well.

### 7.3 Decolonizing Conflict Studies

In making the case for this argument this section will focus on two of the issues which were discussed in the third chapter in particular. These are, first, the relationship between modernity/development and violent conflict, and second, the impact and nature of globalization. It will argue, with regard to the first of these issues, that the (neo-) modernization perspectives which have dominated the post-Cold War period share the problematic features which previous sections have shown to be inherent to mainstream social science. Their influence has therefore had an adverse effect on our understanding of the relationship between modernity/development and violent conflict and, if the study of intra-state conflict is to progress, it is therefore of key importance that they are transcended. It should be noted, however, that this section will argue that the same conclusion applies to Marxian and Weberian *critics* of the neo-modernization consensus as well. This is the case because these approaches have inherited a number of the problematic features which are inherent to the traditions on which they draw. In line with the argument that was made in the first two parts of the chapter this section will therefore argue in favour of making a postcolonial/decolonial turn in our understanding of the modernity/development/violence nexus. The approach which results from this, though it is broadly in line with Marxian and Weberian claims about the violent history of modernity and development, aims to be more attentive to the question of cultural difference than these traditions have been.

Before discussing the advantages of adopting this alternative, however, it is necessary to establish - from the perspective which previous sections have developed - the relative de/merits of the neo-modernization literature and its Marxian/Weberian critics. As will be remembered, it is the neo-modernization literature which has assumed/argued that there exists



an essentially unambiguous relationship between modernity/development and the reduction of intra-state conflict. Whether understood primarily in terms of ‘politics’ (the promotion of democracy, human rights, etc), ‘economics’ (securing private property rights, promoting free trade/markets, etc), or a whole host of additional variables, neo-modernization perspectives have claimed that ‘[w]ar retards development’ and ‘development retards war’ (Collier, 2003: 53). This frames modernity as the ‘medicine’ which is required in order to cure the ‘disease’ that is violent conflict, and is commonly accompanied by the assumption that contemporary wars are manifestations of unenlightened, pathological or primitive attitudes/social forms.

These conclusions have been disputed, however, by Marxian and Weberian forms of historical sociology. These approaches have argued that neo-modernization perspectives (i) depend on the ‘fantasy of a nice and smooth form of capitalist development’ (Cramer, 2006: 95; Goodhand, 2006), when transitions to capitalist modernity are in fact often conflictual, (ii) disregard the important role of war in both state-formation and the promotion of economic growth (Münkler, 2004; Dannreuther, 2007; Tilly, 1985), (iii) neglect the involvement of modern states, industries, ideas, and social forms throughout contemporary conflicts in the Global South (Münkler, 2004; Cramer, 2006), (iv) disregard the fact that peace may be stagnant rather than developmental (Putzel and Di John, 2012), and (v) falsely assume that ‘traditional’ attitudes are to blame for the occurrence of violent conflict when the economically purposive rationality which is often considered characteristic of modern societies has played an important role in various Global Southern conflicts (Münkler, 2004). From the perspective of these critical approaches it is therefore misleading to portray violent conflict and modernity/development as binary opposites.

How, though, might the approach which was developed in the second section of this chapter contribute to this debate? Arguably, it is able to do this in a number of different ways. The first of these results from the CMP approach, as this approach allows us to resolve one of the most important sources of the disagreement. This is the case because this approach provides us with reasons to be extremely sceptical about the merits of (especially large-N) econometric studies, and paves the way for a more historically-informed/contextually-sensitive approach to the social sciences. This is of key importance, as it undermines a number of the most important studies which have claimed to find that modernization/development is inherently pacifying (see for instance Collier, 2003; Hegre, 2003). The same is *not* true, however, of the critiques which Marxian and Weberian approaches have developed. These approaches have, instead, developed their conclusions on the basis of the kind of historical research which - from the perspective of the CMP approach - is much more likely to provide us with genuine insight into the relationship between modernity/development and violent conflict.

If this first contribution allows us to resolve one of the most important sources of the aforementioned disagreement, however, the second contribution of the 'decolonized' approach to social science begins to take us beyond both neo-modernization approaches and their Weberian/Marxian critics. This is the case because its focus on the importance of the 'colonial encounter' allows us to situate neo-modernization approaches within the long-term trajectory of Northern thought concerned with the nature of the 'modern' and the 'traditional'. When looked at from this kind of perspective it becomes apparent that neo-modernist approaches to CS have uncritically replicated a number of dubious colonial-era moral hierarchies. This has, arguably, resulted in a valorisation of the 'modern' (as inherently peaceful/progressive/medicinal) and a dismissal of the 'traditional' (as inherently violent/backward/diseased). Historical sociological approaches to CS have already shown, of course,

that such framings are at odds with the historical record of development in the Global North. The approach which was developed in the previous section, however, allows us to add to this conclusion the idea that neo-modernist framings are part of an imperial imaginary which is rooted in the ‘colonial encounter’. This imperial imaginary has, importantly, only been partially overcome by Weberian and Marxian critics of the post-Cold War neo-modernization consensus. This is the case because these historical sociological approaches have inherited a number of features from the critical traditions on which they draw, and have therefore replicated the problematic modernist presumptions which have been inherent to them.

Of particular importance in this regard is the fact that historical sociological approaches to CS have failed to seriously engage with the question/role of cultural difference in their discussions of the modernity/development/violence nexus. That is to say, these approaches have failed to appreciate the fact that, in addition to providing a more realistic/less sanitized understanding of processes of modernization/development, it is also of key importance that we begin to problematize both the *narrative* and the *idea* of modernization/development itself. From the perspective of the ‘decolonized’ form of social science which was developed in the previous section there are a number of ways in which we might do this. The first of these results from the aforementioned theorization of the social world as an open system which has no pre-determined developmental trajectory or end-point. This illustrates, as we have seen, that the question of whether ‘modernization/development’ will in fact take place in a universal manner is open, and that the answer to this question is – at least to a significant extent – dependent on the inhabitants of the Global South. There is, therefore, no legitimate reason to presume (i) that cultural difference will eventually be eliminated in favour of a universalized modernity, or (ii) that we can do justice to events in the Global South by subsuming them in the overarching narratives which are characteristic of both the neo-modernization literature

and the PDM more generally. This is, however, exactly what a number of historical sociological approaches to CS have done. Perhaps the clearest example of this tendency can be found in the work of Cramer (2006, 2009), who has sought to explain the occurrence of violent conflict by relating it to transitions to capitalist modernity. Though his work provides us with an important deconstruction of the idealized/sanitized notions of development which inform neo-modernization perspectives, it also replicates the modernist tendency to dissolve/incorporate local histories into (supposedly) global/universal ones. In particular, his framework draws on the Marxian notion that development/modernization involves (often violent) transitions from one mode of production to another, while extending this historical understanding to argue that it is such a transition which many parts of the Global South are currently experiencing. This framing has a number of deleterious effects on our understanding of the modernity/development/violence nexus.

It disregards, for instance, the openness of global historical development, by assuming that its end-point has already been specified. That is to say, Cramer's *transitional* framework does not allow for the fact that historical development is not – or at least is not necessarily – adequately described as an *unfolding* of modern social forms from the 'centre' to the 'periphery'. It would be more accurate to say, therefore, that the open systems of the world are characterized by various forms of (sometimes violent) *contention* about the desirability of various types of social arrangements (Bhambra, 2009: 27). This kind of formulation has the advantage of leaving open the 'end point' and, in so doing (i) provides greater space for the idea that the actions of people in the Global South will determine the direction/extent of historical change, and (ii) reclaims local understandings of violent conflict from the 'grand narratives' which are characteristic of modernist forms of social science.

In addition to this, however, it also opens up a number of new possibilities for the ways in which we attempt to tackle violent conflict, as it paves the way for an important ‘postcolonial’ turn in the CS theorization of the modernity/development/violence nexus. This is the case because it opens up the possibility of attempting to resolve violent conflict by drawing on the ‘traditional’ resources of the society under study, while avoiding the automatic resort to modernization/development. If historical development is indeed ‘open’ in the manner specified, and the history of modernization/development is in fact extremely violent, there is – after all – no legitimate reason left to simply foreclose upon the idea that violent conflict may be addressed by alternative means. This becomes especially apparent if, in addition to highlighting the misleading nature of claims about the pacifying nature of modernization/development, we problematize the (usually implicit) presumption that ‘tradition’ is inherently violence-inducing as well. It may well be the case, of course, that this characterization is just as unreliable as the consensus understanding of modernity/development as inherently peace-promoting. Authors working in CS may find, therefore, that – as opposed to what is taken for granted by modernist approaches – ‘traditional’ ideas or social forms in fact provide us with various resources for conflict reduction/resolution/prevention.

This is, importantly, a conclusion which is entirely at odds with the post-Cold War consensus of turning ‘them’ into ‘us’ in order to promote peace, and serves to highlight the fact that the approach which previous sections have developed involves a problematization of universalism (or ‘assimilationism’) as well. The fact that this is the case allows us to pose important questions about the ways in which such drives have informed both the aforementioned neo-modernization approaches and their historical sociological critics. Importantly, however, it also allows us to put into perspective important elements of Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ thesis (2007a, 2007b). This is the case because Kaldor frames her discussion in

terms of the presence or absence of cosmopolitan values, which she associates predominantly with the Global North. Indeed, she (i) blames the ‘absence’ of cosmopolitan values for the occurrence of violence, and (ii) premises her entire conflict-resolution/reduction/prevention strategy upon the promotion and/or protection of such values.<sup>120</sup> This kind of framing clearly replicates both the sanitized notions of modernization/development and the universalism which are inherent to neo-modernization approaches. Kaldor’s intellectual strategy is, therefore, extremely problematic, and – like the aforementioned neo-modernization and historical sociological approaches to CS – is deeply rooted in the imperial imaginary which resulted from the ‘colonial encounter’.

The same applies, however, to the literature on state-failure, statelessness and quasi-states as well (see especially Jackson, 1993; Rotberg, 2004). This literature has clearly framed the occurrence of violent conflict in the Global South in terms of a ‘lack’ or ‘absence’ of modern state forms. This inevitably renders ‘the Third World as a cracked or incomplete image of the First’ (Sabaratnam, 2011: 7), and assumes that its particular solutions (state-building, ‘good governance’, etc) are universally applicable. This obscures both the inherent openness of historical development and the fact that certain types of societies ‘exhibit an anticentralization moral philosophy’ which is entirely at odds with such purported solutions (Ayers, 2006: 160). Like the neo-modernization, historical sociological, and ‘new wars’ approaches this literature is, therefore, guilty of depoliticizing the promotion of modern social arrangements, and thereby prevents us from considering alternative solutions to conflict. A ‘decolonized’ approach to CS would, instead, have to take such alternatives seriously. That is to say, such an approach would have to take seriously the idea that ‘social order does not always and necessarily depend on the existence of states or statesmen’ (ibid).

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<sup>120</sup> Indeed, in one of her lesser known articles, Kaldor claims that contemporary wars are ‘instrumental and rational but not reasonable (in the sense of being in accordance with universal values)’ (2010: 271)

More generally, however, a decolonized approach to CS would have to come to terms with the fact that it is entirely possible for societies to be peaceful but non-developmental/impoverished, violent but developed/developing, ‘traditional’/‘undemocratic’/‘illiberal’ but peaceful, etc. This has a number of important consequences for the ways in which we study peace and conflict. Perhaps the most important among these, however, is the fact that it prevents us from staging the relationship between the ‘modern’ (and elite) Global North and the ‘traditional’ (and relatively non-elite) Global South ‘as a kind of ‘morality play’ of purity and pollution’ in which ‘the cultural conceptions of Western liberals are constructed as normal or natural in relation to marginalized peoples and regions’ (Blaney and Inayatullah, 2002: 127). If the hierarchies which underpin many CS approaches are historically misleading, after all, the resort to such moralism is lacking any intellectual justification.

Indeed, more strongly, resorting to such moralism is arguably hazardous at a (narrowly defined) political level, as there is a potential link between *representations* of the Global South as ‘polluted’ (underdeveloped/primitive) and *interventions* in these parts of the world by ‘pure’ (developed/civilized) Northern actors. As for instance Sabaratnam has argued, mainstream forms of social science ‘continually reproduce the hierarchical self-imagery that underpinned European colonialism’, and thereby ‘produce a disposition that favours intervention and control between the full subjects and lesser objects of world politics’ (2011: 6). If the relationship between modernity/development and violence is not what the post-Cold War consensus has made it out to be, however, it is important for CS authors to question interventions which proceed on the basis of such assumptions.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> It should be noted, however, that there are clear dangers to assuming that ‘Orientalist’ representations of foreign conflicts are always functional with regard to paving the way for Western interventions as well. As Porter has shown, for instance, depictions of the Yugoslav conflict as a phenomenon which is rooted in irrational and long-standing ethnic hatreds *prevented* interventions from occurring. As he writes: ‘General Colin Powell, his influence and prestige heightened by the 1991 Gulf war, staked his opposition to intervention on the idea that

It should be noted, however, that such claims should not be read as promoting a simple *inversion* of the post-Cold War consensus. There is little reason to believe, after all, that a demonization of modernity/development/universalism and a simplistic celebration of tradition/particularism would provide us with a superior basis on which to conduct CS enquiries. This is the case for a number of reasons. First among these is the fact that many ‘primitive’ peoples in fact lived extremely violent lives. As for instance Porter has shown, ‘[f]atality rates in the Amazon or Papua New Guinea were four to six times higher than those experienced by modern nations’ (2009: 31). Like the assumption that modernization is inherently peace-promoting, then, the notion that tradition is unambiguously/inherently conflict-reducing is historically misleading (see Keeley, 1997; Guilaine and Zammit, 2004).

In addition to being historically misleading, however, it should also be noted that such notions *are as much a part of the aforementioned imperial imaginary as their binary opposites*. This is the case because they are rooted in colonial-era claims which simply *invert* the arguments of modernist authors. Whereas the Hobbesian tradition has long portrayed primitive societies as ‘primordially violent’ (ibid), for instance, the tradition which is rooted in Rousseau’s conception of the ‘noble savage’ has consistently sought to invert such claims. From this perspective human beings appear as naturally peaceable, and it is only the ‘[m]aterialist corruption, wealth and territorial lust’ which results from modernization that predisposes them to violence (ibid; Aschcroft [et al], 1998: 209). Although this puts the Hobbesian/modernist and the Rousseauian/traditionalist perspectives on opposite sides of the analytical spectrum, it should be noted that they can also be understood as two sides of the same colonial-era coin. If we are to develop a CS approach which is genuinely postcolonial/decolonial in nature it is therefore essential that we avoid simply choosing one of these sides over the other.

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war sprang from ‘deep ethnic and religious roots that go back a thousand years.’ Orientalism [therefore] served not to spur Western interference, but to block it’ (2009: 53).



Instead, it is necessary to develop an approach which refuses both the comforting mythologies of the post-Cold War consensus and its romantic/utopian inversions. This involves, of course, the adoption of a more realistic understanding of both modernization/development and the nature(s) of traditional societies. An understanding, that is, which refuses to employ simplistic hierarchies that lack historical backing. More importantly, however, the development of a postcolonial/decolonial approach involves *a problematization/deconstruction of the imperial imaginary itself*. That is to say, it involves a problematization/deconstruction of the colonial-era categories which classify global populations into either modern or traditional brackets, and proceed to provide policy prescriptions on that basis. There are a number of ways in which the approach to social science which the second section has developed allows us to do this.

The first of these results from the ‘principle of impurity’ which it adopts. This feature allows us to qualify the modern/traditional binary at the level of social theory, and hence provides us with a way of coming to terms with the real differences between modern and traditional forms without resorting to binary understandings. Although this ‘principle’ applies to the pre-colonial period, it should be noted that it is *particularly* important for the period which commenced *after* the ‘colonial encounter’ had taken place. This is the case because it is this ‘encounter’ which initiated the ‘connectedness’ that would henceforth characterize global developments, and which is largely responsible for the existence of numerous *hybrid* social formations throughout the Global South. These formations are characterized by various features which have their historical roots in the colonial experience, and reflect the impact which ‘modern’ ideas have had on formerly ‘traditional’ societies. Though this impact is in all likelihood increasing as a result of the ‘globalizing’ forces which states in the Global North have unleashed, it has arguably been significant for some time. Many anti-colonial revolutions occurred, after all, in the name of the right to national self-determination, and the

‘modernist’ ideas of progress and development have been widespread in various parts of the Global South for many decades (Shilliam, 2011: 16). In addition to the fact that the imperial imaginary is always/necessarily too ‘pure’ it should therefore be noted that its contemporary relevance is particularly limited.

Perhaps the most important way in which the approach to social science which was developed in the previous section contributes to problematizing/deconstructing the imperial imaginary, however, results from its rejection of ‘traditional societies’ as a homogeneous category. Our descriptions of societies as either ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ is, as we have seen, never *sufficient* to do justice to their actual characteristics, because the ‘groups’ about which they speak are internally differentiated in numerous ways (ibid). Instead of building vast theoretical edifices on the basis of these colonial-era categorizations it is therefore important that the social sciences attempt to grasp societies (whether in the Global North or in the Global South) in terms of the concrete features which they actually possess. This would be the case, importantly, even if societies in the North and South were *not* in fact hybrid to the extent that they are, as *generic* examples of ‘traditional’ societies have never existed/could not possibly exist. The fact that this is the case has important consequences for the way in which CS should approach the modernity/development/violence nexus, as it undermines the idea that it is possible to specify the relationship between these variables at an *abstract* level. Such matters are, instead, dependent on the particular makeup of the society in question, and must therefore be assessed at a concrete level. This would involve, in particular, in-depth knowledge of the issues which caused a conflict to occur and/or continue. This is necessary because it is only a conflict which has resulted from (historically/geographically specific) grievances about economic stagnation, for instance, that can be addressed by means of more effective developmental policies. This relationship between economic modernization and its

pacifying effects cannot, however, be assumed to hold at an abstract level (as a positivist ‘covering law’). This applies even more clearly, however, to the conflict-resolving/reducing/preventing potential of ‘tradition’, as it is only in concrete settings that this notion takes on any meaning. As long as it is simply used as the ‘other’ of modernity - *that which it is not* - it remains almost entirely contentless.

This focus on concrete explorations has a number of distinct analytical advantages. Perhaps the most important among these is the fact that it breaks down the split between universalism/cosmopolitanism and particularism as *generic* conflict-resolution/reduction frameworks. That is to say, it leaves open the question of whether the cause of peace is better served by attempting to universalize a particular set of social arrangements (whether ‘modern’ or otherwise) around the globe, or by drawing on locally available resources which are not in line with such homogenizing drives. This problematizes the universalizing tendencies which are inherent to neo-modernization perspectives, certain forms of historical sociology, Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ approach, and the state-building literature. In addition to this, however, it also pre-emptly any potential attempts at simply inverting these universalizing drives by turning towards particularism/traditionalism as inherently superior alternatives. Rather, this approach illustrates the necessity of developing analyses/policies which are context sensitive, and which seek to address the situation at hand in ways that are as unencumbered by rigid policy guidelines as possible. This strategy is, importantly, in line with the theorization of conflict which was proposed in the fourth chapter as well. That is to say, it is in line with the CMP theorization of conflict as being *varied* in nature, and as having *different* types of causes in *different* contexts. If the causes of intra-state conflict differ across time and space, after all, it seems likely that the solutions to conflict will differ in this manner as well.

It should be noted, however, that it is not just the relationship between modernity/development and violent conflict which the CR/CMP/CPE approach to analytical decolonization is capable of shedding light on. As the final few sections of this chapter will show, these approaches can contribute to the CS debate on *globalization* as well. This is the case because the literature which discusses this issue has, almost universally, suffered from a number of analytical weaknesses. These result, importantly, from the fact that this debate has taken place within the confines of modernist forms of social science. If CS is to overcome the aforementioned problems it is necessary, therefore, to make a postcolonial/decolonial turn in our understanding of the relationship between globalization and violent conflict.

There are a number of different ways in which the aforementioned approach allows us to do this. The first of these concerns the fact that it rejects the idea of separated histories in favour of a conceptualization of Northern/Southern histories as ‘connected’. This allows us to put into context the fact that ‘the intensification of global interconnectedness’ which Kaldor (2007a: 4) and others have described as typical of post-Cold War processes of globalization did not appear out of nowhere. Rather, the ‘connected present’ appeared out of a much longer history of connection, beginning with the ‘colonial encounter’ (Barkawi and Laffey, 2002: 115-116). Globalization should not, therefore, be understood as ‘an escape from this historical relationship, but a reordering – and possibly intensification – of it’ (Shilliam, 2011: 4).<sup>122</sup> The fact that this is the case is not, however, something which has been adequately understood within CS, and this ‘forgetting’ of colonialism has had a number of adverse effects on the

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<sup>122</sup> As Bhambra has argued, the idea of connected histories aims to rethink ‘our current circumstances and the trajectories of change associated with them from multiple perspectives, rather than a dominant European one. This may, in part, be inaugurated by a heightened sense of globalization and its impact in the West, but, for the non-West, globalization has been a fact that they have endured for centuries. When the negative impact occurred primarily in the other direction [...] this was not understood in terms of globalization; in many cases it was not understood at all within the dominant conceptions of modernity and macro-sociological thinking [...]. If the interconnections of globalization are only just coming into the perspective of the West, then, that is not because they are novel’ (2009:153)

manner in which the discussion on this topic has been framed. In particular, it has resulted in a framing of the ‘globalization question’ which neglects the enormous differences in power (and/or wealth) which emerged out of centuries of racial discrimination, imperialism and colonial plunder (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006: 351; Saurin, 2006: 23-24). These differences in power/wealth are, however, essential for an accurate understanding of globalization, as its operation ‘cannot be separated from the structures of power perpetuated by European imperialism’ (Aschcroft [et al], 1998: 113).

What, however, does it mean for CS to argue that this is the case? The first implication of adopting this perspective is the allocation of agential powers which it results in. That is to say, its adoption alerts us to the fact that the phenomenon of globalization has been driven primarily by powerful states in the Global North (see for instance Gill: 1991). The fact that this is the case has, however, been almost entirely absent from CS discussions about the relationship between globalization and violence. Kaldor’s consistent use of the term ‘globalization’ itself, for instance, obscures the fact that the processes which are at the heart of her explanations can – with only a moderate amount of exaggeration – be understood in terms of ‘globalizers’ (or the *makers* of policy) and ‘globalized’ (or the *takers* of policy). This kind of formulation – while it should by no means be read as suggesting a complete lack of agency on the part of the ‘globalized’ – has the advantage of inserting questions of relative power into the CS debate and, importantly, does greater justice to the enormous inequalities which characterize international policy-making. In addition to this, however, it also has a number of important implications for the manner in which the relationship between globalization and intra-state conflict is understood. This is the case because a focus on power differentials highlights the fact that the responsibility for the negative effects of globalization on the occurrence/continuation of violent conflict rests very largely on the shoulders of states in the

Global North. It is these states, after all, which have driven these processes forward, and it is therefore only by challenging the policies which are pursued by these actors that we can attempt to address the various problems that result. This perspective is in contrast with the perspective which the de-agentialized/de-politicized portrayals of globalization throughout the existing CS literature results in. Such accounts transform social forces into naturally-occurring phenomena, which human and social agents seem neither to have initiated nor to have any control over. This has the pernicious effect of promoting resignation rather than resistance, and hence pre-empts any potential attempts at addressing those causes of violent conflict which are in fact rooted in (Global North-centred) globalizing processes.

This is, however, only one of the ways in which the adoption of a postcolonial/decolonial understanding of globalization contributes to the aforementioned CS debate. This is the case because an understanding of this phenomenon which is attentive to the more enduring consequences of colonialism also draws our attention to the fact that – whatever negative effects our connected *present* may be having – such negativity has been a feature of the relationship between the Global North and the Global South throughout the entirety of their connected histories. The dark side of globalization which a number of CS authors have described can, therefore, be understood as simply a contemporary instantiation of the dark side which has long characterized North/South connectedness more generally (Parry, 2004: 4). The fact that this is the case is not, however, something which has been adequately understood throughout the CS literature. This literature has, almost without exception, suffered from the historical amnesia concerning empire which is typical of modernist social science. Such ‘forgetfulness’ is extremely destructive at an analytical level, as there can be little doubt that having been colonized is ‘a fate with lasting, indeed grotesquely unfair results, especially after national independence had been achieved’ (Said, 1989: 207).

## 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has situated large swathes of the CS literature within the problematic neo-modernization impulse which has characterized especially the immediate post-Cold War period. This literature has made use of a number of colonial-era binaries and hierarchies which, as we have seen, are historically misleading. While the post-Cold War period has spawned a number of critical approaches as well, this chapter has shown that these approaches have failed to escape the intellectual legacy of the ‘colonial encounter’. In addition to this, however, it has also shown that, if we are to in fact escape this legacy, it is not necessary (or even advisable) to resort to ‘defeatist’ forms of postmodernism. Rather, what is required is a turn towards the CR, CMP, and CPE approaches which this project has developed. This is the case because these approaches allow us to develop a decolonized approach to both the social sciences themselves, and to CS. This approach is more attentive to the question of difference than Marxian and Weberian approaches have been, but maintains (and expands) the critical stance towards modernism which is a characteristic feature of these approaches.

The need to adopt such a critical stance has been an explicit theme throughout the entirety of this project, and has resulted in an approach to CS which is – in a number of different ways – more genuinely postmodern than postmodernism. This is the case, of course, because the CR framework which grounds it allows us to step out of the problem field which results from the PDM, while proponents of postmodernism have largely remained within it. This has allowed the project to ground an approach to CS which is radically new. Indeed, it has allowed it to develop an approach to CS which is arguably more coherent and sophisticated than previous approaches have been. This means, importantly, that it is much more suited to what, at the start of this project, was termed *the end of ‘the end of history’*.

## CONCLUSION

This project has sought – as its primary aim – to develop a new (and more coherent/sophisticated) approach to CS which is rooted in the tenets of CR. In doing so it has attempted to reconstruct this discipline from the philosophical ground up. That is to say, it has sought to address the various methodological and social theoretical debates which have divided the CS literature by *first* resolving the philosophical problems which underpin them. This ‘philosophical underlabouring’ took place in the first part of the project, which contained two chapters. The first of these chapters provided a ‘sketch’ of the philosophical problem field which CR intervenes in, and discussed the various debates and problems which it aims to resolve. The second chapter then sought to ‘situate’ CR within these debates and problems, and showed that it is only the framework which it provides that (i) allows us to step out of this philosophical problem field, and (ii) is capable of completing the various ‘incomplete critiques’ (Bhaskar, 2009: 3) which other critical approaches have developed. In addition to this, however, the chapter also sought to illustrate (i) that CR is not what it is often presumed or understood to be, and (ii) that a number of its critics have misunderstood the positions which it has adopted and/or developed.

Once the philosophical ground had been cleared in this way, however, the project continued by discussing the various ways in which the CR framework could be made use of in order to rethink the CS discipline. This second part of the project – termed ‘interventions’ – contained three chapters. The first of these chapters provided an in-depth review of the post-Cold War CS literature, and was divided into two main sections. The first of these discussed the *methodological* approaches which authors working in CS have adopted, while the second section reviewed the *social theoretical* divides which have characterized the CS literature.



When this review was completed, however, the project moved on to the first of its reconstructive interventions. This intervention took place in the fourth chapter, which (i) engaged in a critical discussion of the various methodological approaches which authors CS have adopted, and (ii) provided the CS literature with a new methodological approach which was rooted in CR. This approach was termed a Critical Methodological Pluralist (CMP) approach, and sought to develop a resolution to the various methodological debates which were discussed in the third chapter. In particular, this approach sought to (i) undermine the complexity sciences approach, by arguing that it is not necessary to resort to functionalism/organicism in order to avoid mechanistic/linear models of cause and effect, and (ii) undermine the positivist literature, by taking issue with both ‘regularity determinism’ and the ‘uniformity fallacy’. At a more general level, however, the chapter sought to develop an alternative to the common divides between empiricist and reflexive approaches, nomothetic and idiographic approaches, causal and non-causal/constitutive approaches, objectivist and subjectivist approaches, explanatory and interpretive approaches, and quantitative and qualitative approaches. In doing so it argued in favour of a medium-range methodological orientation which is neither conceited nor defeatist, adopts modesty, historical understanding, reflexivity, interdisciplinarity and pluralism as guiding principles of its orientation to scientific research, and suggest a range of plausible resolutions to the problems, dualisms and oppositions which have characterized other critical approaches.

The CMP and CR approaches were then made use of, in the fifth chapter, to ground the second reconstructive intervention which the project engaged in. This intervention took aim, in particular, at the social theoretical divides between materialist/idealist and rationalist/affective approaches, and developed a Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach to the human and social sciences. This approach was then applied to the CS literature, and it was

argued that the field should (i) transcend the divides between cultural, political, and economic approaches, (ii) end the continual back-and-forth between rationalist and affective approaches, (iii) resist all forms of reductionism and instrumentalism, and (iv) adopt a much more heterodox and interdisciplinary approach than it has done in the past. This would allow CS to move from the *thin* accounts of power, identity, personhood, subject-formation, etc. which characterize most modernist forms of science, to the much *thicker* accounts which are required in order to do justice to the complexity, fluidity and intersecting nature of the human and social worlds. As the chapter showed, however, an adoption of the CPE approach requires us to commit to the CR and CMP approaches as well, as it is only the fact that these two approaches step out of the aforementioned problem field which allows us to (i) draw on both both historical materialism and post-structuralism/constructivism, and (ii) draw on both political economy and cultural studies. Indeed, it is only this feature of the CR and CMP approaches which allows the CPE approach to (i) coherently combine all of the traditional fields of the human and social sciences, (ii) overcome the analytical problems which result from liberal/modernist approaches to CS, and (iii) overcome the analytical problems which result from the complexity sciences approach to CS.

Once these philosophical (CR), methodological (CMP), and social theoretical (CPE) foundations had been laid, however, the project moved on to the last of its three parts. This final part – termed ‘incorporations’ – incorporated the insights of two largely neglected literatures into CS reflections about intra-state conflict. In the sixth chapter, for instance, the project argued that the gender and war literature should be brought in from the intellectual cold. Indeed, this chapter claimed that a distinction between ‘CS’ and ‘gendered CS’ is untenable, and that the gender-studies literature provides us with a number of important intellectual resources. These resources, it argued, should be incorporated into our reflections

about conflict, and the chapter argued that the CR, CMP, and CPE approaches provide us with important ways of doing so. Indeed, it argued that these approaches provide us with a more coherent and sophisticated analytical framework than has been provided by the ‘post-positivist’ approaches which many gender-studies authors have adopted. The same conclusion applies, however, to the postcolonial/decolonial literature which was discussed in the final chapter of the project as well. This literature, though it has developed a number of important insights, has largely remained within the aforementioned philosophical problem field. As the chapter showed, however, this does not mean that its concerns and claims can simply be dismissed. Rather, these should be incorporated into CS, as this would allow studies of intra-state conflict to overcome a number of misleading analytical presuppositions which are rooted in the ‘colonial encounter’. In particular, it would allow such studies to overcome the negative effects of the neo-modernization impulse which has characterized most of the post-Cold War CS literature. This impulse has affected both explicitly modernist approaches and a range of more critical approaches, and – as the chapter showed – should be abandoned. This is the case, concretely, because doing so allows us to develop an approach to CS which transcends various ‘conceited’ assumptions about the supposed superiority of modern ways of thinking and organizing social life. Indeed, more broadly, it allows us to develop an approach to CS which is much more suited for what this project has termed *the end of ‘the end of history’*.

If all of this has indeed been shown to be true, however, this project has succeeded in achieving its secondary aim as well. That is to say, this would mean that - in addition to developing a new approach to CS by drawing on CR - the project has also succeeded in making creative use of the philosophical framework which it provides. It should be noted, however, that achieving the aims which were set out at the start of this project does not entail that the work of ‘rethinking’ CS has been completed. Rather, additional avenues of

exploration might be opened up in future work. These include, in particular, questions about the nature of *peace*. While this project has shown that intra-state conflict should be understood as plural in nature, for instance, future work could explore the relevance of this argument for the notion of peace as well. Such work would, in fact, be able to build on some of the arguments which this project has already made, as (i) the final chapter has divorced the question of peace from notions of universalism/cosmopolitanism, and (ii) the fifth chapter has relativized the meanings of terms like culture, politics, and economics. In addition to simply pluralizing peace in this way, however, the aforementioned kinds of explorations could also draw on this project's focus on the importance of analysing and/or critiquing binaries. Concretely, such explorations could benefit from the idea that the peace/war opposition which is employed by most authors tends to overstate the difference between the two categories. Authors in CS have, in fact, made this argument in the past (see for instance Keen, 2000; Kalyvas [et al], 2008). The work of these authors has been held back, however, by the fact that they have either (i) adopted the complexity sciences approach, or (ii) failed to theorize their claims in a more systematic manner. A CR-based approach could attempt to remedy this situation. Indeed, it could do what this project has attempted to do with regard to the entire CS discipline: rebuild the notion of peace from the philosophical ground up.

Such efforts should, however, form part of a much broader *research programme* which is rooted in the philosophical, methodological, and social theoretical frameworks that this project has developed. This kind of research programme, because of the pluralistic and interdisciplinary nature of the CR, CMP and CPE frameworks, has the potential to be quite heterodox in nature. Indeed, while the current author certainly has a range of personal preferences with regard to the kinds of research which are most likely to be fruitful, it deserves emphasis that the analytical frameworks which this project has developed only

provide us with limited reasons to legislate against the interests (whether methodological or substantive) of others. As this project has shown the CR, CMP, and CPE frameworks are compatible with a wide range of different types of research, extending from discourse analysis to political economy, from explorations of income inequality to explorations of gender-dynamics, from psychological studies to social scientific studies, and from ‘active’ (fieldwork) forms of research to ‘passive’ (theoretical) forms of research. As opposed to the narrow-mindedness and dogmatism which some of its critics have claimed it represents, therefore, this project has attempted to illustrate that the CR framework in fact provides us with a very inclusive (and non-dualistic) basis for engaging in scientific forms of research. This was, of course, Bhaskar’s point as well, when he referred to the CR framework as involving an ‘embrace’ of the valuable insights which various other approaches have previously developed (Bhaskar and Hartwig, 2010: 77-78), and remains – at least in the current intellectual context – a very necessary corrective.

The fact that this is the case cannot, however, be blamed entirely on the critics of CR. Rather, a not insignificant amount of the blame for the intolerant reputation which CR has developed over the years rests squarely on the shoulders of its proponents. This is the case, in short, because – with a few notable exceptions (Frauley and Pearce, 2007) – its proponents have failed to fully exploit the heterodox potential which CR possesses. This applies especially at the level of social theory, where many of its advocates have simply opted for Marxian/historical materialist approaches, or drawn on relatively orthodox traditions within political economy. As the fifth chapter of this project attempted to show, however, this amounts to a waste of the social theoretical potential which is in fact possessed by the CR framework. It is only when we systematize the CR embrace at a social theoretical level, after all, that we can begin to heal some of the rifts which have divided the social scientific enterprise in the past.

This does not mean, however, that – from the perspective of the analytical frameworks which this project has developed – no pronouncements can be made with regard to forms of research that are genuinely unlikely to be analytically fruitful. This conclusion clearly applies, for instance, to the kinds of large-N positivist studies which have dominated the CS discipline throughout the post-Cold War period, as such studies – despite their reputation for ‘hard’ science – suffer from a host of philosophical and methodological problems. These range from the a-historicism and ‘regularity determinism’ (Hartwig, 2007: 122) which result from adopting their favoured methods of enquiry, to the ‘uniformity fallacy’ which is consistently committed by them. Such problems would prevent large-N positivist studies from playing any role of significance within a CR-based research programme. Instead, such a research programme would seek to reinforce those (relatively few) heterodox, reflexive, historically-oriented, etc. tendencies which have already been apparent throughout the post-Cold War CS literature. Indeed, it would provide authors who have already sought to develop this kind of work with both an explicit philosophical, methodological, and social theoretical rationale, and a clear strategy of defence against their ‘hard’ science critics.

If the aforementioned research programme is to actually get off the ground, however, it is not enough to simply argue in favour of it at a philosophical and/or theoretical level. This is the case, of course, because the success of such a research programme is entirely dependent on various *social* conditions being (put) in place as well. Without adequate funding for field-work, or language-training, or longer-term immersions in concrete (conflict) settings, for instance, many of the characteristics of good research – as described especially in the fourth chapter of this project – will simply not be attainable. Indeed, more generally, all of the philosophical, methodological and social theoretical divides which were discussed (and

addressed) throughout this project will in all likelihood remain intractable *without accompanying transformations in the scholarly (cultural) political economy which governs our activities as academics*. The transformation of such social conditions is, however, often considered to be beyond the scope of the more strictly ‘scholarly’ activities which academics are supposed to engage in. If it is indeed true, however, that ‘the most useful equipment [for engaging in research] is a stout pair of boots’ (Connell, 2010: 206) – as the fourth chapter of this project argued – it follows from this that such a ‘passive’ understanding of scientific practice is in fact misleading. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the development of a better CS discipline – like all forms of (progressive) social change – is in fact entirely dependent upon our engagement in effective forms of collective action.

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