

Towards a Dialectic for World Politics

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Abstract:

Dialectics remains an under-utilised methodology in contemporary IR theory and represents a significant limitation to the study of world politics which this paper intends to redress. This article has two primary goals. Firstly, it aims to build upon the small but robust debate concerning the validity of dialectics in IR that has been championed previously by Alker and Biersteker, and Heine and Teschke respectively. Secondly, the paper emphasises two themes as being central in formulating a dialectic approach to world politics; (i) its open-endedness, and (ii): its basis in intersubjectivity. In regards to the first point, the dialectic is emphasised as being open-ended, contingent and altogether reliant on human action, which rejects any understanding of 'inevitable' dialectical progress or teleological endpoint. The second point claims that a dialectical account of world politics must be inherently based in real social relations that places intersubjectivity as a key factor in social change. On the one hand, this promises greater human freedom through the dialectical recognition theory of Hegel and Honneth, but on the other, indicates the potential for the irrational toleration of contradiction and antagonism as an accepted feature of social life. Ultimately, the paper argues that the skilled dialectician should emphasise human agency and intersubjectivity within a dialectical approach to world politics.

“Wherever there is movement, wherever there is life, wherever anything is carried into effect in the actual world, there Dialectic is at work.”

- Hegel²

Introduction

While we may now disagree with the metaphysical supposition of Hegel's idealist dialectic as a force running through all things, nevertheless dialectics can, if appropriately modified, offer fruitful grounds for research in world politics. This paper only suggests a basic groundwork of such a dialectical approach to the study of world politics, a full account of which would otherwise necessitate voluminous treatment. Some may call this a dialectical methodology, which I am not opposed to, so long as by a methodology one does *not* mean a rigid set of principles that are to be forcefully applied to any question. We must be mindful, as stated by Horkheimer, to guard against making a fetish of dialectics as if it were something *outside* and *beyond* human action.³ The danger is that making a fetish of dialectics could lead to aporia - alienating the process of change away

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² G.W.F. Hegel, *Logic: Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (abridged), (W. Wallace Trans.), (London, N.D), Chapter VI, § 81, note 1. At <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20Logic%20ToC.htm>

³ Dialectics can only a loose set of principles and would be opposed to the strictures of a full-blown, totalising methodology. Horkheimer quoted in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996), 54, 79.

from ourselves and our capacities, towards metaphysical constructs outside of our control, or, to grandiose assumptions of an inevitable human perfection. History would become an external, uncontrollable force imposed from above rather than humanly-willed or socially-constructed. The ends produced by humankind would not be comprehended as being shaped by them and would ultimately break away from consciousness to become reified.⁴ My aim is to tentatively outline an *open-ended, social-relational* dialectical method which will build on the work of Heine and Teschke,⁵ and Alker and Biersteker,⁶ to reinvigorate dialectics in the so-called intersubjective turn in IR. It does not purport to provide a concrete application or case study of the method, something which may be taken up in later works.⁷ While the article intends to provide a brief epistemological outline of the dialectical method, it does affirm the indeterminate and ongoing nature of social change in world politics and emphasises the intersubjectivity of the dialectic of world politics, that is, its embeddedness in the manifold network of global social relations. My central claim is that a dialectical methodology of world politics is, and must be, thoroughly intersubjectivist as it is ultimately through human interaction that contradiction and social antagonism are generated, wherein lies the dialectical catalyst of social transformation. The dialectics of world politics, in this view, is *inherently* social - it is the encounter of intersubjectivities, the engagement with the Other. As Hegel's recognition theory in the 'Master/Slave dialectic' passage of the *Phenomenology* and his earlier work in the *Realphilosophie* reveal, human-beings cannot be free *alone*.⁸ It is therefore through highlighting the interrelatedness of the dialectical method *and* recognition theory that can ensure that both ideas remain in the service of emancipatory purposes as subversive and potentially progressive social forces.⁹

This argument is heavily indebted to the work of Heine and Teschke who also described their dialectical approach as being *open-ended*,¹⁰ and also the work of Alker and Biersteker who conceptualized their dialectic as *synthetic*, that is, as a heuristic that

⁴ The danger of such a view however is aporia; that dialectics may dissolve into a theory of social collapse, or of alienated processes of change, rather than of conscious social development and change. See Ernst Bloch, "Dialectics and Hope", (trans. M Ritter), *New German Critique*, (No 9, Autumn, 1976), 4.

⁵ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, "Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (Vol. 25, No. 2 1996).

⁶ Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, "The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire (1984)", *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 28, No. 2, June 1984).

⁷ Such an application was desired by Krippendorff who argued that a dialectical account, as provided by Heine and Teschke, would warrant that they "write their own study of international relations", of the "international system, of international politics, or a significant section of it". This, unfortunately, cannot be given here. Also, I will anticipate Krippendorff's objection and agree that nothing in this paper will be "earth-shattering" - the dialectic is readily understandable, the problem however is that it is so rarely used in IR theory. See Ekkehart Krippendorff, "Be Your Own Prince", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 26, No. 2, 1997), 445-447.

⁸ For an excellent discussion of this point see Robert B. Pippin, "Hegel, Freedom, the Will. The Philosophy of Right, § 1-33", in *Hegel: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, (L. Siep Ed.), (Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1997). See also Robert B. Pippin, "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel's Compatibilism", *European Journal of Philosophy* (Vol. 7, No. 2, 1999), 195.

⁹ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, "On Dialectic and International Relations: A Reply to Our Critics", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 26, No. 2, 1997), 456.

¹⁰ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, "Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations", *Op. Cit.*, 399.

looks deeply within the realm of being for contradiction.¹¹ However, there are two distinguishing features of my approach. Firstly, my conception of *open-endedness* is intended to emphasise the intersubjectivist nature, or embeddedness in social-relations, of the dialectical processes in world politics. This is to convey the idea that not only is there a vast array of variables, nexus points and objects of analysis that must be adequately accounted for in a dialectical approach to IR, but also that these factors must be viewed as being intersubjectively constructed social phenomena that are wholly interrelated. This is to guard against any empiricist tendency to view social relations as determinatively causal (as within a strict positivist framework) and to ensure that my account is distinguished from the more orthodox dialectical materialist approaches that either suggest an inevitable progression toward freedom or which are too structurationist and deterministic in their outlook.¹² While I would hope to share in the optimism of the latter, the dialectic of the social world is far more contingent – and potentially regressive – than assumed by some dialectical materialists.¹³ In this sense, my formulation also differs from the approach of Alker and Biersteker who, ultimately, looked for contradiction in the essence of *things*¹⁴ whereas this article gestures towards a methodology that takes as central the analysis of *contradiction* in social relations and in the intersubjectively formed modes of recognition. It is because of the social-relational nature of dialectics within world politics that I characterise its movement, its transformation of being, as *open-ended*, not only in the sense that change will inevitably be ongoing (as a necessary corollary of continued human interactions which will generate new, more complex contradictions that in turn will necessitate sublation) but because the dialectical outcome is altogether contingent upon *real human actions* that will push or pull social transformation this way or that. The dialectic of world politics is here considered as open-ended precisely because its outcome is totally reliant on real human agents and the contingencies that affect them – the infinite array of social choices, pathways, structures, institutions and mediations on their actions which can change, or fail to change, reality. As stated by Marx, it is people, *real, living* people “that change circumstances”¹⁵ – though of course, as so famously stated in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, not under conditions of their own choosing.¹⁶ Other, postmodernist terms could also be used to describe this conceptualization of dialectics that would stress the complexities, ambiguities and contingencies in human life. Therefore, as I place more emphasis on the embeddedness of dialectics within the matrix of existing social relations, I will add the prefix *social-relational* or *intersubjectivist*, to denote my dialectical approach from the

¹¹ Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, Op. Cit, 243.

¹² Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas are exemplars of such mechanistic or structuralist materialism. See Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Allen Lane, 1968) and Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, (London, NLB, 1978).

¹³ Lukács is a key example of such optimism in the proletarian revolution. See Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, (R. Livingston trans.), (London, Merlin Press, 1971).

¹⁴ Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, Op. Cit, 243.

¹⁵ Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works*, Fifth Impression, (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), Vol. II, 403.

¹⁶ As famously stated by Marx; “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.” Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”, (1852), 15 cited in R.C. Tucker (Ed), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, (New York, Norton, 1963), 436-525.

open-endedness of Teschke and Heine which, in their typology, referred only to a 'concrete totality'.¹⁷

While dialectics has moved through five conceptual stages,¹⁸ the most common emphasis placed on the concept today is as a method (epistemological dialectics), a set of laws or principles governing a sector or whole of reality (ontological dialectics), and as the movement of history (relational dialectics).¹⁹ Yet, while most dialecticians stress one of the several meaning cluster's of dialectics that Schneider has identified,²⁰ most accounts unfortunately omit the social-relational aspect of dialectics and also usually slip into characterising it as some teleological and metaphysical construct that can '*fit*' change to desired ends. Consequently, in this paper dialectics will be taken as an expansive concept that refers to ways in which we can understand the world (epistemology), as an assertion of the interconnected, contradictory, and dynamic nature of the world (ontology), and as an idea for the explanation of social change (relational-dialectics).

The conception of the dialectic here is avowedly Left Hegelian.²¹ For the author, dialectical thought is characterized by its emphasis on negativity in social antagonism/contradiction *and* its emphasis on the interconnectedness of the social whole to its parts. The former illustrates that dialectics points towards perpetual negation of that which exists, and the latter highlights the rubric of the dialectical method, how thinking in abstract the dialectician descends to the most simple determinations and parts of phenomena, and from there begins to ascend to the concretised, or whole, phenomena.²² The dialogical opposite of the dialectical method is therefore the isolated study of objects in their fixity and abstraction from their interconnectedness to the whole, a common erroneous feature of empirical and positivist approaches. It was Hegel who first

¹⁷ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, "Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations", Op. Cit, 411.

¹⁸ Within the critical, Hegelian/Marxian tradition, dialectics has developed through five main stages; (i) the dialectics of nature (Heraclitus); (ii) dialectics as a form of dialogue/persuasive argumentation (Plato/Socrates); (iii); transcendental dialectics (Kant); (iv) idealist dialectics (Hegel); (v) historical and dialectical materialism (Marx), and; (vi) negative dialectics (Adorno). Thalheimer argued there had been only four stages of development. See A. Thalheimer, *Introduction to Dialectical Materialism – The Marxist World View*, (Covici Friede, 1927), Chapter 10. At www.marxists.org/archive/thalheimer/works/diamet/index.htm

¹⁹ For the Right Hegelians, dialectics was mystified and brought all religious and political evolution to a close; for the Left Hegelians, the dialectic pointed to the fact of perpetual negation. See "Dialectics" in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, (T. Bottomore, L. Harris, V.G. Kiernan, R. Miliband Eds.), (Oxford, Blackwell, 1985), 122.

²⁰ Schneider has found seven "meaning-clusters" of dialectics, these include; (1) A discrepancy between aim or intention and outcome; (2) Goal shifts and displacements (heterogeny of ends or functional autonomy);(3) The idea that effective adaptations to a situation stand in the way of future progress, "success brings failure"; (4) Development through conflict; (5) Contradiction, opposition, or paradox; (6) Contradictory emotions; (7) Conflict dissolved in a coalescence of opposites. See L. Schneider, "Dialectics in Sociology", *American Sociological Review*, (Vol. 36, August 1971), 667-678.

²¹ Frederick Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works*, (Moscow, Foreign languages Publishing House, 1955), Vol. II, 359, 365.

²² Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, "Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations", Op. Cit, 400, 412.

contrasted the dialectical method from such approaches that viewed the world in distinct notions or fixity, employed deductive procedures or which stressed the independence of principles from others (i.e. mathematics).²³ This view was retained by Horkheimer who argued that there was no facet of reality that was complete, nor any social ‘facts’ as positivists assumed. Instead, there existed a constant interplay of “particular and universal, ‘moment’ and totality”. Similarly, the dialectical viewpoint was also shown by Horkheimer to overcome the Machiavellian political imaginary, that is still so prevalent in IR theory, that separated man from nature and then hypostatized the distinction.²⁴ Instead, dialectics reveals that not only does civilization change nature, humankind’s conception of what nature is also changes. The danger for IR theory is that without dialectics theory would devolve to a positivist and allegedly neutral attitude to existing social relations, ultimately leading to naturalist accounts of social change.²⁵ In juxtaposition to such static forms of empirical analysis, dialectics is a method of reasoning which aims to understand things in all their movement, change and interconnection. To borrow Sciabarra’s expression, it is through such a dialectical method that the analysis of world politics can be seen with a new insight, “not as an ineffable organism, but as a complex nexus of interrelated institutions and processes, of volitionally conscious and acting individuals and their dynamic relations”.²⁶ Ultimately, the method is intended to illuminate immanent tendencies in the phenomena of social relations, which further investigation can subsequently determine how they came to be, how they may be developing, and how they may be channeled to emancipatory ends. As stated by Adorno, a true dialectics embodies the “the attempt to see the new in the old instead of simply the old in the new”.²⁷

It is the notion of *negativity* that is the constitutive “motor” in the Hegelian/Marxian dialectical movement.²⁸ As stated by Marcuse, things “never are what they can and ought to be”²⁹ and it is this negativity, this antagonism in social relations, that can result in human action to bring forth change. It is principally because of this reason, that dialectical approaches have also tended to value emancipation and have favoured structural change to challenge the legitimacy of the existing world order. In this way they have contrasted the dominant and imposed structure of world politics with the emergent alternatives that may supersede them.³⁰ Dialectics, so conceived in this article,

²³ J.N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1958), 60. In the *Logic*, Hegel shows how the basic illusion of empiricism actually use metaphysical categories such as matter, force and the infinite but uses such categories in an entirely uncritical and unconscious manner. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, (W.H. Johnston, L.G. Struthers Trans.), (New York, Macmillan, 1929), Vol. I, § 38.

²⁴ Horkheimer cited in Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996), 54, 257.

²⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, (London, Unwin Brothers, 1973), 398f.

²⁶ C.M. Sciabarra, “Reply to Roderick Long: Dialectical Libertarianism: All benefits, no hazards”, *The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies*, (Vol. 3, No. 2, Spring 2002), 383.

²⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, “Husserl and the Problem of Idealism”, *Journal of Philosophy*, (Vol. XXVII, No.1, Jan, 1940), 7.

²⁸ In Hegel’s dialectics, it is the negativity in everything (i.e. between its potential and what it is, its contradictory existence to itself) that is the cause of development and which compels sublation. G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Op. Cit., Vol. I, 66.

²⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, Op. Cit., 66.

³⁰ Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, Op. Cit., 248-249.

is both an empirical-analytic device that centers on contradiction or social antagonism as the causal explanation for social change, and a hermeneutical method that emphasises the intersubjectivity and shared meaning of such contradictions as being of central importance in social movements *for* change. What is the goal here is to add a layer of intersubjectivity through recognition theory in the dialectical approach to world politics, so as to provide a more comprehensive understanding of social transformation generated through human interaction and the need for mutual recognition.

Dialectics and IR Theory

The relationship of IR to dialectics has been, at best, ambivalent. The field has largely unnoticed the dialectical element in Hegel's (and Honneth's) recognition theory,³¹ and, on the rare occasions that it has looked at dialectics, has usually focused its attention on a structuralist dialectics as associated with Althusser. For many in the Anglo-American IR tradition, the distorted account of dialectics provided so ignominiously by Popper has continued to hold sway and which has led to dialectics being widely discredited, even if on untenable grounds.³² While there was the fanciful application of an idiosyncratic Hegelian dialectic in Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis,³³ there has been little substantive engagement with the concept outside of the debates in *Millennium*.³⁴ This is despite the promise of dialectics to help understand social change and transformation - a key weakness that has plagued IR scholarship as a whole. With the rapid - and largely unpredicted - demise of the Soviet Union, most theorists recognized that the discipline had clearly failed to grasp the dimension of large-scale social change - despite Fukuyama's insistence that we would no longer need to.³⁵ However, some scholars such as Robert Cox, Richard Ashley and Andrew Linklater have used dialectics in their methodological approach. Unfortunately however, even these astute writers have failed to explicate the content of their dialectical approach.³⁶ Yet despite IR's overall reticence to utilise the dialectic as a viable method for the analysis of transformation in world politics, many other disciplines have been employing dialectics with significant results. Dialectics has been used in psychology/counseling and in theories of

³¹ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (A.V. Miller Trans.), (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977), § 178-196 and Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, (J. Anderson Trans.), (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1995). Only a few IR pieces have discussed this important development. See Hans-Martin Jaeger, "Hegel's Reluctant Realism and the Transnationalisation of Civil Society", *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 28, No. 3, 2002) and T.H. Brooks, "Hegel's theory of international politics: a reply to Jaeger", *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 30, No. 1, 2004).

³² See Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies, Volumes 1 and 2* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

³³ See Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", *The National Interest*, (Summer 1989): 3-18.

³⁴ There were also two books published by Alker that made dialectic central to IR theory but which did not receive the attention they deserved. See Hayward Alker, (Ed.), *Dialectical Logics for the Political Sciences* (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1982) and Hayward Alker, *Rediscoveries and Reformulations: Humanistic Methodologies for International Studies*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁵ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the last Man*, (New York, Free Press, 1992).

³⁶ For example see Robert W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*, (New York, Columbia Press, 1987), Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism" *International Organization*, (Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984), 225-286, and Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations*, (London, Macmillan, 1990).

communication in ways that are similar to the intersubjectivist account presented here.³⁷ It has also seen an increased use in mathematics, information and computer sciences, and the law.³⁸ Others have looked to catastrophe theory, chaos theory and complex emergent dynamics as ways to provide for a mathematical modeling of the dialectical transition of quantitative to qualitative change.³⁹ Quantum theory suggests another fruitful area for the potential application of dialectical principles.⁴⁰ So too in biology, where it has become possible, according to Thom, to develop a dialectical mathematical model of morphogenesis as the transformation from quantity to quality in the development of organs within organisms.⁴¹ One significant area of development through a dialectical methodology has been within political economy and its developments through “systematic dialectics”⁴² and the “dialectical critical realism” of Bhaskar.⁴³ This wide array of developments following dialectical methods of inquiry underlies the point that dialectics can be a useful explicative tool in a range of fields. Moreover, the myriad ways in which dialectics has been employed illustrates that it is not a rigid method to be applied mechanistically as if there existed *one* dialectical equation that could be metaphysically applied to all questions. It is important to refuse, as did Horkheimer, to make a “fetish of dialectics”. Horkheimer did not view dialectics as a methodological construct to be imposed like a scientific model, as it did not – and could not – pretend to have discovered any “ontological first principles”. Instead, dialectical analysis must

³⁷ For examples in psychology and counseling see T. Carere-Comes, “Beyond psychotherapy: Dialectical therapy”, *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, (Vol. 9, 1999), 365-396 and Tullio Carere-Comes, “Bodily Holding in the Dialogic-Dialectical Approach”, *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, (Vol. 17, No. 1 2007), 93-110. For example in use for communication in relationships, see Baxter, B. Montgomery, Chapter 11 “Relational Dialectics”, page 138ff, at www.afirstlook.com/manual6/ed6man11.pdf.

³⁸ For example, Kreidik has explored the mathematical expression of dialectics. See L.G. Kreidik, “Mathematical expression of the main categories of dialectical philosophy and logic”, (Trans. T.S. Kortneva, G.P. Shpenkov), *Journal of Theoretical Dialectics-Physics-Mathematics*, (Issue B-01, 2001), at www.dialectical-physics.org/b01en.htm. Sabelli has explored non-linear dynamics as a dialectic of logic. See H. Sabelli, “Non-linear dynamics as a dialectic of logic”, *Proc. International Systems Society*, (Chicago, 1995), 101-112. For example of computational dialectics see G. Vreeswijk, “Eight Dialectical Benchmarks Discussed by Two Artificial Localist Disputors”, *Synthese*, (Vol. 127, 2001), 221-253. See also the “Computational Dialectics Group”, at Utrecht University, www.cs.uu.nl/groups/IS/cd/cd.html. For example of dialectics and the law see H. Prakken, “From Logic to Dialectics in Legal Argument”, (Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Law, Washington D.C., ACM Press, 1995), 185-174.

³⁹ See J.Barkley Rosser Jr, “Aspects of dialectics and non-linear dynamics”, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, (Vol. 24, 2000), 311-324.

⁴⁰ In this field, Georgescu-Roegen has argued that the probabilistic nature of reality evidences its ‘fuzzily dialectical’ character. For him, there is a deeper contradiction between human consciousness and physical reality at the quantum level, which, according to the basic view of quantum theory – at least in the social world – would hinge on ones perspective and the level of the observer. N. Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy of Law and the Economic Process*, (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1971), 52-59.

⁴¹ For Thom catastrophe theory “favours a dialectical, Heraclitean view of the universe, of a world which is the continual theatre of the battle of between ‘logoi’, between archetypes”. See R. Thom, “Catastrophe theory: its present state and future perspectives, Dynamical Systems-Warwick 1974”, *Lecture Notes in Mathematics*, No 468, (Berlin, Springer-Verlag, 1975), 382 and R. Thom, *Structural Stability and Morphogenesis: A General Outline of a Theory of Models*, (Reading, W.A. Benjamin, 1975).

⁴² See T. Smith, “Marx’s Capital and Hegelian Dialectical Logic”, in *Marx’s Method in ‘Capital’: A Re-Examination*, (F. Mosley Ed.), (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1993), and T. Smith, “Value theory and dialectics”, *Science and Society*, (Vol. 62, No. 3, 1998).

⁴³ See Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, (London, Verso, 1993).

remain “willing to operate in a perpetual state of suspended judgment”⁴⁴ and cannot be reduced to one operationalisable method.⁴⁵ Put quite simply, there is no forced, preconceived, universal dialectical schema. Of course, the principles of movement, change, contradiction, and interconnectedness are features of the dialectical method but they are not foisted on the subject matter of investigation *a priori*. Dialectics should therefore be seen as possessing, at best, a minimalist ontology.⁴⁶

Yet, despite the paucity of IR’s engagement with this subject area, there have been three principle developments in contemporary IR theory relating to dialectics; the work of Alker and Biersteker, Heine and Teschke, and recently by Stephen C. Roach (which I have criticised elsewhere and will not repeat here).⁴⁷ The first major work was by Alker and Biersteker’s which focused on some epistemological themes of dialectics in the *discipline* of IR theory but did not aim to either articulate the principles of a dialectical method, or to offer a dialectical account of world politics itself. Their approach was much more concerned with problematising the discipline of IR, how it is taught, its dominant approaches, and illustrating the dearth of dialectical accounts in IR literature rather than providing the groundwork for a dialectical method of IR as is the purpose here.⁴⁸ One problem of their approach was their triadic interdisciplinary account between radical, behavioural, and traditional approaches to IR which is far too neat to convey the complexities and differences between the theories of IR and I recall Hegel’s condemnation of the dialectical triad as a “lifeless schema” that is not suitable (or appropriate) for the study of social relations which are, at all times, complex and multi-faceted.⁴⁹ Alker and Biersteker argued for “genuine cross-paradigmatic fertilization”, that is, for an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of world politics that integrates dialectical analysis. While I share their concern, my approach here is to attempt to lay the methodological groundwork from which Alker and Biersteker’s hoped for “alternative competing perspective on world affairs” may yet develop.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Horkheimer quoted in Martin Jay, *Op. Cit.*, 54, 79.

⁴⁵ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, *Op. Cit.*, 419.

⁴⁶ While of course, a dialectical account can be derided for failing to take an adequate of certain phenomena, or because it may overly emphasises other phenomena, such questions necessarily plague all research methods and render all approaches vulnerable to charges of failing to discern appropriate objects for analysis. However, such questions relate to the *relevancy* and *selectivity* of the analysis rather than the viability of the dialectical method itself.

⁴⁷ See Steven C. Roach, “Critical International Theory and Meta-Dialectics”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 35, No. 2, 2007), 321. See Shannon Brincat, “The Problems of a Meta-Dialectic Approach to IR Theory”, (Paper to be presented at the upcoming Australian Political Studies Association conference, 2008).

⁴⁸ Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, *Op. Cit.*, 243.

⁴⁹ See Gustav E. Mueller, “The Hegel Legend of ‘Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis’”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, (Vol. 19, No. 3, June 1958), 411-414. While Hegel refers to the “thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Mind*, he actually calls it a “lifeless schema” as “boring as the repetition of any bit of sleight-of-hand. See .W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (abridged) (W. Wallace Trans.), ‘Preface’. At <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/Hegel%20-%20Philosophy%20of%20Mind.htm>

⁵⁰ I agree with Alker and Biersteker and Honneth who hold that an interdisciplinary approach is fundamentally important and that a complex and quickly changing reality cannot be investigated within a single theory, even if its interdisciplinary. See Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, *Op. Cit.*, 255, 267, 271

Over a decade later Heine and Teschke took up the mantle of dialectics and argued for its viability in IR theory. Their argument centered on formulating what they called a “dialectic of concrete totality” which possessed four “dialectical dimensions”; the social or concrete totality, context of justification, historicity and praxis.⁵¹ Like Alker and Biersteker, they argued for inter-paradigm communication in IR and for a ‘second-order’, reflexive, discourse that involved both empirical and immanent modes of critique. For them, these twin methodological points were promised by dialectics.⁵² Moreover, for them, it was only reflexively dynamic approaches to understanding global processes that could constitute a basis for knowledge and they argued that dialectic was the most appropriate mode of understanding social development and differentiation in this context.⁵³ They justified this claim on three “irrefragable premises” of dialectics - its comprehension of reality as contradiction, its concern with praxis as multiple sites of human action, and its notion of reason as the unfolding of human praxis with no fixed terminus.⁵⁴ For Heine and Teschke, while subjects are confronted and constrained by their objectified externalizations (structures) it is through the dynamic ontology of dialectics - the assumption of humankind as “*becoming*” - that reveals that humanity’s reproduction and forms of “engagement” are nevertheless “infinite”.⁵⁵ The importance of their approach lies in the acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of human *relations* as central in the dialectical process of change and it is this notion of humankind’s ‘becoming’ through forms of engagement that is here referred to as intersubjectivity. The approach makes intersubjectivity central so that the subject of analysis is neither an isolated individual, or a sum-total of individuals, but rather “a definite individual in his real relation to other individual and groups...”⁵⁶ In this way, Heine and Teschke’s thesis largely prefigures what is being argued here for the radical extension of accounts of intersubjectivity in the dialectical method of world politics.⁵⁷ However, the limitation of their work is that instead of pursuing the discussion of intersubjectivity in the dialectic of world politics, they instead proffer a more orthodox account akin to dialectical materialism, suggesting the centrality of labour and praxis, rather than the importance of mutual recognition.⁵⁸ However, it is not what Heine and

and Axel Honneth, “The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today”, in *Disrespect*, (J. Ganahl Trans.), (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2008), 63.

⁵¹ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, Op. Cit, 404.

⁵² Ibid., 404-405

⁵³ Ibid., 411 citing Hayo Krombach, “International Relations as an Academic Discipline”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 21, No. 2, 1992), 250.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 411-413.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 416.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Note 66, citing Max Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory”, in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 210-211.

⁵⁷ However, while Heine and Teschke did adumbrate the idea that dialectics rejects closed accounts of history and views historical change as necessary or contingent (and ultimately dependent on human action) they failed to explicate the importance of intersubjectivity dialectics in the dialectic of world politics. See Ibid., 421. The importance of intersubjectivity can also be identified in the work of Alker and Biersteker where they suggest “the existence of changing, generative essences within social and political relationships”. See Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, Op. cit, 264, citing V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1939), 86.

⁵⁸ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, Op. Cit, 417-419.

Teschke claim but rather what they leave under-stated that is the issue – in particular, the open-endedness of the dialectic and its social-relational (intersubjectivist) basis that is crucial in the sublation of social antagonism.

One criticism that emerged from the debate in *Millennium* was that the ‘open dialectic of concrete totality’ of Heine and Teschke⁵⁹ - and by implication any form of dialectics - operated as a monistic theory.⁶⁰ Dialectics was once again mistakenly identified by its critics as touting itself as the panacea for all questions. However, Heine and Teschke placed considerable emphasis on Marx’s notion of the world as the “ensemble of social relations” which they stressed was ever-changing (in flux) and which therefore worked against the possibility of any totalising or static conception of IR that claimed “transhistorical validity”. Similarly, Heine and Teschke’s insisted that concepts must remain malleable and clearly argued against the possibility of rendering universal social laws or “once-and-for-all” definitions.⁶¹ Their reference to ‘totality’ is not the aggregation of facts (or norms as constructivists today posit) and is far removed from the postmodernist implication of a ‘totalising’ discourse. Rather, what Heine and Teschke meant by the ‘dialectic of concrete totality’ was the epistemological possibility of the cognisability of the parts in relation to the social totality.⁶² In this way, the dialectical method of Heine and Teschke was designed to avoid both the isolation of the part from their “social genesis” (as in empiricism), and, to avoid the emptying of the whole of its components and which is subsequently abstracted as a ‘system’ or ‘structure’ (as in Waltz’s ‘Third Image’ analysis). One cannot ascribe a *higher* reality to an alleged system than what its parts provide, otherwise, we would witness the hypostatization of the whole bereft of its particulars and re-rendered as a monolithic structure. As expressed by Heine and Teschke, “[d]ialectic transcends the artificial prioritization of either the atom or the system, the agent or the structure”.⁶³ A central tenet of dialectics has always been the view of a *plurality* of viewpoints, whether it be in Plato’s *Dialogues* or the examination of the complex social antagonisms in modern society. The dialectical method does not claim to be a magic master key for all questions, nor does it claim to be the sole pathway, the aporia, to ‘truth’.⁶⁴ It is a mistake therefore to charge dialectic with the exclusion of rival approaches, which in itself would be *undialectical*. For this reason some have

⁵⁹ This criticism focused on their claim of praxis as being the “linchpin of history”. See *Ibid.*, 413.

⁶⁰ See Mathias Albert, Yosef Lapid, “On Dialectic and IR Theory: Hazards of a Proposed Marriage”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 26, No. 2, 1997), 403-415.

⁶¹ Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, *Op. Cit.*, 413-414, note 57, citing Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, 1845-47*, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), Vol. V, 4.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 416.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 417.

⁶⁴ As Trotsky explains “Dialectical materialism is not of course an eternal and immutable philosophy. To think otherwise is to contradict the spirit of the dialectic. Further development of scientific thought will undoubtedly create a more profound doctrine into which dialectical materialism will enter merely as structural material. Moreover, Trotsky claimed that “The dialectic is not a magic master key for all questions. It does not replace concrete scientific analysis. But it directs this analysis along the correct road, securing it against sterile wanderings in the desert of subjectivism and scholasticism”. See Leon Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, (London, New Park Publications, 1971), 76, 52.

argued that dialectics can only inform rather than constitute a methodology.⁶⁵ Yet as Sciabarra has countered, dialectics is an orientation toward contextual analysis of the systemic and dynamic relations of components within a totality⁶⁶ and therefore is consistent with, rather than opposed to, other approaches. While the ontology of dialectics suggests that it is through social contradiction that change takes place, it does not claim to be the only method that can be used in the abstraction of the parts to understand this movement; other economic, political, cultural, historical methods and approaches can play considerable roles within dialectical social analysis.

Another misapprehension of dialectics in the *Millennium* debate was the claim that dialectics is just a “processual” view of the contradiction in social life and human practices and our “faulty” comprehension of them.⁶⁷ ‘Process philosophy’, however, largely removes real subjects from analysis and replaces them with systemic factors and is therefore essentially a return to mechanistic determinism rather than a dynamic examination of process. In distinction, it is the intersubjectivist contestation between existing and alternate ways of being that is shared and challenged between real, living persons that is the essence of dialectics in world politics. Horkheimer, for example, held that true materialism was dialectical, involving an ongoing process between subject and object. All cultural phenomena are mediated through the social totality – not just the subject, or class, or any particular.⁶⁸ This is why Schatzki’s emphasis on understanding and intelligibility as the ordering medium in social existence in IR captured only half of the issue,⁶⁹ for Schatzki forgot one of the central principles of dialectics; contradiction. That is, while understanding and intelligibility are central in the Wittgensteinian approach to social life, this does not mean shared understandings are non-contradictory, merely because they are intelligible. This is why taking an intersubjectivist account in dialectics is of central concern here because it is only when contradiction is jointly recognized in a shared conception of social life that human agents can begin to change it.

Open-Ended Dialectics

Unfortunately, despite this flurry of debate generated by Heine and Teschke’s piece, the field of IR quickly resumed its ambivalence toward the dialectical method. My article intends to reinvigorate this debate by first illustrating the open-ended nature of dialectics before then moving to a brief description of recognition theory and its relationship to a dialectic of world politics. So whereas Heine and Teschke focused on labour and seemed only to tangentially look at the question of intersubjectivity,⁷⁰ and whereas Krombach focused solely on Hegel’s idealist dialectics,⁷¹ I wish to make recognition theory – as a form of dialectical interplay between individuals or groups – as the central element in the ‘pulse of freedom’, to borrow Bhaskar’s famous

⁶⁵ See C.M. Sciabarra, Op. Cit, 393.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ This is problematic claim made by Albert and Lapid. See Mathias Albert, Yosef Lapid, Op. Cit, 406.

⁶⁸ See Martin Jay, Op. Cit, 54, 79.

⁶⁹ Theodore R. Schatzki, *Social Practices* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13.

⁷⁰ See Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “On Dialectic and International Relations: A Reply to Our Critics”, Op. Cit., 462.

⁷¹ Hayo Krombach, “Op. Cit, 417-436.

characterisation.⁷² It is the “ever-shifting ensemble of social relations” that is therefore key in this dialectical method of IR.⁷³ It is through intersubjective engagements that the dialectical process allows for the possibility of emancipatory change – without necessarily buying into the “political substance” that is usually assumed to go along with the Hegelian/Marxist dialectic.⁷⁴ For Hegel, freedom was “*to be with oneself in the other...*”⁷⁵ and therefore could only be but a social achievement, something created in relation with an other, that is, through the *mutual recognition* of and with, Others. As affirmed in the *Logic*, freedom is “being at home with oneself in one’s other, depending upon oneself, and being one’s own determinant”.⁷⁶ Some have called this socially-mediated self-reflection a “rational ‘self-and-other-relation’” and have identified this as the foundation of Hegel’s concept of freedom, an interpretation which I share.⁷⁷ In this determination, Hegel provides a social theory of freedom that maintains that one cannot be free *alone*.⁷⁸ Under this type of thinking, not only would the mythical Robinson Crusoe be unable to provide the material conditions necessary for the full expression of their own freedom but by being *alone* they would lack utterly the mutual recognition, the expression of themselves with *and* through others, that is considered as essential in this Hegelian conception of human freedom.

The approach here can link with constructivist accounts in IR and move beyond them by taking as central practical reflexivity and inter-subjectivity, whilst also looking towards broader social phenomena, how they are interrelated and how these interconnections are generating contradiction or social antagonism and are therefore acting as movements of change. Moreover, it can supersede such constructivist accounts by examining how immanent social change may lead to emancipatory outcomes, rather than the normative vacuity of most constructivist approaches.⁷⁹ Similarly, as the dialectical method here invites reflexivity while pursuing emancipatory goals⁸⁰ it guards

⁷² See Roy Bhaskar, Op. Cit, Chapter 5.

⁷³ I concur with Heine and Teschke on this point. See Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, Op. Cit, 413.

⁷⁴ For example, Ring has argued that it is “nearly impossible to look at the Hegelian and Marxian epistemology without the pressure to accept the political substance of Marxism”. However, in my argument the politics of emancipation is only one possibility in the changes of the social world. See Jennifer Ring, *Modern Political Theory and Contemporary Feminism: A Dialectical Analysis*, (Albany, NY, State University New York Press, 1991), 49.

⁷⁵ My emphasis added. See G.W.F Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Vol. 8,9,10, Werke (E. Moldenhauer, K. Michelet Eds.), (Frankfurt a.M, Suhrkamp, 1970,) Vol. 8, § 24A.

⁷⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of Logic*, (T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris Trans.) (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1991), § 24.

⁷⁷ See Robert B. Pippin, “What is the Question for Which Hegel’s Theory of Recognition is the Answer?”, *European Journal of Philosophy*, (Vol. 8, No. 2, 2000).

⁷⁸ Supra Note 8, Robert B. Pippin, “Hegel, Freedom, the Will. The Philosophy of Right, § 1-33”, in *Hegel: Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, (L. Siep Ed.), Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1997. See also Robert B. Pippin, “Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel’s Compatibilism”, *European Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 7, Number 2, 1999, 195.

⁷⁹ For example see ?

⁸⁰ Patti Lather, *Getting Smart*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 59 cited in Mathias Albert, Yosef Lapid, Op. Cit, 403-415, Note 37

against the danger of domination inherent to most efforts at emancipation.⁸¹ The fears of totalisation can be overcome if we take as central in the dialectical theory of recognition the presumption of the necessary complexities, differences and particularities in social life.⁸² After all, just because social relations are inherently complex does not preclude the viability of the dialectical method, rather, social differences merely confirm that it is only through a complex, open-ended, social-relational dialectics that we can begin to adequately understand social change.

What is essential in this approach is the ontological assumption that dialectical sublation is altogether contingent on human action and is, consequently, an open-ended, and ongoing process – a thesis that many from Heraclitus to Hegel have affirmed.⁸³ So, while we may reject the inevitabilist account of progress in such thinkers like Hegel, it is their recognition of *flux* that is of crucial significance.⁸⁴ Dialectics is here depicted as open-ended because it deals with social phenomena that do not fit within any pre-given mould of behaviouralism or acts for some metaphysical end that would allow one to chart the future progress of humankind. Contradictions and bifurcations in social life are indeterminate and the possibilities of change are infinite; dialectical forces may return the system to its original position, make it regress, or it may explode to yet another kind of complex dynamics. In dialectics, ‘later’ does not necessarily mean ‘better’;⁸⁵ or as stated by Horkheimer, “Dialectics is not identical with development...” Without “active resistance and constantly renewed struggle for freedom” the end of exploitation “will never appear”.⁸⁶ Ultimately, it is up to human action to change the world and while dialectics can be a tool for understanding social antagonism, it cannot solve it.

The open-ended dialectic, here conceived, is intended to overcome the propensity of IR scholars to insist on characterizing the dialectical method as teleological, as holding to “a self-consciously posited goal that awaits actualization”.⁸⁷ There is simply no possibility for a teleological account of world politics that maintains an ‘inevitability thesis’ or suggests a desired developmental ‘endpoint’ when the metaphysical mystifications of dialectics are removed and replaced instead with an emphasis on social relations and human action. That is, there can be no teleology within a properly

⁸¹ Brian Fay, “How People Change Themselves”, in *Political Theory and Praxis*, (T. Ball Ed.), (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 209.

⁸² For Schatzki it is the complexities in social practices that precludes the adoption of a “totalistic dialectical method”. However, in my account, dialectics presumes such social complexity. See Theodore R. Schatzki, *Social Practices* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 13-14.

⁸³ See G.W. F. Hegel, *Logic, Part One of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), (Trans. J.N. Findley), (Oxford, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1975), 117.

⁸⁴ It was Hegel who first made explicit the universal interconnection and mutability of things, As he wrote “[e]verything that surrounds us may be viewed as an instance of dialectic”. *Ibid.*, 118.

⁸⁵ So while for Hegel the spirit of humankind “is never at rest, but carried along the stream of progress ever onward” it is the notion of perpetual unrest, rather than his assumption of ‘progress’ that is of importance. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, (Trans. J.B. Baille), (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1964), 75.

⁸⁶ Allen W. Wood, “Hegel’s Critique of Morality”, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Grunlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, (Berlin, Herausgegeben von Ludwig Siep, Akademie Verlag, 2005), 150.

⁸⁷ Max Horkheimer, “Authoritarian State”, 143 cited in Martin Jay, *Op. Cit.*, 157.

⁸⁸ Krombach unfortunately falls into this error. See Hayo Krombach, *Op. Cit.*, 421.

conceived dialectical approach, for teleology assumes some force working above the consciousness and purposes of the actors themselves. Such a teleological promise could lead to dangerous forms of prognostication that on any number of levels would be immensely problematic. Even in Hegel's account there is no telos given to dialectic which remains, at all times, a process of change, *not the change itself*.⁸⁸ As argued by Kaufman, "...[in Hegel we] find a vision of the world, of man, and of history which emphasises development through conflict... which produce wholly unintended results, and the irony of sudden reversals... the fateful myth that this perspective is reducible to a rigorous method that even permits predictions deserves no quarter".⁸⁹ So while for Hegel every present is not only the result of its past, but is also "pregnant with the future",⁹⁰ this does not mean this future road is *determined* and *inevitable*. The future child is socially-constructed.

However, there is an *idealism* intrinsic to Hegel's dialectics which does allow for the charge of teleology to come in - if one is not so discerning in their reading of the *Phenomenology*. This can be found in Hegel's concept of the *totality of reason* as "a closed ontological system, finally identical with the rational system of history".⁹¹ Yet while Hegel's notion of Geist and Absolute Spirit are driven teleologically towards being "both itself and the other to itself",⁹² the dialectical process does not presuppose this end but is rather the process through which Geist arrives at itself. The idealism that taints Hegel's conception of dialectics is his assumption that it is through Mind alone that the developmental process is achievable. As reported by Engels, for Schelling Hegel established the "negative philosophy as the absolute philosophy" which held that "Over the fate of man also presides a reason which makes him persist in one-sidedness until he has exhausted all its possibilities".⁹³ The problem of this thesis for establishing a dialectical approach is not Hegel's assumed endpoint of a reconciled Geist (which is separable from the dialectical process and is an 'end' which we can accept or reject on empirical grounds) but is its progression solely through the powers of Mind. As stated by Lenin, the fundamental misfortune of the metaphysical materialism of Hegel was its inability to apply dialectics of the theory of reflection (*Bildertheorie*) to the process and development of knowledge.⁹⁴ For Hegel, the "higher dialectic of the notion requires that each determination be interpreted not only as a limited and opposing force but that out of it there arises a positive content and result by which it [the dialectic] alone is shown to be

⁸⁸ While, Hegel's philosophy of history, the unfolding of Geist to self-understanding as in the *Phenomenology*, is without doubt a teleological endpoint for Hegel – but the dialectical process itself is not.

⁸⁹ Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*, (New York, Anchor Books, 1966), 161.

⁹⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature, Part Two of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, (A.V. Miller Trans.), (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970), 259.

⁹¹ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1964), vi-vii.

⁹² Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, Op. Cit, 313-314.

⁹³ On this point see Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Op. Cit, 31.

⁹⁴ This is a commentary by Engels on one of Schelling's lectures. See Frederick Engels, "Telegraph für Deutschland", No, 207, December 1841, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1972), Vol. 2, 181f.

⁹⁴ I.V. Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks, Collected Works*, (Moscow, 1961), Vol. 38, 362.

development and immanent progress".⁹⁵ Yet as expressed by Engels, Hegel was naïve in his belief in the existence of philosophical results in the right of reason to enter into existence, to dominate being.⁹⁶ Here Marx's criticism is well-made because he indicates that Hegel mistakenly takes the logical route from the abstract-simple to the concrete-complex in the process of thought (Mind) as the actual process in reality, so that the concrete-complex reality appears as the end-product of the dialectical process of the abstract-simple categories.⁹⁷ Marx, as is so often quoted, thus stands Hegel on his head, substituting the real material world for the idea.⁹⁸ Dialectics neither directs change, nor ascribes an endpoint to such development, nor endows social transformation with either a positive or negative character. The problem with the Soviet Marxist variant of dialectical materialism was the perversion of Marx's humanistic account, which emphasised the need for human struggle *for* change, and its substitution with a teleological account of the inevitable victory of the proletariat.⁹⁹ In many ways, it is this perversion by Soviet orthodoxy that needs to be exorcised from the minds of the detractors of dialectics in IR who still ascribe to it some mystical agency. To re-capture the critical edge of dialectics we must rid it of telos and move to a conception in which negativity means a *processive* not automatically *progressive* movement so that philosophy and history never terminate at one fixed position; to borrow from Rosenthal, "Thus we never stop at any position because we never stop at all".¹⁰⁰ Here I will make a rare concession to Popper and agree that as the direction of knowledge cannot be predicted, we cannot therefore predict the future direction of history. Yet, what Popper fails to subsequently do is account for the social forces which render history as an open-ended process.¹⁰¹ Similarly, Heidegger is right to avow the 'indeterminacy of the future' but fails to recognise that this indeterminacy exists because social relations are in dialectical process and which therefore constitute anything but a "forgetfulness of Being".¹⁰² In a superior analysis to both Popper and Heidegger, Foucault had dismissed, quite rightly, certain versions of dialectics as merely simplistic ways "of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict to a Hegelian skeleton".¹⁰³ My argument can be seen therefore as an attempt to integrate this Foucaultian position within a reinvigorated conception of dialectics that is accepting of an "open-ended" (indeterminate) ontology of social conflicts. It is not a *thick*

⁹⁵ My emphasis added. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, (S.W. Dyde Trans.), (Mineola, New York, Dover, 2005), § 30 and 33.

⁹⁶ Engels comments on both Schelling and Hegel. See Frederick Engels, "Telegraph für Deutschland", No. 208, December 1841, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, Op. Cit, Vol. 2, 183.

⁹⁷ K. Marx, *Grundrisse, Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, Rough Draft 1857-1858*, (M. Nicolaus Trans.), (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973), 101-102.

⁹⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, Volume 1, (S. Moore, E. Aveling Trans, F. Engels Ed.), (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1971), 29.

⁹⁹ See Herbet Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1965), 158.

¹⁰⁰ Abigail L. Rosenthal, "A Hegelian Key to Hegel's Method", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, (Vol. 9, 1971), 210.

¹⁰¹ Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, Op. Cit, vi-vii

¹⁰² Heidegger charges Hegel's idealism with extreme "forgetfulness of Being" and as attributing an "inner consequentiality" to history and "end" to this history as an expectation of "revelation". This issue is discussed well by Gadamer. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, (P.C. Smith trans.), (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1976), 110-115.

¹⁰³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (London, Tavistock Publications, 1984), 56-57.

conception of dialectics that assumes progress or predictability but is intended to involve a deliberate appeal to risk, uncertainty and - most of all - the importance (and contingency) of social action in the process of change. As such, the dialectical account here is indeterminate and open-ended but it nevertheless possesses a means by which we can reflect on change, perceive how change is socially mediated, and potentially direct change to emancipatory ends. So while the predictive abilities of dialectics are foreclosed, the capacity to direct immanent forces of change towards great human freedom are clearly not. My claim is therefore far less grandiose than the certainty of the old Soviet dialectical materialism but nevertheless retains the possibility of investigating (and promoting) the conditions under which systemic transformation may occur.¹⁰⁴

This point can be better understood by making a clear distinction between *real* opposition and *logical* contradiction as emphasised by both Colletti and Setterfield. In this interpretation, reality contains only *real* dialectical oppositions, that is, conflicts between forces and relations of 'contrariety and is in distinction to Kant's and Hegel's idealist form of dialectics that is primarily concerned with logical contradiction.¹⁰⁵ The overcoming of contradiction in logic is only *one* aspect of dialectics and may not be applicable to the study of world politics. As real oppositions ('relations of contrariety') cannot mediate each other, nor, as Marx said, integrate with each other, these conflicts nuance the dialectical notion of contradiction in the social sphere. Firstly, as these real oppositions are in fact mutual antagonisms between social beings or groups ultimately precludes the metaphysical misappropriation of dialectics that is sometimes assumed by unskilled dialecticians who hold "that without dialectics there can be no struggle or movement, but only inertia and immobility of death".¹⁰⁶ Secondly, relations of contrariety (being opposed social forces) means that the sublation of social antagonism can be formed in any number of ways. There is no fixed formula, nor assumed progression, nor any presupposed end. Unfortunately, some in IR, like Krombach, have failed to adequately grasp the difference between "conceptual contradictions" and "real oppositions".¹⁰⁷ Others, like Kratochwil, by forgetting the embeddedness of dialectics in human action, quickly fall into a similar error, writing as if the idealist (logical) dialectics

¹⁰⁴ See G. Reuten, M. Williams, *Value-Form and the State: The Tendencies of Accumulation and the Determination of Economic Policy in Capitalist Society*, (New York, Routledge, 1989) and Michael Williams, "Mysticism, method and money in the Marx-Hegel dialectic, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, (Vol. 25, 2001), 567.

¹⁰⁵ Another term for this could be '*struggle between opposites*'. While Colletti's motivation here is to reconcile dialectics with scientism, this need not concern us. See Lucio Colletti, "Marxism and the Dialectic", *New left Review*, (1/93, Sept-Oct 1975). This view is also raised by Setterfield who notes that contradiction may be logical in nature or between real conflicting forces. See M. Setterfield, "'Keynes' Dialectics", (mimeo, Trinity College, Hartford, CT.1996). This view is also confirmed by Marx himself when he wrote that "Real extreme cannot be mediated, precisely because they are real extremes... They have nothing in common with each other, they have no need for one another". See Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", *Early Writings*, (L. Colletti Ed.), (London, Penguin, 1975), 155.

¹⁰⁶ Lucio Colletti, *Op. Cit.*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Krombach refers mainly to Hegel's idealistic dialectics and hence his account remains particular and one-sided and is focused on logical contradictions, rather than social antagonisms. See Hayo Krombach, *Op. Cit.*, 425ff.

of Hegel were the *only* form of dialectics – “Logic 101” as he derides it.¹⁰⁸ An action/reaction, effect/counter-effect of a factual situation is not the same thing as a relation between logical categories of thought (being and non-being for example). As stated by Ajdukiewicz, “If the action or the effect is a force, then the reaction or counter-effect is also a force – it is not simply the non-being of that force”.¹⁰⁹ In other words, the dialectic of ‘real oppositions’ attaches a different significance to the term ‘contradiction’ than that normally presupposed by the notion of logical non-contradiction.¹¹⁰ As such, Neufeld better captured the sentiment of dialectics in IR when he wrote that contradictions in dialectics are not logical but ‘relational’ contradictions.¹¹¹ When studying world politics we must move decidedly away from Hegel’s idealist dialectics in the *Logic* in which the categories (i.e finite/infinite, being/thought etc.) remain as “abstract, unreal entities”,¹¹² and move towards an understanding of social antagonisms as embodying contrariety as real oppositions.

It would be wrong therefore to reduce dialectics merely to a process of logical thought, for it is the guiding principle of logic that upon the recognition of contradiction that this *must* lead to a reconfiguration to remove it.¹¹³ There can be no “*subjective impotence* of reason” in logic and it cannot remain in a state of contradiction. Here Hegel’s conceptualist ontology which reduces dialectics to a mere thought form cannot explain social and historical development in the same way as a logical progression. His ontology proceeds through a reconstruction of how we think about *reality* as a form of logical thought proceeding from contradiction to sublation – which may not be the case in real social life. If one adopted Hegel’s dialectical typology and confounded logical contradiction as synonymous with real contrariety (as does Kratochwil),¹¹⁴ it would seem to imply that immediately upon the perception of real oppositions or social antagonisms that the human mind would move directly to overcome this contradiction in material reality. As expressed by Mead, “[t]he very fact of synthesis implies a new world, of which the former conflicting elements were conditions, but which is new because it has

¹⁰⁸ Kratochwil then translates *Aufhebung* as synthesis, rather than sublation and argues that in dialectic there must be “some hidden mechanism by which such seemingly nonsensical conclusions are avoided”. By this he assumes that dialectics aims at “‘totality’ within which everything can be comprehended” and hence implicates dialectics as a form of the history of redemption. Friedrich Kratochwil, *Op. Cit.*, 439-441.

¹⁰⁹ K. Ajdukiewicz, *Abriss der Logik*, (Berlin, 1958), 79-80.

¹¹⁰ Lucio Colletti, *Op. Cit.*, 8.

¹¹¹ For Neufeld contradictions cannot be sustained over time and dialectics assists us in understanding how these antagonistic forms may resolve themselves. This point is consistent with my own approach because it leaves development as open-ended. Mark Neufeld, “The ‘Dialectical Awakening’ in International Relations: For and Against”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 26, No. 2, 1997), 450.

¹¹² Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, Vol II, (Tübingen, 1924), 360.

¹¹³ In logic dialectical synthesis is total. Once recognized, contradiction must be sublated, it cannot remain. See Benedetto Croce, *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*, (New York, Russell & Russell, 1915), “I: The Dialectic or Synthesis of Opposites”.

¹¹⁴ In Hegel’s logic, the dialectic is represented by Hegel as the “process” which “consciousness executes on itself” to overcome contradictions in thought and in real history Hegel terms this as *experience*. For Hegel, any form of thought or historical experience will inevitably contain a criteria, or standard, of adequacy and hence it is only necessary to compare it against itself to enable one to see whether it is as it *ought* to be. Hegel’s dialectic assumes an unlimited capacity for human-beings to progressively change which reveals his faith in dialectical positivity and the inevitability of Absolute Knowledge. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Op. Cit.*, § 142 and 145. See also Friedrich Kratochwil, *Op. Cit.*, 439-441.

overcome the necessity which was expressed in the conflict.”¹¹⁵ But successful or progressive sublation is not an inevitability in *real oppositions*. Why should we not find unreconciled contradictions in social life and acquiescence to these conditions? While in logic contradiction is a sign of error, real social antagonism is essentially an unsuccessfully mediated problem of intersubjectivity. In social life, while understanding, recognition and consciousness of antagonism is crucial in the dialectical process of change, they remain immaterial without human agency and would merely constitute the cognition of contradiction, not its sublation. We can see even through the most superficial survey of contemporary human existence that human-beings are capable of living with, even partially reconciling themselves to, an incredible array of irrational and antagonistic ways of life (denying the earth is round, denying the sun as the center of the solar system, believing that some humans are less human than others). Imminent environmental collapse is a primary example of today’s acceptance of irrational ways of life; exploitation and marginalisation of our fellow human-beings, the MADness of the bomb are others. As stated by Adorno: “society is full of contradictions and yet determinable; rational and irrational in one, is system and yet fragmented; blind nature and yet mediated by consciousness”,¹¹⁶ or as stated by Bloch “Mankind is the animal who takes detours, yet often in an obdurate and flagrantly foolish way, not just cunningly”.¹¹⁷ This is a view shared by Rosenthal who has argued that “nobody can ever be ‘forced’ to solve a problem” and therefore while “history imposes obligations... it does not dictate that individuals shall meet them.” Indeed, “civilizations have been wrecked by problems that they have not faced...”¹¹⁸ Consequently, we must appreciate that in social life the dialectic cannot be reduced to some mechanistic, inexorable force that drives all forward to a rational, progressive synthesis, or hold faith in the Hegelian belief in the power of Mind that with the mere recognition of contradiction shall immediately bring forth a purposive, reasoned change.

We can ask therefore whether we can take anything from Hegel and doubt the possibility of extrapolating the dialectic as an approach to world politics. Yet as argued by Pinkard we, in the political sciences, can do so on the basis of Hegel’s notion of subjective and objective mind¹¹⁹ - but not by just lifting Hegel’s idealist dialectics uncritically. Here Hegel’s *Logic* and its account of reconstructive method of dialectics may yet provide an interesting grounds for development – if it can be bridged into an account of social reality.¹²⁰ What comes out of this discussion is the importance of the notion of intersubjectivity within the dialectical process, how contradictions and social

¹¹⁵ George H. Mead, “A new criticism of Hegelianism: Is it valid?”, *American Journal of Theology*, (Vol. 5, 1901), 87-96.

¹¹⁶ Theodor W. Adorno, “On the Logic of the Social Sciences”, in *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, (T.W. Adorno, R. Dahrendorf, J. Habermas, H. Pilot, K.R. Popper Eds.), (G. Adey, D. Frisby Trans.), (New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1976), 106.

¹¹⁷ See Ernst Bloch, *Op. Cit.*, 3.

¹¹⁸ Abigail L. Rosenthal, “A Hegelian Key to Hegel’s Method”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, (Vol. 9, 1971), 210.

¹¹⁹ Terry Pinkard, “The Logic of Hegel’s Logic”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, (Vol. 17., No. 4, October 1979), 435.

¹²⁰ In Hegel’s account of the reconstructive method of dialectics there is three aspects, the progressive, the regressive and the systemic. On this point see *Ibid.*, 417-435.

antagonisms and *our* perception of them is of crucial significance in their possible mediation. Some social contradictions can obtain a degree of stability (what may even appear as permanent, if one only takes a synchronic view of history) through the tacit and widespread acceptance of the irrational antagonism. However, in such circumstances, it is not that *real* contradiction is no longer present – it is simply either unrecognized, or continues unmediated and unchanged. For example, in Marx's *Capital*, economic laws that appear to have a material or objective character are nothing other than the objectification of human social relations which have become distorted in the collective intersubjective understanding and which now appear as alienating conditions, beyond the control of the human beings themselves.¹²¹ Yet the recognition of the inherent tensions and crisis prone nature of capitalism economic system did not create the social forces necessary to change it. This was also the problem of Horkheimer's initial program. For him, the proletariat had already developed a sense of injustice of capitalist production and that this sense of injustice merely had to be systematically articulated by a critical and reflexive theory.¹²² Unfortunately, *human-beings may choose not to change*; this is both our gift and our burden.

What makes critique conclusive is not the empirical evidence itself, nor the appeal to morality, but what the consent of the community – or most dominant section thereof – wish to qualify as being conclusive.¹²³ Dialectical critique as such, does nothing if it does not capture the minds of the community. This was recognized in the distinction made by Heine and Teschke between objective dialectics (dynamics of the social totality as it unfolds through social antagonism) and subjective dialectics (which comprehends the objective dialectic of appearance and essence).¹²⁴ So, using Marx's critique of political economy as example once again, while he clearly identified contradiction within capitalism, the social relations of production and commodity exchange, what was lacking was an adequate contemplation of subjective dialectics by the community to overcome this contradiction. It is only when contradictions are perceived as being contradictory, incompatible, and antagonistic in their unreconciled form – and when *a* solution has been pondered or discovered – that the dialectic process can take place.¹²⁵ This argument however should not be taken as a monistic view of solutions to social problems but rather as suggesting that the exposition of contradiction through dialectical critique is nothing without mutual recognition of the contradiction, an intersubjectively shared desire to overcome the problem, and joint social action to overcome it. Nor should it be seen as reformulation of Bukharin's notion of dialectical *equilibrium*.¹²⁶ While we may be living

¹²¹ For a discussion see David McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx*, (London, Macmillan, 1995), 78ff.

¹²² Axel Honneth, "The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today", *Op. Cit.*, 68-69.

¹²³ This is where I differ from Heine and Teschke who suggest that it what researchers qualify as being conclusive that is of key importance. Here they lose sight of the intersubjective nature of critique of society and how change is reliant on the shared acceptability of critique and the need for transformation to resolve the recognised contradiction. See Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, "Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations", *Op. Cit.*, 407.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 418.

¹²⁵ See John (McTaggart Ellis) McTaggart, *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic* (1896), (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), Chapter I, 6.

¹²⁶ Living with social antagonism is a form of stabilization rather than a form of sublation towards a qualitatively different social reality, as Bukharin wrongly theorized and which. Lenin was right in

amidst any number of irrational and antagonistic social institutions or ways of being, whether subsequent change will right the anomaly is ultimately up to future social forces. As such, while we may accept Della Volpe's optimistic appraisal that dialectical contradiction *can* be a rational instrument for understanding real opposition and therefore towards their reasoned resolution,¹²⁷ this is not guaranteed. The process of contending or opposed forces is a social question, involving a complex nexus of agency and structure, power and inter-subjectivity.

While this lampoons any teleological inevitablist account of human emancipation, it does not deny its possibility. My argument should *not* be taken to mean that we are doomed to regression and conditions of irrationality and *unfreedom*. The claim that the dialectic is open-ended and dependent on social forces does not commit me to the view that no future progress toward emancipation is possible, but rather that this very possibility is dependent on humanity and the agency of each individual. Moreover, it highlights that such change that does occur will, inevitably, be one-sided, partial and therefore susceptible to the same immanent critique regarding its internal inadequacy and thus prone to dialectical, ongoing change. So while self-reflexive human beings are, in principle, able to understand their social relations (and any contradictions therein) and retain a degree of agency to change them, this does not mean that they necessarily will. Moreover, since the resolution of social contradictions is reliant on intersubjective relations (historical, economic, political factors) the outcome is inherently indeterminate and altogether contingent on human practices and actions.

Intersubjectivity and Dialectics

As we have seen in the proceeding discussion, there is no inevitably in my conception of dialectics. As stated by Bloch, there is no automatism of dialectics *towards the good*, no comforting motto: "Through the night to the light." What dialectics does reveal however, is that there is the *potential* for co-movement; where dialectical processes move towards something socially negative, there can be a counter-movement of subjectivity towards something *else*, something what Bloch called "possible success", the "liberation of what is due (*das Fällige*)".¹²⁸ As such, all teleological content ebbs away from dialectics and is replaced by a critically anticipatory dialectic that is open-

criticizing him for. For Bukharin an *equilibrium* reflected a balance of the conflicting dialectical forces but its destabilisation and the subsequent emergence of a new balance constituted a 'qualitative shift'. The problem with this view is that it hypostatizes any subtle, quantitative change in the context of a social equilibrium as constituting dialectical movement to a quantitative transformation. See I.V. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1967) and N.I. Bukharin, *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*, (New York, International Publishers, 1925).

¹²⁷ See Della Volpe, *Logic as a Positive Science*, (New York, Verso Books, 1980).

¹²⁸ For Bloch, dialectics can make possible a "utopia in utopia" as a work of dissatisfaction of existing social life and its forms of servitude and in the hope or anticipation of freedom to be-for-oneself. See Ernst Bloch, *Op. Cit.*, 7. Note also the similarity with Karl Polanyi's 'double movement' where the attempt to sever the economy from society as a self-regulating market, ultimately provokes a reaction form society. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1957).

ended.¹²⁹ In this open-ended dialectical process, there is obviously an intimate connection between structures of social relations, forms of consciousness, and the comprehension of social antagonism that are generative of change. As such, the dialectical method is, and must be, sensitive to linguistic, social, and cultural issues and is therefore “pre-eminently sociological”, far more than its critics have grasped.¹³⁰ In distinction to logical or causal analysis, dialectics does not view social systems as deterministic or formally constituted. It is one thing to view the international relations of world politics as being the logical deterministic cause of either political, economic or socio-cultural structures, and quite another, to reveal them as the dialectical expression of these intersubjectivist factors at a specific time and stage of development. My argument here therefore is that if IR theory is to provide an adequate understanding of change, then it must take adequate account of the field of social conflict as situated forms of struggles for recognition. In this final part, I wish to emphasise the importance of intersubjectivity in the dialectic of world politics which leads directly into the theory of mutual recognition as paradigmatic of dialectical processes in social life. While my contention can only be outlined here, it is that the struggle for mutual recognition constitutes a form of dialectical process which is an important but under-theorised source of change, and potential emancipation, in world politics. The approach attempts to combine the idea of the productive role of the subject in the construction and comprehension of social reality, their embeddedness in socio-historical institutions, with the dialectical struggle for recognition that suggests and ongoing but open-ended process of change towards freedom.¹³¹

Recognition theory does not assume that individual human-beings possess specific constitutive essences, such as the Hobbesian assumption of self-interestedness. Instead, human-beings as social actors, are regarded as the product of ongoing, intersubjective constitutive practices. For Jackson, mutual recognition, based on Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic, reconceptualises social structures as patterns of social interaction and rejects the typical structuralist tendency to annex actors completely to social processes that denies them agency and portrays them as “structural dupes” – “blind carriers of objectively existing social and cultural forces, unable to exercise any independent causal influence over the course of events”.¹³² Social structures are not inevitable or fixed but are ongoing accomplishments of practices, “*patterns of activity*” as he calls them, and possess a contested regulative function. Patterns of activity, being highly contested by different individuals and groups, are ambiguous and indeterminate, requiring political work to “lock down” their meaning and implications.¹³³ So while

¹²⁹ As stated by Bloch, dialectics is a tendency, and knowledge must move from mere passive contemplation to something “practical in the socialist liberation... the changing of philosophy into a philosophy of changing the world... proceeding towards great open horizons... against alienation” and for “the coming-to of self-being” in the “homeland of humanisation”. See *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹³⁰ Richard A. Ball, “The Dialectical methods: its Application to Social Theory”, *Social Forces*, (Vol. 57, Number 3, March 1979), 787-788.

¹³¹ This is in distinction to Kratochwil’s argument that these would be better served by language philosophy and speech act theory *alone*. See Friedrich Kratochwil, *Op. Cit.*, 437-442.

¹³² The proposed solution of constructivists on this issue, an assertion of actor autonomy coupled to a discussion of actor motivations, does not adequately solve the problem. See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, “Hegel’s House, or ‘People are states too’”, *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 30, 2004), 285.

¹³³ *Ibi.*, 286.

individuals have a degree of agency under this approach, their sphere of action is situated in particular circumstances and entailments and is never absolute. Moreover, the theoretical premise of recognition theory is that the development of a subject's personal identity presupposes, in principle, certain types of recognition from other subjects.¹³⁴ the struggle for recognition, as the means by which individuals aim to secure their identity and being with others, is a dialectical process whereby intersubjective conditions for human identity and development are achieved by reciprocation or mutual recognition. As expressed by Honneth, "if I do not recognise my partner to interaction as a certain type of person, his reactions cannot give me the sense that I am recognized as the same type of person, since I thereby deny him precisely the characteristics and capacities with regard to which I want to feel myself affirmed by him".¹³⁵ The benefit of the concept of recognition is that it provides a suitable instrument that makes possible an answer to the question of how to distinguish systematically between forms of social interaction with regard to the pattern of respect for another person that it entails and this is a question that bears a direct relation to the problem of community and the division between men and citizens in world politics.¹³⁶

What recognition theory shows us is that there is a pre-theoretical empirical interest, or moral experience, in humankind that requires mutual recognition as a "vital human need".¹³⁷ It is this need for recognition that forms the incessant dialectic of freedom – the need of person to be recognized in a society of mutually recognized, free beings. Hegel's most famous account of recognition begins by showing that the subject's 'state of desire' and the satisfaction derived from material appropriation and the annihilation of objects is not enough for human freedom which can only be fulfilled through association with other individuals. In the *Phenomenology*, the Master and Slave dialectic reveals how recognition is central in the process of self-consciousness. It is in this struggle for recognition that arises one's reflected identity and the knowledge of freedom – "the ego that is We and the We that is ego".¹³⁸ However, this understanding of the struggle for recognition is a limited one in comparison to Hegel's Jena period and the writings of the *System of Ethical Life* and the *Realphilosophie*. For Honneth, if Hegel had here carried the logic of his construction of the social world as an 'ethical learning process' via stages of the struggle demanding reciprocal recognition into the constitution of the ethical community, he would have opened up the "form of interaction in which each person, in his or her individual particularity, can reckon with a feeling of recognition based on solidarity".¹³⁹ The implications of this approach for world politics are truly

¹³⁴ Honneth refers to Hegel's *System of Ethical Life* and his *Realphilosophie*, rather than relying on the later *Phenomenology of Spirit* which reduces the importance of intersubjectivity to the formation of self-consciousness only. See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Op. Cit, 37. See also G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, (Hamburg, Meiner, 1969), and G.W.F. Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit*, (G. Larson Ed.), (Hamburg, Meiner, 1967).

¹³⁵ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Op. Cit, 38.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 59. See also Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, (London, MacMillan Press, London 1992).

¹³⁷ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", in *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*, (A. Gutmann Ed.), (Princeton New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1992), 26. See also Axel Honneth, "The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today", Op. Cit, 64.

¹³⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, Op. Cit, Vol. I, 174.

¹³⁹ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Op. Cit, 62.

amazing. Yet, instead Hegel moves to the philosophy of consciousness over these intersubjectivist insights and reduces the formative process of mutual recognition to the sole function of the formation of self-consciousness.

In distinction, Honneth's recognition theoretic approach offers a regrounding of critical social theory – and, arguably, the dialectical method. Honneth proceeds from intersubjectivist premises, leaving behind the philosophy of the subject, methodological individualism and Habermasian communicative action and makes central the moral category of recognition.¹⁴⁰ He provides a formal criteria through which progressive and regressive modes of social relations, inclusion and exclusion, can be understood. The dialectical account is confirmed by his concept of struggle in moral structures which pattern intersubjective relations and the way “socially acting subjects advance claims for recognition” and the potential “progressive expansion of attitude of recognition”.¹⁴¹ Honneth recasts the problem of freedom and autonomy in intersubjectivist terms and this clearly involves a form of *dialectical* interaction through which recognition theory intends to understand the “conditions and capacities required for developing stable social identities and the ability to recognize, defend, or challenge mutually binding values and norms”.¹⁴² These categories develop dialectically through intersubjective engagements in the struggle for mutual recognition and the requirements of an ideal personhood; emotional support, cognitive respect and social esteem (care, friendship, and love).¹⁴³ This seems compatible with Mead's conception of the dialectical process in social interaction where he suggests that in every moral act, that flows from deliberation or dialogue, we can pass into “a world that is new, in just this respect, at least, that the necessity which brought out an irrepressible conflict no longer exists.”¹⁴⁴

For Heine and Teschke, Habermas reduced praxis to mere instrumental action and thus left out crucial dimensions of interaction that are arguably picked up by Honneth's alternate approach. That is, under Honneth's recognition theory, dialectics can focus on the antagonistic interests that are temporality institutionalized in specific structures and which are reproduced and changed through reflexivity and communicated intersubjectively.¹⁴⁵ It is by changing Habermas communication paradigm from a conception of rational understanding to a conception of recognition that we can escape the narrow confines of a ‘theory of rationality’ and instead move to the criteria of the intersubjective conditions of human identity development.¹⁴⁶ Forms of recognition indicate a society's development and it is precisely where there exists deficits, disorders

¹⁴⁰ See Martin Weber, “Hegel Beyond the State?”, (Paper presented at the 2007 ISA Annual Convention, Chicago), forthcoming 2009.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴³ See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Op. Cit, Chapter 5, 92ff.

¹⁴⁴ See George H. Mead, “A new criticism of Hegelianism: Is it valid?”, *American Journal of Theology*, (Vol. 5, 1901), 87-96

¹⁴⁵ Note the similarity to Heine and Teschke's definition of praxis. See Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “On Dialectic and International Relations: A Reply to Our Critics”, Op. Cit, 458-459.

¹⁴⁶ Axel Honneth, “The Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today”, Op. Cit, 74.

or pathologies in the existing social framework of recognition that reveals the potential places where social forces may dialectically push for greater recognition. As such, it is forms of transnational and cross-cultural mutual recognition in world politics that can offer plentiful areas for dialectical research.

For Honneth, the grammar of such struggles is ‘moral’ in the sense that feelings of disrespect and exclusion are forms of rejection of claims to recognition, which implies both a normative judgment about the legitimacy of the existing social arrangement and which also acts as a dialectical driving force of social transformation. The specific content of recognition shifts over time as does the procedure by which such moral-political questions are to be resolved. But both of these are moved by struggles for recognition, which as embodiments of dialectical change, can either lead to greater modes of recognition, or even worsening forms of disrespect. The importance of Hegel’s and Honneth’s theory of recognition is the notion that without an adequate intersubjectivity that provides for and maintains mutual recognition, human-beings cannot be free and cannot develop their full identities. In terms of particular states and communities, this places in contestation all forms of exclusion that do not adequately establish mutual recognition, that is, in which the relation between being and Other is unequal, disrespectful or unrecognised. For example, Honneth sees the conditions for individual self-esteem as a field of contestation and cultural struggle for the recognition of what were previously disrespected contributions to the ‘common good’.¹⁴⁷ As expressed more generally by Anderson, Honneth’s normative ideal is a society in which patterns of recognition would allow for individuals to acquire self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem necessary for the full development of their identities.¹⁴⁸ However, while this ideal is regarded by Honneth as implicit in the structure of recognition itself - that the requirement of reciprocity is built into the demand for recognition - social struggles for recognition nevertheless proceed dialectically. That is, struggles for recognition are struggles for the expansion of forms of recognition to realize what is already a normative and immanent potential in existing social relations. As such, the struggle for recognition not only contributes to the reproduction of the spiritual element of civil society but is also a source of normative pressure towards development.¹⁴⁹ Using Mead’s notion of the “I” as the driving force of transformation, Honneth can illustrate the expansion of identity claims over time and “the emergence of *new* claims to recognition”.¹⁵⁰ Here we can detect a clear dialectical movement in the struggle for recognition, moving from forms of disrespect, to social mediation, and finally to greater inclusion.

Conclusions

This paper has aimed to provide a brief epistemological outline of an open-ended, socially embedded and intersubjectivist account of a dialectical method for IR theory that

¹⁴⁷ Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Op. Cit, Chapter 5, 92ff.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., “Translator’s Introduction”, xviii.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., “Translator’s Introduction”, xx. See also Axel Honneth, “Decentered autonomy: lessons from the critique of the subject”, (paper presented at the Society for Phenomenology and Existentialist Philosophy, 1992).

does *not* rest on prescriptive, exhaustive and pre-given modes of social mediation.¹⁵¹ My conception of dialectics suggests only the groundwork of an investigative procedure for world politics; the study of dominant conditions and practices in IR, the examination of the immanent principles of development situated within intersubjectivity, and the possible fulfillment of the ideals and potentials for mutual recognition already pregnant in this world. Yet, the perception of contradiction and social antagonism does not automatically assume change towards sublation, rather, social transformation is conditional on appropriate human responses and intersubjective mediations between individuals and groups. Human interaction is not only the cause of social antagonism but it is also the form of that change. The argument here should not be confused as a philosophy of history, nor a monistic theory, but a means to help understand the “changes and continuities”¹⁵² in world politics. Dialectics, so conceived, is a “critical impulse” but which is indeterminate and reliant on human actions. Yet the goal is not the mere understanding of change - the goal is to explore existing social antagonisms so as to aid progressive social forces working for emancipatory change.¹⁵³ We can only be free in and through others – when we recognize and respect each other and can have that recognition and respect mutually reciprocated. It is this dialectical process of mutual recognition that promises a high degree of hope for emancipation in world politics.

¹⁵¹ See Michael Williams, “Mysticism, method and money in the Marx-Hegel dialectic”, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, (Vol. 25, 2001), 564.

¹⁵² Christian Heine, Benno Teschke, “Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations”, *Op. Cit*, 400.

¹⁵³ Note the similarities with my conclusion and that of Neufeld. Mark Neufeld, “The ‘Dialectical Awakening’ in International Relations: For and Against”, *Op. Cit*, 453.