Changing Global Realities:
Critical Theory for Critical Times

Address to the 8ᵗʰ METU International Relations Conference ('Patterns of Change in the Global System') Ankara, Turkey, 18 June 2009)[1]

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Introduction

It is always a great intellectual, social, and personal pleasure for me to attend conferences in Turkey. I want to thank the organisers of this now famous conference very sincerely indeed for the invitation, and the opportunity to address you all today.

I want also to thank the conference organisers for choosing such an interesting and important topic. 'Change' is one of those things that we deal with all the time, but rarely stop to think about in a systematic way; it is one of those concepts that seem obvious till we really try and think about them.

In this talk I will try to explain how my book *Theory of World Security* is above all a set of ideas about change in human history. I will do this by offering six propositions:[2]

1. **Human society, globally, faces a world-historical crisis.**
2. **Critical theory offers a comprehensive theory of change.**
3. **History is an account of radical change.**
4. **Progress in human society is possible but not inevitable.**
5. **Emancipation offers a philosophical anchorage and political goal.**

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[1] This is a post hoc text of my address. It includes some material which was in the original text, but which I did not have time to deliver, and also a few points I remember adding on the day. It does not include any adjustments of the argument in the light of the excellent questions and challenges I received from the audience. These were much appreciated, and will be dealt with at another place and time.

[2] As this is the text of a talk, I will not supply references. All the important quotations and supporting arguments can be found in Ken Booth, Theory of World Security (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). What is not in that book is the explicit focus on change I address in this talk. I thank the organisers of the conference for allowing me to elaborate the theory of change in the book more explicitly.

6. Ideas are at the heart of 'global realities', and intellectuals have a role in changing them.

To begin, I want briefly to describe where I think we are in world history – today's big 'global realities':

1. Human society, globally, faces a world-historical crisis.

The picture I will give attempts to take a several thousand year perspective on human society; this is an attempt to look at world history with real 'critical distance'.

With such a perspective, one can see human society globally facing a 'Great Reckoning' – a generalised crisis resulting from the ideas that have shaped human attitudes and behaviour over hundreds and in some cases thousands of years. Focusing on the global condition more closely - shifting the perspective from hundreds/thousands of years to decades – I see human society facing what I call a 'New Twenty Years' Crisis'. Together, this *Great Reckoning* and within it the *New Twenty Years' Crisis* provide the context of today's 'global realities'.

(a) The Great Reckoning

The Great Reckoning is the term I give to the general condition of global society in the 21st century. A 'reckoning' is when we humans, as individuals or as collectivities, come face-to-face with our established yet regressive ways of thinking and behaving. Confronted by a reckoning, we have to change or pay the price. What I call *The Great Reckoning* is History's way of catching up with human society's established - and I believe regressive - ways of thinking and behaving on a global scale.

Today, there are profound problems in world politics - political, social, and economic sicknesses that prevent global human well-being. *The very ideas that made us* – that made the structures of world politics, world economics, and world sociology – are problems not solutions. They once seemed to make sense, but they do so no longer if we take a global perspective. These ideas still make sense to some - the globally powerful/the world's winners - but in relation to common humanity as a whole (what I call '*the global-we*') the ideas that made us are backward and harmful.

The term 'the ideas that made us' refers to the ideas that produced the structures of thought (our dominant theories and our traditional 'common sense') which constructed the institutions and patterns of behaviour that largely shaped contemporary consciousness about world politics. My basic position is that these ideas prevent us (collectively) from developing

positive, humane, long-term, inclusive policies and institutions that offer a promise to the global-we that we will emerge out of the Great Reckoning in good shape.

The major structures of ideas that have interacted through history to construct today's collective consciousness about living globally can be sum-marised as follows:

- 4000 years of patriarchy (the idea that men know best and should dominate society).
- 2000 years of proselytising religions (the belief that 'our' faith – whi-chever it is - represents the only 'True' way and so deserves to be universalised).
- 500 years of capitalism (a fantastically successful means of produc-tion, but one that is requires losers as well as winners – with nature being amongst the most prominent losers).
- 350 years of statism/nationalism (the game of sovereignty allied with national narcissism, producing the conflictual logic of interna-tional politics, characterised by the pursuit above all of the 'national interest' in the context of habitual mistrust and the institution of war).
- 200 years or so of racism (the idea of superior and inferior human beings, based on minor biological differences). And
- 100 years or so of consumer democracy (which has led to what J.K. Galbraith called a 'culture of contentment' on the part of the winners within and between societies, whereas the losers inhabit lives of ex-ploitation.

The interaction through history of this combination of ideas and their related power-structures has constructed a world that doesn't work for countless millions of its inhabitants, doesn't work for nature, and doesn't promise a harmonious future.

(b) The New Twenty Years' Crisis

Within *The Great Reckoning* is a particularly dangerous period I call *The New Twenty Years' Crisis* (borrowing of course from E.H. Carr's famous book-title). This 'New' period of crisis began, symbolically, with the specta-cular terrorism of 9/11. It represents a period of particular danger for hu-man society, and time is running out; but like all crises, it also creates op-portunities for change.

The period we are living through perfectly conforms to the famous phrase coined by Antonio Gramsci to describe his challenging transitional era. 'The old is dying and the new cannot be born' he said, '[and] in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms.'
Today's 'morbid symptoms' include:

- the destruction of nature, with the danger of massive food shortages;
- 'climate chaos', with the danger of mass population movements and conflict;
- energy depletion, with the danger of conflict over oil and gas supplies;
- the danger of economic crises (recent events having shown that those responsible for running the much-praised triumph of capitalism have not understood how it worked);
- the prevalence of poverty in many parts of the world, with vast inequalities in life chances within and between countries (and therefore all the problems that inequality brings, as well as poverty);
- the prospect of the spread of nuclear weapons to 20/30/40 states over coming decades, with the attendant danger of catastrophe through miscalculation or accident; and
- 'clashes of ignorance' between ethnic and other identity groups.

These and other morbid trends have been developing in the context of a huge global population increase. This will surely complicate and exacerbate many of these 'morbid symptoms'. The population increase will threaten more poverty, more unemployment, the risk of dangerous identity politics, greater social strains, a growing disparity of access to life chances and on and on.

Each of the morbid trends is worrying. What makes it all so much more threatening is that they are converging. We face the danger of multiple and complex crises occurring and overloading decision-makers at the same time. Imagine a situation in 2019, for example, in which there is another period of global financial meltdown – and let us not fool ourselves that our specialists in Economics have the future under control. This time, let us suppose the meltdown coincides with both a major oil crisis and Iran having recently carried out its first nuclear explosion (the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime might effectively have collapsed by then). In this situation, let us add an earlier and not-unthinkable Vietnam-like withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, and a Taliban takeover of (nuclear) Pakistan. What price, in this context, a face-off between NATO and Russian troops created by Georgian nationalists seeking to exploit the distraction of the Iranian crisis? And let us add to the mix the prospect of President Palin in her first term.

The risks we face in the New Twenty Years' Crisis come above all from the very complexity of governments seeking to promote 'national interests' at a time of converging crises under conditions of radical material change and clashing word-views. As was the case in the twentieth century, when their backs are against the wall, nations and states will retreat into

the politics of 'blood and belonging' (in other words, will retreat into extreme nationalism and authoritarianism). Such an outcome is not calculated to improve the conditions of the global-we.

There is some time to turn around the negative trends. But if they are not engaged with effectively in the next 10 years or so, it will be increasingly difficult to deal with them later. Conditions will have deteriorated: by then, climate change will be closer to being irreversible (if it will not have already become so), and nuclear proliferation might have doubled the number of nuclear-armed or arming states.

Is this picture scare-mongering?

It is too soon to say, of course. And it is important to understand that what I have been sketching is *an extrapolation* – an extension of current trends if global business-as-usual continues. The sketch is not meant *as a prediction* of what will or must happen. That said, in the decade since I started this line of argument, we have witnessed spectacular terrorism, the threat of a 40% loss through soil erosion of farming land in China's breadbasket, extreme (and largely ignored) political violence in the Congo, the inability of western forces to pacify the Taliban in Afghanistan (a base for drugs and terrorism) or Pakistan (a nuclear-armed state), talk of a new cold war with Russia, the erosion of the NPT, North Korea testing nuclear weapons, the worst financial crisis for 80 years, increasingly pessimistic predictions about climate chaos (and continued slowness in dealing with its causes), the continuing pull of extreme ideas (including extreme complacency that all will be well); apathy and a shift to the right in the recent Euro elections; and on and depressingly on.

There have been positive developments, for sure, but not many, and some of the positive developments, as ever, may turn out to be problems rather than solutions. One of the positive developments is 'Obama's America'. The post-Bush feel-good mood is obviously welcome, but the new United Sates is still characterised more by words than actions.

So, are my extrapolations – which are meant to serve as warnings - justified? It is too soon to give a definite 'yes' at this point, but I would go so far as saying – as of June 2009 - that it is not obvious that I have been wrong.

2. Critical theory offers a comprehensive theory of change

Why are today's global realities as I have described them? How *do* we/*can* we know they are the realities? What *can* we/*should* we do about it? In short, how should we theorise our situation? My next proposition is

that critical theory offers a comprehensive approach to the theory and practice of change, including change in 'global realities'. Critical theory is a theory for critical times.

Before I turn to the meaning of the adjective 'critical' in critical theory, we need a helpful conception of 'theory' itself. The one I want to develop is that of Philip Allott – a very distinguished international lawyer, a sparkling philosopher, and also a former practitioner in the British Foreign Office (and, incidentally, a sceptic about the academic discipline of 'International Relations').

Theory, for Allott, simply, is 'a mental ordering of…reality' (systematic thought to explain, understand, and justify action). He distinguishes between three levels of theory – we can think of them as nesting or sedimenting in each other - which he calls 'practical', 'pure', and 'transcendental':

- *Practical theory* is 'ideas as practice'. [How to do it?) Examples of practical theory in IR include the 'balance of power' and 'nuclear deterrence'.
- *Pure theory* is the theory of practical theory. (In other words, it is the ideas behind the practical theory. We can think of it as going a level deeper – explaining why things are as they are, and why some practical choices are better than others.) An example of pure theory in IR is political realism (the idea that states are the main actors, that material power is decisive, and that the logic of international anarchy is competitive). Practical theories (such as the balance of power and nuclear deterrence) represent rational strategies within the workings of the world as described by the 'pure theory' of political realism.
- *Transcendental theory* is yet a deeper level. (For Allott it is the theory of pure theory.) It is the foundation of truth and value: it is the set of ideas underlying a whole worldview. In one version of political realism, for example, the transcendental theory that explains realism's explanation of how the world works is a particular conception of human nature as aggressive and selfish. This understanding of human nature seems to explain why realism makes sense, which in turn makes the practice of balancing power make sense.

I think that these levels of theory – practical, pure, and transcendental – offer a very helpful framework for trying to organise a critical theory for critical times.

In place of the illustrations from the dominant themes of IR for the past century (in a nutshell, balance of power-realism-anarchy) I want to insert a very different set of ideas at each level. I propose:

- a practical theory which I call *emancipatory realism*;
- a pure theory which I call *critical global theorising*; and
- a transcendental theory which I call *human sociality*.

What is important for the theme of this conference is that each set of ideas, at each level, represents a theory of change in human affairs.

I will start at the most fundamental level: the transcendental. This equates the history and indeed nature of human society with change: 'Change is the only evidence of life' as an old adage has it.

(a) Human sociality

'Sociality' has been defined by the cultural anthropologist Michael Carrithers as 'a capacity for complex social behaviour'. We are 'animals with history'. We are 'active…inventive and profoundly social animals, living in and through …relations with each other and acting and reacting upon each other to make new relations and new forms of life.'

From this, what above all is 'real' in my understanding of world politics is the idea of the human as an animal with immense possibilities through the capacity of the social mind: 'We Have Worlds Inside Us'[3]. Such a viewpoint is an explicit rejection of traditional essentialist (and overwhelmingly conservative) understandings of what is usually called 'human nature'. Humans have evolved physically, and have developed socially. We have not been held back by an objective reality called human nature, only by some of our ideas about something we have chosen to label as 'human nature'. In contrast to so-called 'human nature pessimists' I prefer the starting point of the brain scientist Steven Rose. His claim is that 'Biology sets us free'.

Here it is useful to make a distinction between our animal nature and our human potential (as suggested by Rose). We must be careful when we speak about humans having 'a nature'; we can only do this in a very specific sense – that is, in relation to the biological and unchanging set of characteristics we commonly share with most other animals (the need for food, the urge to reproduce, the emotion of fear and so on). This animal nature must obviously have its say - we have stomachs to feed and sexual urges to be met. But these general characteristics are not specifically 'human', they belong to our animal selves – though how they are expressed (and how they change) is importantly human/cultural. That which is the

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3 This is the title of an unremarkable painting by Edvard Munch, with the title being based on a rather better poem by Paul Erik Tøjner, 'The Tree of Knowledge'.

'human' part of our attitudes and behaviour is far from unchanging. This is why I do not want to use the term 'human nature'.

Human social evolution over time has been radical. Our changing consciousness through history means that our attitudes, institutions, and behaviour is constructed and reconstructed through our developing minds. The term 'human' in 'human nature' is dynamic, while the term 'nature' applies to what is 'animal'; thus, in my view, the term 'human nature' is an oxymoron.

The potential of consciousness in humans to develop the meaning of 'human' has promoted complex social evolution, and to a degree that makes us radically different from other animals.[4] Developments in human consciousness refer to changes in collective minds through history – the collective minds of families, tribes, societies, nations, and – potentially - what I have been calling *the global-we* (common humanity). The social development of the human animal is derived from changes in human consciousness. So, international relations can be seen as an aspect of the social development of humans, indeed of the evolution of human consciousness on the biggest social and political stage of all: 'the global'. In thinking about this, again, 'We Have Worlds Inside Us' – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

What is 'human' about us, as opposed to merely 'animal', has been and will continue to be constructed/developed in our collective minds whether we are talking about inter-personal relations, relations within societies, or how best to live globally. Sociality - defined as the potential for 'new relations and new forms of life' - is as much a part of our history as the evolution of our bone structure. Underlying my critical theory therefore, is a fundamental belief that new relations and new forms of life for human society are not only possible, but inevitable

(b) *Critical global theorising*

The transcendental dimension of critical theory, therefore, understands world politics as an arena of changing realities over time as a result of changes in human consciousness. 'IR' , as I said, is therefore an aspect

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[4] 'Consciousness' is a much discussed and much disputed concept (What is it? Do other animals have consciousness, or only humans? – these are just some of the many contested issues). For present purposes, I conceive the term as equivalent of mental awareness (in other words, 'the mind'); this involves experiencing the world (through the senses), absorbing/transmitting meanings through culture, and making judgements (through reason/emotion, consciously/unconsciously). In this sense, I think it appropriate to talk about a collective consciousness in relation to politics on a global scale – how we experience, understand, and judge 'the global' or 'the international'. As I will argue, 'International Relations' (the discipline) can therefore be understood as a dimension of human consciousness about 'the global', and so the development (or not) of IR is an aspect of the development of human consciousness about human society globally.

of the evolution of human consciousness about how to live globally. The ideas that made us – including IR - have constructed one set of global realities, but – and here the normative aspect of theory comes to the fore - we need to do much better to rise successfully to the great global challenges that lie ahead. This leads to 'critical theory' more explicitly.

I am using 'critical' in relation to theory in the (Robert) Coxian sense of trying to stand outside the status quo in order to identify the oppressions within it, and the resources for change. (It is what I call 'outsider' rather than 'insider' theorising.) There is no time to go into this in detail, but the intellectual resources for critical global theorising are well-known. For me they are comprised of two bodies of thought. First, the critical social theory of the Frankfurt School, Gramscian thought, and so on. And second, the tradition of radical international relations theory, including historical sociology and especially the social idealism of Kant. Out of these bodies of thought, it is possible to develop a theoretical commitment and political orientation which is universalist, inclusive, normative, emancipatory, and progressive.

Two key ideas of Robert Cox are his famous line that 'theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose', and his distinction between 'problem solving' and 'critical' theory. The 'someone' I want critical theory to be *for* is common humanity, and the 'some purpose' is *for* emancipation. The goal of critical theory is not primarily to make the prevailing social and power relations and their institutions work more smoothly. Its purpose, in other words, is not to solve the problems *in* the status quo – a status quo I have argued is made up of ideas that don't work globally. Rather, its purpose is to seek to identify the very problem (or problems) *of* the global status quo (the problems of continuing business-as-usual, and to replace dysfunctional power relations and their institutions with those that offer greater promise of working in the interests of common humanity. Critical theory is therefore acutely concerned with solving problems, but at a different level and with a different time-scale to traditional theory. In relation to praxis, a key idea is that of 'immanent critique': this involves attempting to identify resources for social progress out of what exists, thereby seeking to build better relationships, societies, or worlds out of concrete possibilities, not utopian dreams. This leads to the third level of theory.

(c) *Emancipatory realism*

My version of 'practical theory' is *emancipatory realism*. This label has two terms that require explanation:
- What I mean by the term 'realism' here is not the same as its traditional usage in mainstream IR, where it refers to a particular theoretical approach (or set of approaches). For me, the political/classical/structural versions of realism offer too restricted a view

of reality and of ethics. My usage of the term 'realism' is more generic than disciplinary, referring to the need to pay constant attention to power in all its forms: where power lies, how power is exercised, who benefits from power, and so on. As John Herz insisted, one has to be concerned with power in order to understand world politics, and to have any hope of being taken seriously.

- Emancipation is an even more controversial term. In my understanding, the idea of emancipation in the global context seeks to promote politics aimed at freeing people from life-determining threats, thereby creating opportunities to invent a more harmonious, equal, and dignified human society globally. Central to emancipation is the philosophical idea that what we call 'reality' is constructed in our heads – specifically in our minds. This is too big an issue to develop here, so I will quickly move on with two observations. One is that the ideas in our heads are rarely if ever separated from the material (Marx's insight), and the second is that if 'global realities' in the title of this talk are the result of what I called the ideas that made us, then global realities can be made by changing our collective common sense about global reality. One of Allott's slogans is: 'the only power over power is the power of ideas'.

Stalin (in)famously joked at the end of the Second World War: 'How many divisions has the Pope?' (He was implying that as the Pope lacked the material power of an army he was thereby irrelevant to the outcome of post-war geopolitics in eastern Europe). Within less than 50 years, however, the power of nationalist/religious ideas (notably in Poland) had overthrown the power of Stalinist ideas backed by tanks. History was able to laugh at Stalin's short-sightedness about power – though it did take nearly half a century. World politics can change, slowly and incrementally, and rapidly and radically; when change does take place, the processes and time-scales are inter-linked, like the streams joining into a river.

3. History is an account of radical change

Before I continue, a brief recap will help:

- Transcendental theory (human sociality) tells us that radical change is possible. It gives us reason not to be oppressed by static ideas about human potential: 'We Have Worlds Inside Us'.
- Pure theory (critical global theorising) offers a body of ideas about creating a world according to a set of principles that are calculated to create a different world, and one that should work better (with greater equality and freedom) for ever more of us, whatever our nationality, gender, class, colour, religion or no religion.
- Practical theory (emancipatory realism) is about trying to make progressive change happen. It is about agency, and specifically about

changing global realities by changing how we think about global realities.

I certainly do not want to exaggerate the ease with which the power of ideas can change currently dominant ideas are backed by material power and embedded institutions and common sense. This cautioning note is always necessary in world politics. Nobody has put it better than Karl 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.' World politics is the hardest test of all when it comes to the practice of political theory: this is why our subject is sometimes so frustrating and depressing - as well as fascinating.

At the most fundamental level, I have argued that human sociality is synonymous with social change through history. The theory and practice of 'international relations' can therefore be understood as a global dimension of this capacity for, and process of, social change. Attempting to understand the academic discipline of IR as a historical sociology in this way separates it from static theories of IR, notably realism. Realism stresses historical continuities deriving from essentialist understandings of (the powerful idea of) human nature, or of (yet another powerful idea) the structure of anarchy. Instead of continuity as the default position of history – nobody could deny multiple continuities - I want to emphasise historical change, indeed fundamental historical change. There is 'nothing as radical as reality' as Lenin put it.

Let's think about reality being radical for a moment. Charles Darwin encouraged us to adjust our time-scales in relation to physical changes in the human species. That is, he taught us to think in terms of millions of years, during which time natural selection can change the character of a species. I take Lenin's point to be a recognition of how startling change can be if we adjust our time-scales in relation to the social world.

Reality can be radical if we readjust our social clocks. Allow me a personal illustration.

Three out of four of my grandparents never went as far as London – only about 250km from the village where they lived. The only one who did travel (and he went round the world) did so to fight in the Great War. This was a war, of course, in which Turkey and the UK were enemies. Today, one of their grandsons (me) was invited to travel to Ankara to attend a conference; and what's more, he wants Turkey to be part of the EU and thereby participate in law-making directly relevant to 'the British way of life'. I remember my grandparents as generous people. They were quite poor; both my grandfathers were coal miners, and both my grandmothers worked to look after large families. They were as generous as they could be to their

family, but in those days the moral horizons of 'ordinary people' did not include giving money to global charities on a regular basis, or in response to disaster appeals on behalf of complete strangers in wars and earthquakes afflicting distant places. For the generation of their grandchildren, however, the expectation of cosmopolitan giving is normal. In such ways, the understanding of the global-we has changed markedly, in a couple of generations.

These might be thought trivial illustrations. On a bigger scale we can see the radical character of changing reality when new patterns of thought have hit History between the eyes. It is possible to provide many examples: the changes in collective consciousness as a result of the birth of monotheistic religions: the revolution in attitudes and behaviour that came with the understanding that the earth is round not flat; the importance of the legitimisation of such powerful ideas as democracy and equality; and so on. In the time before such ideas became accepted as global realities, they were unthinkable – indeed for the most part unthought. Shortly we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing. The idea that humans might walk on the moon was science fiction one decade, and rather boring TV by the end of the next. Once powerful ideas take hold, things are never the same again.

4. Progress in human society is possible but not inevitable

So, a critical theory for our critical times postulates that global realities change, and can change radically: but is radical change necessarily progress?

There are many critics, of course, of the idea of 'progress' (except for progress in technology, like gadgets to make our pain less and our travel easier – dentists drills and efficient cars for example). But one does not have to be a post-structuralist enemy of Enlightenment ideals to accept that many terrible things have been done in the name of progress (perhaps 'Progress' would be better here). Think of Stalinism. But let us not throw out the baby of progress (the idea of a better world) with the bathwater of historical wrong-doing.

A key concept of critical theory is the idea of *reflexivity* (the strategic monitoring of one's ideas, turning one's critical faculties back on one's own thinking). It is through reflexivity that we know the problems with 19th century hubris about (linear and unproblematic) progress: notions such as 'the onward march of man' and the rest. Through reflexivity we now understand that progress is not what it was – an exercise of reason that in itself represents major progress. It has become so much more apparent that material progress does not, of itself, bring social harmony and individual happiness. However, we should have at least some historical sympathy towards those who once thought it would be so - those who were tempted

to believe in the promise of material-based happiness. It was an understandable hope, from the perspective of those whose primitive technology meant that daily life was a grind, and whose food and shelter depended on a not-always-beneficent nature.

One traditional driver of social progress has been the ancient Greek idea of the 'idea of the ideal', that is, the imagining of a better reality. In relation to world politics, such ideals include peace, justice, freedom, democracy and so on. Such ideals are usefully seen as 'process utopian' goals; that is, better ways of organising our attitudes, institutions, and behaviour, without an expectation of some 'end-point' situation for society in which there will one day be a perfect society on earth. Thinking about ideals has been important to humans, though we have clearly not always (or even often) made a great job of implementing them. (We still must continue chanting: 'Give peace a chance'.) In my view, the theory and practice of politics among nations remains the toughest test for such ideals as 'justice' and 'trust'. While recognising the troubled history of 'progress', I do not conclude that there has been no progress in morality and ethics.

Among others, the philosopher Peter Singer has argued the case for the recognition of (some) moral progress in history. He has pointed to the delegitimisation of slavery and racism, and to the spread of workers' rights. Specifically in the international realm, one can also point over the centuries to the moral progress embedded in the growth of the norms of equality, decolonisation, development, human rights and so on, and to the delegitimation of war. Again, it goes without saying that the implementation of these norms has sometimes been a different story.

At this point I must stress – if it is not obvious already - that I do not equate historical change with the steady march of moral progress. A better world (locally and globally) is possible, though it is not inevitable. Change can invent or revive barbaric ideas, as was the case with the triumph of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s. My position is simply that there are rational grounds for hope in moral progress: whether this possibility becomes the probable depends importantly on the marketplaces and battlefields of ideas. What collectivities think is possible and desirable will be a factor in the future history of human becoming – the good, the bad, or the ugly. If we collectively act on fatalist principles then we are likely to get fatalist outcomes. It does not follow, though, that if we act on transcender principles, transcender outcomes will necessarily come about. Politics on the biggest stage is more complex than that: world politics, to re-target a phrase of Clausewitz's, is 'movement in a resistant medium'.

But progress is a rational hope. It is possible, and history proves it. In addition to the examples just given, history gives us some record of traditional enemies patching up their differences and living in peace; of long periods of religious tolerance in some polities; and of people escaping from

tyranny and creating stable democracies. As the great peace researcher Kenneth Boulding used to say, with characteristic truth-revealing simplicity, 'If it exists, it is possible'.

Of course, emancipatory realists must take for granted that they will not be able to promote progressive change 'under circumstances chosen by themselves', but their effort is not bound to fail. In this regard, I like this quip by the Irish writer George Bernard Shaw: ' The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.' (And let's obviously update this old saying by adding 'and woman'.)

The rest of this address is largely for those who want to join the large body of people within global civil society whose ambition is to be un-reasonable in face of traditional global business-as-usual. I have repeated the phrase 'We Have Worlds Inside Us' (the good, the bad, and the ugly), and at the start argued that the world we inhabit is morbidly ugly in impor-tant respects. Finally, I want to turn to thinking explicitly about the good.

5. Emancipation offers a philosophical anchorage and political goal

For a start, instead of focusing almost exclusively on the traditional IR concepts of anarchy, sovereignty, order and so on, I want to create space at the centre of the discipline for the concept of emancipation.

Emancipation, without doubt, is a controversial concept these days. Indeed, many clever people find it unacceptable. Familiar criticisms are that it is vague, that it is utopian, and that it is Eurocentric.   The concept is not, or need not be any of these things.

For me, a nineteenth century English carpenter and radical, William Lovett, expressed the core of the concept of emancipation in a book title: *The Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom*. In other words, emancipa-tion can be understood to be about securing a level of material satisfaction (symbolised by bread), escaping from a life dominated by ignorance and lies (knowledge), and shaking off the yoke of political tyranny and economic exploitation (freedom). I hope you will agree that understanding emancipa-tion in terms of the goals of bread, knowledge, and freedom is not difficult to understand, is not vague, is not utopian, and is not exclusively Eurocen-tric. Such values have been, can be, and are recognised across the world. Struggles to escape poverty, overcome ignorance, and escape from tyranny exist in history books and folk tales across space and time.

The core of the concept of emancipation should not be difficult to understand therefore. What is difficult – almost always - is working through the politics of emancipation in specific settings. There is invariably much

scope for disagreement about priorities, tactics, short-term and medium-term goals, and so on. But to say that operationalising any theory or ideology in the political arena is difficult is hardly a decisive blow. Emanicipation is no different to any other concept in this regard, whether it is 'democracy' or 'justice'. Politics are always messier in the streets than in seminar rooms, and in the heat of the kitchen than in the recipe books of theory.

'Security' – always a central concern of academic IR - is directly implicated in the goals of bread, knowledge, and freedom. In IR, security has always been about survival, but why should it not also be about (as with Hobbes's conception of 'safety') 'a happy life as far as is possible' ? Insecurity implies threats to both survival and a happy life; it is synonymous with living a determined existence. Think of the insecurity of radical poverty (a person who has to search for food on a rubbish tip); or the insecurity of a state that faces the threat of war; or the insecurity of an ethnic group which is oppressed. Emancipation offers a philosophical anchorage for a theory and practice seeking to move people(s) out of determined existences; in other words, to achieve survival plus a happy life (perhaps 'happier' life would be more felicitous).

By conceiving security as emancipation, I look towards the achievement of a level of security that brings to people and groups some time, energy, and scope to choose to do other things than simply survive as human biological organisms. Security can therefore be seen to be about 'survival-plus', that is, relative freedom from threats which allows some life choices. World security, conceived as survival-plus, means trying to create the conditions in which the global-we (and not just the presently dominant) can live their public and personal lives with space for dignity, love, a laugh, music, and a decent meal.

The challenge, then, is to play our part, however small that might be, in trying to change 'global realities', and so make the world work for the many, and not just the relatively few. Our discipline has a role in this. By joining the tribe of the 'unreasonable', we can seek to change human consciousness about living globally. This requires a revolution human consciousness about the ideas that make world politics. This, in turn, requires something of a revolution in the agenda of our discipline.

6. Ideas are at the heart of 'global realities', and intellectuals have a role in changing them

A 'revolution' in IR? Certainly there have long been murmurings about change – seen in the start of the 'critical turn' in the 1980s. We need to press on with this, moving into the most critical empirical areas, always attending to power in all its forms (military, diplomatic, economic, and social), and shifting our conceptual frameworks, theoretical commitments, and

political orientation away from the balance of power-realism-anarchy agenda. By doing this, we might – *might* - contribute as scholars to changing the collective consciousness about living globally.

The disciplinary shifts I have just alluded to would involve, for a start, prioritising the following: the goal of equality over the celebration of difference; the search for democracy rather than simply accepting the logic of power distribution; the cultivation of empathy against the errors of ethnocentrism; the construction of trust-building as opposed to living with the fatalist assumptions of mistrust; the exploration of cosmopolitan hospitality against the totalitarian pressures of nationalist ideology; the understanding of the politics of stable peace instead of making a fetish of military techniques; the cultivation of duties beyond borders in place of selfish 'national-interests'; and so on. Such shifts belong to a disciplinary agenda organised around the concept of emancipation rather than one assuming global business-as-usual. The world is not working, so let us be unreasonable: it is the only rational position

I have tried to show that the human species has change in our bones (literally), and in our minds (crucially). I have tried to show that we not only have 'Worlds Inside Us', but can reach for the good rather than accept and replicate the bad and the ugly. And I have tried to argue that we have agency, albeit in face of powerful traditions and structures resistant to change.

The global challenge is great. In one sentence it can be expressed as follows: How at this point in history, can human society organise globally, with greater fairness and harmony, to overcome the consequences of the fact that on an ever-smaller planet there are ever-more of us who need to eat every few hours, have an urge to reproduce, who need jobs, and who have active and massively evolved minds which are collectively stuck in regressive ideas about how the world works?

The challenge is great, but 'let's not waste a crisis' in the infamous words of a former White House official. Crises, after all, represent opportunities as well as constituting threats, and the Great Reckoning offers some potential for an acceleration in changes in the collective consciousness about living globally. If not in the next few decades, when?

The challenge – easier to say than to accomplish – is to work towards turning human society globally into an increasingly 'global-we' – a politically-meaningful common humanity. The more common humanity becomes a global reality, the greater will the potential be to build global institutions able to promote common law, and act politically in the common rather than the particular interest.

History has exiled us from each other by borders created through the power-plays of nationalism, gender, class, race, religion, economic forces, and the rest. To build a more global-we, we need to learn, feel, and recognise each other as equal human beings, rather than forever seeing each other, first, as 'English' or 'Turkish', 'Islamic' or 'Christian' – and all the other ideas that we have learned, and that divide. I want us to enjoy un-harmful differences while celebrating and institutionalising cosmopolitan equality.

As students of world politics we have a special role – though I would never want to exaggerate our influence – in changing the collective under-standing of living together globally. There are not many people on earth who have the privilege of spending their working lives thinking about the great issues of world politics. That privilege gives us the opportunity to think – and importantly rethink – global realities. This, by the way, is why I always claim that IR – with all its faults - is without doubt the supreme dis-cipline. It is the only intellectual project that engages so directly with the biggest questions in life (what is real? what can we know? how might we act?) in relation to human behaviour on the biggest stage of all.

As students of this supreme and frustrating discipline, we have a choice: to try to improve global business-as-usual or to try and help con-struct a new consciousness about living globally. We do not have to accept that world politics will remain dominated by ideas that do not work for so many fellow humans, and much of the natural world. We can choose to reject being trapped by – having our minds yoked to - static theories about 'global realities'. Instead of learning and repeating that there can be no alternative, we can choose, for a start, to try and turn every essay, every seminar, every PhD proposal, every lecture, and every relationship inside and outside the classroom into a small act of resistance against the tradi-tional ideas that made today's world politics.

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