
7. Dialectics in critical international relations theory

Shannon Brincat and Susan de Groot Heupner

Dialectics has an incredibly rich, though relatively modest, place in the field of international relations (IR) theory. While the influence of dialectics has remained largely confined to a handful of scholars working within Marxism and critical international relations theory (CIRT), more recent developments have also seen its application in those approaches concerned with “worlding” the discipline of IR (Ling, 2013).¹ As we endeavour to show in this chapter, dialectical thinking has great utility in bridging ontological, epistemological and methodological interests across the entire discipline regarding the problem of analysing *flux*. As an approach that seeks to grasp the inherent changing nature of world politics, dialectics promises a deeper analytic into such diverse phenomena as the rapidity of global changes, interlocking environmental and political crises, and the massive social-cultural dislocations that have accompanied the advance of late capitalism, among others.

Dialectics is an approach – *a way of thinking* – that “understands things through their own development, change, and movement, and, in their relation and interconnectivity with all other things” (Brincat, 2014, p. 588). It involves a certain way of seeing our world: “as an interconnected, contradictory, and dynamic whole or totality (ontology), as a way that we can understand the contradictory nature of our world (epistemology), and as a way to explore or ‘think’ through our world (methodology)” (Brincat, 2014, p. 3). From this dynamic core follows the key analytical benefits of dialectics: the ability to better understand the contradictory relations between all elements and phenomena and the radical potentials for the change this generates. Instead of dualisms and simplistic binaries that bifurcate between phenomena, artificially separating them under taken-for-granted abstractions, dialectical thinking can move freely through to the relations that are constitutive of the phenomenal world and compel human thought to move through to what we call in this chapter “*the between*”.

With this concept of “*the between*” we aim to shift analytical focus to the relations between all elements and phenomena that are in actuality constitutive of them. So, for example, instead of focusing on a relation that exists between A and B that assumes the relation as something separate from them both, emphasis is placed on the

¹ Here, ‘worlding’ the discipline refers to Ling’s idea of recreating IR theory so that it is more inclusive and epistemically open to approaches outside the Western and modern canon. In this example, dialectics has been utilised in what can be viewed as postcolonial approaches to IR theory.

nature of the relation itself without which $A \neq A$ and $B \neq B$. It is this relation of “the between” that other approaches to relationality and change typically overlook. From our dialectical perspective, A and B consist of the multiplicity of relations between them. The importance of emphasising the constitutive nature of relations themselves lies in its ability to redirect commonsensical human thinking that is inclined to categorise and distinguish between A and B and thereby overlook the mutual implication of relationality itself, to instead focus on the relations as inherent to A and B in-themselves. On the basis of this ability to capture “the between”, we argue the power of dialectics is not only found in its explication but also within its analytic. Namely, its analytic may help reveal what exists in the past, being, and negation of elements and phenomena; the historical development and fluidity of all things in their relation and movement (Marx, 1990).

Arguably, one of the earliest texts to explain the outbreak of the First World War (which many regard as the foundational question of the entire discipline of IR) was dialectical in nature (Ashworth, 2000). Lenin’s *Imperialism* (1999), we contend, is far more dialectical in its method than usually seen.² Its mistranslated full title, which should have been “the *latest* stage in capitalism” (emphasis added), was intended to demonstrate the open-ended processes of change in the geopolitical competitions between national bourgeois classes, finance capital, and colonial-imperialism (Lenin, 1999). Its translation as “the *final* stage of capitalism” completely overrode this purpose, instead giving licence to the determinism of dialectical-materialism (“Diamat”) and its thesis of the inevitability of communism. One could highlight the same dialectical underpinnings of Trotsky’s combined and uneven development thesis, since only substantively taken up by Rosenberg in IR (see for example 2012). This utilised dialectical thinking in its rejection of the notion that human society must inevitably develop through a unilinear sequence of “stages” of development towards emancipatory communism, an idea which gave great explanatory power not only to the relative differences in economic development between states but also to the necessity of permanent revolution. Nevertheless, these open dialectical aspects of both Lenin and Trotsky’s work that emanated from the developmentalism as the key aspect of dialectics were largely subsumed under the dogma of Diamat whose determinism took such a stranglehold against thinking dialectically in the early twentieth century.

After this early period, dialectics went into hibernation in IR theory. In its place, classical approaches prevailed, consisting of any number of undialectical beliefs from unverifiable conjecture on human nature to romantic notions of tragedy. These would, in turn, give way to behaviouralism and to a crude positivism that were equally undialectical, trapped as they both were in notions of stasis in a anarchical system of recurrence and repetition. It was not until Robert W. Cox’s (1981) path-breaking

² It is important to note that the title should have been translated as “The Latest Stage in Capitalism” (thus indicating the ongoing process of change in world politics) rather than the “Highest Stage of Capitalism”, which gave it a determinist quality. If one looks to the original German edition, it gives a far better reflection of its dialectical title.

article “Social Forces, States, and World Orders” that the discipline was led back to the fundamental importance of dialectics. The article is most famous for its contrast between critical and problem-solving approaches with its methodological component outlining what Cox called a “framework of action for historical structures” looking at the potentialities of three interacting forces in world politics: ideas, material capabilities/agency, and institutions (Sinclair, 2016). For Cox, these took the form of a particular configuration between social forces, forms of states, and world orders with each “containing, as well as bearing the impact of, the others” (Cox, 1981, pp. 135–138). Structures were no longer inert in this approach but in movement and theory could now grapple with this by understanding the configuration of forces as the framework in which human agency operates. With this simple methodological intervention, dialectics was once again pushed to the forefront of theoretical developments within critical approaches during the so-called Inter-Paradigm Debate.

Yet despite the centrality of Cox’s thought to all of CIRT, it was not until Alker and Biersteker’s (1984) work that dialectics would appear as an operative term within the theory-building of IR. Theirs was the first to look at developing a synthetic dialectical approach that was to be comprehensible to Soviet thought and thereby enable East/West dialogue. Alker’s (1982) work, in particular, was concerned with a form of dialectics that was to be communicable with and across other approaches. In their famous “The Dialectics of World Order” article, Alker and Biersteker (1984, p. 133) attempted to foreground dialectical approaches in IR as leading to more “worldly” and “sophisticated” research and teaching as opposed to the myopia of “parochial behaviouralism” that limited IR to scientific and traditional approaches. In their much larger *Dialectics of World Orders Project* (with Amin, Gilani, and Inoguchi), it was asserted that the application of a dialectical approach would be most productive to “analyze and comprehend the complexity of contemporary world order and disorder” across both East and West.³ Arguably, the challenge is now to achieve such comprehension across North and South simultaneously. Alker and Biersteker argued that the importance of an open-ended dialectics was that it specifically included positivist approaches, was non-deterministic, and remained focused on social processes that proceed from contradictions. For them, our world is composed of multiple and often contradictory world ordering theories and practices. These interrelationships are pervasive, changing, and often identity-modifying, and therefore require an ontology of change that dialectical understanding is primed to achieve.

Yet despite Alker and Biersteker’s insistence on the importance of dialectics in IR, the discipline has remained largely unmoved (Marlin-Bennett & Biersteker, 2012). The only entry of dialectics into IR theory that gained much notoriety was Heine and Teschke’s call for a “dialectic of concrete totality”, which sparked debate in *Millennium* (1996, 1997). Like Alker and Biersteker, they too sought to wake up the

³ This manuscript is yet to be published and includes the work of Alker and Biersteker, with Tahir Amin, Ijaz Gilani, and Takashi Inoguchi. A draft was generously provided to the authors by Thomas Biersteker, for which we are grateful.

discipline to the utility of dialectics, through a model that was to be reflexive, combining empirical and immanent modes of critique. Heine and Teschke's model had three premises: (i) that just as reality is contradictory, so too must our mode of thinking reflect these social contradictions; (ii) place as central praxis and human agency in production, cognition, and communication; and (iii) providing a non-determinative understanding of history as the potential site for reason to emerge through social praxis – or what Marcuse would have called towards a rational society. This process is historically mediated and through it dialectics can help us perceive “human praxes (plural)” within concrete contexts (Heine & Teschke, 1996, p. 415). In their dialectical method, parts are not isolated from their social history or genesis, nor is the whole emptied of its parts to become abstracted as some fixed system or (pre-)determined structure (Heine & Teschke, 1996). For Heine and Teschke (1996) given its historically informed basis for understanding social praxes, dialectics was the most appropriate mode of analysis to understand social development and differentiation in the dynamic context of global processes.

Outside the debate and replies that followed Heine and Teschke's piece, it has only been in recent years that a new undercurrent of dialectical scholarship has emerged – a trend that promises to broaden the historico-cultural basis of dialectical thinking in IR. Agathangelou and Ling (2005) were essential catalysts in this development. Together they sought to overcome the automatic oppositional perspectives, dualisms, and Eurocentrism through the development of what they called a “worlded” IR – one that was derived from the multiple ways of being and living in the world (Agathangelou & Ling, 2004; Ling, 2013). Accordingly, Ling pioneered a unique Daoist dialectical approach to world politics (2013) and was, before her untimely passing, completing a work exploring the dialectical relation between Daoist *yin/yang* theory and the seven categories of *anekāntavāda* argumentation (from Jainist philosophy, which we will briefly discuss in the next section).⁴ These explorations have been allied ways of furthering an open-ended, negative, and social-relational dialectic for world politics (see Brincat, 2009, 2011; Brincat & Ling, 2014). With this impetus, in 2015 a joint project on *Dialectics in World Politics* (2015) was able to draw together a range of dialectical approaches in IR, ranging from Marxism and Critical Realism, to Daoism and Postcolonial theory (Brincat, 2014). What seems to unite this new form of dialectical thinking in IR is a shared interest to broaden the epistemological basis of the discipline by including far older and non-Western forms of dialectical thought, i.e. “worlded”. This suggests that it is no longer enough to develop derivative discourses from these non-Western approaches (that are made then to merely reflect the concepts and assumptions of Western IR theory), but to reclaim what has been lost, to establish new grounds, forms of thinking, and fresh insights into our world (Shahi, 2018).

One key example of the fecundity of bringing in older and non-Western dialectical insights into IR is the symbol of the *spiral* that encapsulates the dialectical under-

⁴ This was to be called *Culture & World Politics: Journeys beyond Westphalia*.

standing of change-time. The overwhelming view of time across approaches in IR is unilinear, that is, things/phenomena emerge from point A to point B. To these are sometimes added either progressive or regressive assumptions and narratives: that change/s occur in some upward trajectory (a teleology of progress) or of decline (teleology of regress). For an example, one key area of tension in IR has become the contestation by postcolonial scholars against modernist narratives whose underlying assumption is of progressive linear change. In dialectics, on the other hand, change/s occurs as if in a spiral, the spiralling arms symbolising the history of sublation in the movement of flux. That is, all the past movements of things/phenomena are retained with this process as it spirals. This captures how dialectical thinking is, ultimately, historical – as Benjamin et al. (1985) said, it provides an approach for thought to have the winds of history in its sails. Symbolised within the spiral, *being* carries within itself all its prior sublations, all those elements of its past, its genesis, and its relationality. Indeed, it cannot be understood – it cannot *be* – without these. One could say the arms of the spiral are the history of its past *beings*, preserving them. Engels (1925), following Marx, called this the “spiral form of development”: everything is made of the mutual penetration of polar opposites and the negation of this relation leads to gradual change.

But such conceptions of a spiralling dialectic are thousands of years older. In Daoist forms of dialectical thinking, for instance, change takes place in a temporal continuity of spatial varieties and differences: complementarity and contradiction are the “two phases” of this “advancing spiral”. As explained by Tian (2005, p. 36), “[t]his is because change is seen not from the ontological viewpoint, which gives formal privilege to the formal aspect of phenomena and separates time and space, but rather in light of the ceaseless transformation of things, in which ‘things’ are rather seen as ‘events’”. So, “from yin to yang and yang to yin, again, indicates an advancing spiral” (Tian, 2005, p. 36). A similar process is observable in the dialectical logical structure of the Buddhist *Bhāvanaviveka*. Here, a formalised system of debate includes the repetition of certain claims so that the discussion accretes additional material with each new pass that the parties make over the topic. The repetitions are not circular – they add new concepts/ideas, and hence accumulate in the spiral through which the debate reaches ever finer logical organisation (Lieberman, 2007). The symbol of the spiral is thus an heuristic to visualise flux from a dialectical viewpoint: nothing is lost in this process, new things arise in their genesis and interconnection, what was prior remains preserved in the spiral arms, and what is possible is present within the spiral-shaped movement itself.

KEY COMPONENTS OF DIALECTICS: FLUX AND INTERNAL RELATIONS

Since very few studies have employed dialectics in IR, rather than continuing to survey this small body of literature this section will focus on explaining two key ideas of dialectics that we think are both unique to its approach and constructive

for how we should “think” in IR. The first is the problem of understanding change, the inherent and essential nature of the universe as *flux*. For dialecticians, nothing is permanent; all things move, alter, and change – the process which dialectical analysis is primed to uncover. The second is the philosophy of internal relations that we define simply as the position that the relations of things/phenomena are essential to them – they would not be what they are without these relations. Of course, such relations may be thin or thick (Johansson, 2011), strong or weak, but they are intrinsic to or constitute “the between” of all things. Both of these ideas are, ultimately, aspects of a metaphysical theory about the nature of our universe – part of a universal philosophy that applies to all *changes* of things/phenomena and all *relations* between things/phenomena in the phenomenal world.⁵ We understand, then, both of these ideas as part of the ontological assumptions of dialectical thinking. In the next two sections we will address the methodological implications that arise from these twin philosophical commitments.

Flux

In order to move away from the mystification of dialectics, it is important to recall the words of Engels when he emphasised the laws of motion are not imposed upon nature and history but rather deduced from them. Just so, “[if] we turn the thing round, then everything becomes simple, and the dialectical laws that look so extremely mysterious in idealist philosophy at once become simple and clear as noonday” (Engels, 1925). By reprising its constitutive ontological elements, we can remove dialectics from its mystical trappings in order for it to be effectively deployed as a comprehensive means of analysis. With this purpose in mind, we propose that dialectics can be best understood as a cognitive approach for those with a knowledge-constitutive interest in understanding change and transformation, or “flux”, that denotes the constancy and indeterminacy of change in our universe.

On the grounds of this ontological premise of flux, nothing is static insofar that every element that constitutes the whole exists in a perpetual state of becoming. Contrary to the ontological assumptions of most other modes of analysis in IR, dialectics privileges motion and fluidity in the conceptualisation and theorisation of the social world. Indeed, the very purpose of dialectics is to challenge the appearance of stability that is both the foundation and the product of traditional modes of IR theory. For example, the realist thesis of system reproduction within anarchy is the foundation of its theoretical conceptions that the theory then reproduces through its analysis. This is merely its own presupposition that it endlessly confirms. Dialectics, in distinction, is understood as an approach to understanding “processes of motion, change and transformation” that form the basis of all existence in their singularity and in their totality. To return to the spiral conception of change-time outlined above, *being* relies on all the parts of the past for what it is *becoming*. Sublation – in the

⁵ For a recent defence of this position in dialectics see Sayers (2015).

Hegelian sense of *aufheben* – captures this idea of the motion of past, present, and future that assumes both the permanency of flux as well as the preservation of parts in this movement. This is the term preferred to “synthesis” (a term Hegel never used) which serves to focus on some aspect while recognising its inherent position within the whole. Moreover, instead of time as a measure of change in the Aristotelian sense, the dialectical measure of change embodies the perception of time as well. Indeed, it is this relative perspective that is crucial to the experience of time and change for human thought.

Non-dialectical approaches to understanding “change” are typically *stagist* – that is to say, where two or more differentiated states form the basis of the development of a thing/phenomena. Change, under this conception, is as an intermittent process in which the external relations between things/phenomena direct change but in which each thing/phenomenon, in-itself, remains static. There is a tipping point whereby *some* thing transforms into *an other*. In this non-dialectical approach, the concept of change is determined by a linear conception of time insofar as it is a momentary capture of two or more stages. In contrast, dialectics perceives of change beyond its momentary existence in which time is not the sole referential point. Of course, we may choose to abstract such moments to focus our attention on any such “moment” but we must not mistake this as the whole or as the process of change. Both past and future, relations and moments, make possible what may be. Thus, on the basis of this historicity and contingency, dialectics is inconsistent with any causal reductionism that seeks for cause and effect by way of the overdetermination, or underdetermination, of certain elements. Dialectics breaks down the actual processes and relations (the “contradictions”) between elements that reveal contingency. This focus is essential because, as we already stated, the relations of a thing, and between all things, is part of its being (i.e. the present state) and its becoming (i.e. the future state). Thus, change is the interpenetration of past and future which, given the meaning of the concept of time in relation to and as part of things/phenomena, can only be considered as a process of continuous *flux*.

To recall one of the most renowned of all dialectical aphorisms of Heraclitus, “everything flows, nothing stands still” (*Panta Rhei*). In his Presocratic cosmology, the ongoing process of change (*flux*) comes about through the relations or exchanges that he calls “strife” and which he symbolises as the process of transformation in the element of fire. His demonstration of this principle is perhaps even better known regarding the impossibility of entering into the same river twice: “On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow”, or “We both step and do not step into the same rivers; we both are and are not” (Barnes, 2013) In this logic, the river is never constituted by the same waters at two different points in time, and, yet, though the waters are always changing, the river appears the same and can be identified as such in human thought. It is not just that those things that appear most stable in their identity are actually not so. More so, the river is a metaphor to reveal how seemingly permanent entities are always undergoing change and at the same time can be known however temporally – as posited by Graham (n.d.) it is “precisely *because* the waters are always changing that there are rivers at all”, and without

which would be something else entirely. How a thing changes, then, is inherent to its very being. Dialectics is an ideal method to assist in the analysis of this ongoing movement between identity and difference.

Dietzgen (2010, p. 34) helps us go a step further with this logic. He writes:

The universe is in every place and at any time itself, new, and present for the first time. It arises and passes away, passes and arises under our very hands. Nothing remains the same, only the infinite change is constant, and even the change varies. Every particle of time and space brings new changes.

He uses this against the materialist/idealist dualism claiming both positions fail to see “the relation of content to form” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 122) As against the materialists, he claims we never meet anything but perishable forms of matter. Matter changes and flux itself appears eternal to us. Or more poetically stated, “[t]he essential nature of the universe is change. Phenomena appear, that is all” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 36) As against the idealists, Dietzgen (2010, p. 38) claims their belief that “there is an abstract nature behind phenomena which materialises itself in them” is nothing less than the admission that this hidden nature is made by the human mind. Research or understanding how “hidden nature” materialises cannot take place *a priori*, but only *a posteriori*, and on the basis of empirically given effects, our sense perceptions, and human faculties of mind. In this way, dialectics transcends the materialism/idealism debate and pushes us to view the universe in a fundamentally relational manner.

Internal Relations

As a corollary to the ontology of flux, dialectics requires a philosophy that focuses on those processes that constitute its object of analysis. As stated by Hegel (1975[1830], §81), the purpose of dialectics is “to study things in their own being and movement and thus to demonstrate the finitude of the partial categories of understanding”. So, the knowledge-interest in understanding flux leads to, even presupposes, the philosophy of internal relations: that relations are intrinsic to the nature of one or more of the relata (an *essential* relation), without which thing/phenomenon would not be as they are. This philosophical commitment implies that things/phenomena exist only insofar as they are “in contact with other things, in reality ... [things/phenomena] manifest themselves because they are existent, and they manifest themselves in as many different ways as there are other things with which they enter into relations of time and space” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 38). As these things relate to each other in space–time, they undergo change, and, concurrently, so does the whole. But rather than focusing more on this aspect of how relations generate flux, we will here explore the implications of internal relations for how to think or understand things/phenomena more fully. Here, we are not concerned with the dispute of Bradley, Russell and Moore regarding internal relations but the far more advanced form presented by Joseph Dietzgen (1828–1888) and, more recently, Bertell Ollman (1976, 1993,

pp. 28–36, 2003), who offers the most thorough account of how the philosophy of internal relations is intrinsic to the dialectical method.

According to Ollman (2015, p. 9), the distinction between the philosophy of external and internal relations is the “most important philosophical question of the day”. Whereas the philosophy of external relations considers “relations” and “things” as independent of each other, the philosophy of internal relations regards “things” as constitutive of “relations”. In other words, in the former, change is perceived to affect the “thing” or “relation” in their totality but is not considered to alter the internal qualities that come to define the “thing” or “relation”. In the latter, on the other hand, it is the “relations” that constitute the “thing” that are subject to change – these relations are essential to the object without which it would no longer be the same. Dietzgen declares: “Any thing that is torn out of its contextual relations ceases to exist. A thing is anything ‘in itself’ only because it is something for other things, by acting or appearing in connection with something else” (Dietzgen 2010, p. 29) In other words, the conditions of things or the existence of phenomena are taken to be part of what they are. This implies that everything has some relation, however distant, to everything else. Marx riffs on this theme: “The sun is the object of the plant – an indispensable object to it confirming its life – just as the plant is an object of the sun, being an expression of the life awakening power of the sun, of the sun’s objective essential power” (Marx, 1959, p. 157). The sun’s effect on the plant is an “expression” of the sun itself, a part of it, just as is the plant to the sun.

In the Western canon, Hegel was the first to construct the type of total system that internal relations implies. He altered the notion of identity used by Kant (the “in-itself”) by replacing both the notion of mathematical equality ($1 = 1$) and Aristotelian identity ($A = A$) with “relational equality”, that is, where the entity in question is “considered identical with the whole that it relationally expresses” (in Ollman, 2003, p. 41). That is, “the thing under examination is not just the sum of its qualities but, through the links these qualities (individually or together in the thing) have with the rest of nature, it is also a particular expression of the whole ...” (Ollman, 2003, p. 40). Thus, Hegel maintains that truth “is the whole” (in Ollman, 2003, p. 41), or as Dietzgen (2010, p. 41) would later claim “[t]he universe is the truth”. The importance of this philosophy is crucial to how dialectics is able to understand identity and difference. So, within Aristotelian identity ($A = A$), the unit (A) has already been declared different from everything else so that identity and difference are necessarily mutually exclusive, and the relation between any two units must be one or the other (Ollman, 1976). The philosophy of internal relations, in distinction, allows for “the logical coexistence of identity and difference” (Ollman, 1976, p. 21). For Dietzgen (2010, p. 41), semblance and truth “flow dialectically into one another” – and hence our conceptions like hard and soft, good and bad, right and wrong – in which they can be related and at the same time remain different. Kant’s “thing in-itself” disappears in the universe of relations – behind the appearance of identity, the object is much more, it is part of the totality of relations, it is everything. It only appears in such and such a way in a particular moment and place in space–time, and to a specific perspective of human perception and mind that is ultimately relative. As

for Hudis, the act of dialectical thinking enables us to see that the thing's otherness is itself a moment in the effort to annul this otherness by knowing the object as itself. As Dietzgen (2010, p. 40) affirms, "[e]very existence is relative, in touch with other things, and entering into different relations of time and space with them". There are many examples of understandings of internal relations throughout the history of dialectical thinking in other philosophical traditions. In the dialectical tradition of ancient India, for example, the notion of the *svarupa* relation denotes the inherent "non-independent status" of identity and emphasises the interpenetration of qualities of the self and the other (Ruegg, 1981). So, dialectical thinking does not impose static holism reducible to the identity of a particular thing – when Hegel extols that "the truth is the whole" he discerns the whole in temporality and not in permanence. The "truth" signifies only temporal stability, and incompleteness is representative of the "whole". The lesson is to be on guard against any "unit" of analysis being presented as given in-itself and/or unchanging.

For the philosophy of IR, the universe provides the basis for all thought. We cannot think or imagine outside of this. So mind/matter are no longer seen as dualistic, as "either/or". Indeed, they "are real only in their inter-relations" (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 21). Mind exists as a part of the entire universe so that its content is only the effect of the other parts – the universe is what furnishes the material for thought, through which mind can then both generalise and distinguish. As Dietzgen wrote to Marx, "*thinking means to develop the general from what is given by the senses, from the particular*" (Dietzgen, 2010, original emphasis). At the same time, because of internal relations, to fully understand one object at one moment in time requires, ultimately, the truth of *everything* else. So, any "thing in-itself" is *factum*, something made, something *only* ever a "concept of the mind": the universe can be seen as one unit, and every part of it can be seen as an infinite number of relations and perceptions thereof. Hence, the importance of the dialectical method in sorting through contradictions and oppositions, generalisation and differences of all things, *and* its insistence on the necessary movement of thought to see such abstractions as a concrete part of one and the same whole. This mutual interdependence of all things – the infinite nest of relations that constitutes the universe – can be viewed in any way by the human mind. The difference is merely one of perspective of focus, of our interest in pursuing knowledge, and of the questions we wish to answer.

So, the question that inevitably arises when attempting to think dialectically is where to *begin* and *end* analysis, given that both are potentially infinite. As stated by Ollman (1976, p. 226), dialectics:

views the whole as the structured interdependence of its relational parts – the interacting events, processes and conditions of the real world – as observed from any major part. Since the ordering of elements and their relative importance varies according to the vantage point adopted, this view admits as many totalities (structured wholes) as there are take-off points for analysis.

This leads to the question of *abstraction* – the choice of the human mind in what it focuses on and, for a moment, removes from its relations (Ollman, 1976). For scholars this is a necessary part of analysis – we cannot hold all things in mind at once. This means that the *interests* and *purposes* behind all analysis are fundamental (to recall the famous line of Robert W. Cox). It also means that what we can know of any particular thing in any particular moment is only ever partial and hence the need for a system of thought in which each part is seen as related to and a facet of the whole. Dialectics requires the movement in thought from abstraction of the thing/phenomena, and its placement back in the whole. Without this movement, the method becomes one-sided and the depiction of reality (the “whole”) distorted. So, while all things are transitory and related, dialectical “thinking” can generalise, can discern differences, can account for changes in qualities and quantities, can individuate based on similarities, can deduce and infer – but with the steadfast recognition that the materiality of relations is grasped by the human mind. It is the vantage of the researcher, their choices and interests, that determine what is included in analysis, where it begins, where it ends, just as it is the researcher who manipulates their subject through abstractions (Ollman, 1976). It also accounts for the difficulty in undertaking dialectical analysis, not just in terms of the length of such studies (like *Capital*, and its attempt to examine the many sided relations of this economic system) but the difficulties in language for the different abstractions deemed necessary to capture the complexity of the thing/phenomena under analysis within all its manifold relations. With this admission, the researcher must possess humility that knowledge is never complete or full. That is, any account, when viewed against the whole, is necessarily a one-sided version, or, in the words of Ollman (1976, p. 273) “uni-dimensional and therefore incomplete”. Moreover, what is taken as rational is only relative, that is, applicable as rational for a particular time and place. Previous forms of analysis and knowledge claims that are exposed as being limited may be sublated but are never useless, they are “ascending stages of understanding ... which contain ever more truth and ever less error ...” (Pannekoek, 1902, p. unknown). Indeed, for dialecticians, the only real error is “unwanted assumptions” and the only mistake is when subjectivities are taken as objective “without further inquiry” (Dietzgen, 2010, p. 49).

What the philosophy of internal relational does for IR theory is to help overcome its tendencies towards both binary (“either/or”) thinking and its entrapment under identitarian thinking. Recall the surprise of the neo-realists at the end of the Cold War, at the absolute failure of this theory to explain this fundamental systemic change. Think, too, of the hierarchical relationalism in mainstream constructivism, for example, in which norms “cascade” downward and are advanced through “entrepreneurs” in successful forms of norm diffusion in IR (see Price, 1995). Even though some have shown that political change is not the inevitable outcome of the initiatives of norm entrepreneurs (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), the primary social relation taken into account is this hierarchical form that privileges a specific actor above all others. The importance of the context of such events – shifts in polarity or in normative change – are neglected and undervalued in both of these theoretical approaches.

Change evokes either “surprise” (and the contradiction of the foundational claims of the theory, in the example of neo-realism) or is explained in a linear casual manner (in which wider relations are neglected, as in constructivism). Only those relations that appear *immediately* (and therefore superficially) to such theories are taken into account – all others are assumed not to exist, are completely ignored, or are at best neglected. As Hegel expressed so matter-of-factly, “a one-sided relation is no relation at all” (cited in Williams, 1969, note 8, p. 41). Yet within these approaches the reality of change and the internal relations between all forces in IR is reduced to one-sided causal accounts in which certain factors become determinative – but they are determinative only because they have been abstracted without placement back into the whole. Neo-realism constructs an unchanging system whose emergence in the history of world order remains as inexplicable as its demise.

Constructivism, on the other hand, dismisses crucial parts of the processes and relations responsible for normative change becoming incapable of accurately comprehending change instead privileging a certain actor or certain event as determinative. By isolating entrepreneurs and the norms themselves from the social relations that they are merely an expression of, constructivism hides relevant relations and distorts others. The objective features or conditions of which human beings are a part of are grossly undervalued. Such approaches have fallen to the error of “unwanted assumptions”, mistaking some subjective judgement as objective “without further inquiry”. It is only dialectical accounts – premised on the philosophy of internal relations – that ensures thought moves from the whole to the part and can overcome these problems acute within traditional theories. Specifically, it is “only the prior acceptance of the identity of each part in the whole, [that] permits adequate reflection on the complex changes and interaction that constitute the core qualities of the real world” (Ollman, 1976, p. 19).

It must pointed out that internal relations does not rule out causal relations, in fact it presupposes them: but it is sceptical of claims where one element or factor is made primarily responsible and/or where immediacy of causal analysis becomes over-determined. Indeed, dialectics is the method for exposing such over-determined claims because it is the method of *doubt*. Dialectics makes us qualify such claims of certainty in causation, compelling us to recall the mutual interdependence of all things that are in constant interaction, that the interactive/relational context limits the possibilities of what is being asserted as causal and what, apparently, is being denied (Ollman, 1977). As argued by Sayers (2015, pp. 27–28):

The philosophy of internal relations is not about what is immediately apparent. What it says is that the more we go beyond what seems immediately evident, the more we learn about a thing or event, the more we come to see its necessity. A complete understanding of things would reveal their full necessity, the internal nature of their connections with all other things ... In doing this, we must presuppose that these facts or events are necessarily related, though for the present, we do not understand how ... [and that] We have no guarantee that it [our analysis] will be vindicated.

Dialectics, then, compels thought to dig deeper. It rejects the surfaced causality of cascading norms or presupposed state behaviours within the security dilemma. These are simple answers. Instead, the full complexity of internal relations must be made a focal point of thought. But in practical terms we need only look at economic flows, migration movements, environmental crises, all of which reveal how our lives are so intimately bound with all others on the planet and which gives the concept of the internal relation of people, our global interconnectedness, more concrete meaning. It pushes us towards the constellations/networks/valences of our relations in the world. For us in IR, the subject of study are real people, conditions, and events of global society, but the units are individuated and must vary according to the purpose of research and the limits of knowledge at any one time. Yet in order for such ideas to be known, they must be *analysed* “into a practical, tangible, perceptible, concrete thing and into a theoretical mental, thinkable, general thing” – and hence the importance attached to dialectics (Pannekoek, 1902, p. unknown). What is needed then in IR is “practical dialectics” that can help us make dialectics a practice of thought – a way to help *move* through thinking – and which we outline an example of in the next section (Pannekoek, 2003, p. 92).

DIALECTICAL “MOVEMENTS” IN FIVE PARTS

Based on these two pivotal ontological assumptions of flux and internal relations, in this final section we describe a potential way for applying dialectical thinking in IR through five movements that we have modified from the work of Ollman (2003) and what he describes as the “dance of the dialectic”. The methodological movements of dialectical thinking – the choices the dialecticians make in apprehending and analysing its subject matter – operate in both linear and nonlinear directions. This may seem contradictory, but the potential of dialectical analysis is located in this entanglement. Dialectical analysis is always multidirectional, and hence our deliberate choice of terminology to describe this process of thinking as “movements”. This terminology denotes the need for thought to continuously move, to not stand still, as evidenced in Hegel’s insistence on moving through Being, Essence and Concept (and back again) in *Logic* (Dunayevskaya, 2003, p. 39). Every abstraction contains elements of *an* other: it has characteristics of the specific (or particular) and the general (the universal), neither of which can be understood in isolation. Dialectical thinking is able to capture the constitutive elements on the macro and micro scales in this entanglement as it is always understood in relational and processual terms. To borrow from Ollman (2003), in this entanglement dialectics discerns each constitutive element microscopically and provides different magnification glasses to recognise the multiplicity of functions, relations, and qualities of each element. It does not ask *why* things are changing (because they are already changing) but asks *why* something appears to change the way it does, or why this process of change appears to have stopped; and *why* relations take different forms and may appear as independent (Ollman, 2003, p. 14). This demands forward, backward, and multidirectional analyses to

view the different ways in which the elements, processes, and relations of the thing/phenomena operate in the totality. Thus, rather than fixed methodological steps, the dialectical approach can be seen as a systematic operationalisation of different modes of abstraction embodied in successive movements of thought that regards the various forms entanglements as movement and relation.

Movement One: Choice of Abstractions

After the initial step of choosing the subject matter of research from the infinite array of those possible within the whole, the first movement – or “step” in the dance of dialectic – is abstraction which, in the dialectical tradition, is understood as an activity, as a verb. This mental activity involves the deliberate and systematic selection and deconstruction of certain elements (or abstractions in the noun form) of a thing/phenomenon that constitutes a particular totality removed (for the purposes of analysis) from the larger whole. It is removed so that it can be analysed more closely but in full recognition that removed from its relations in this way it can only remain partially known. Ollman (1990, p. 27) explains that abstraction denotes the “simple recognition of the fact that all thinking about reality begins by breaking it down into manageable parts”. This choice of abstraction may appear arbitrary to non-dialectical thinkers but the selection is part of the critical process of judgement and evaluation of what elements in the totality of relations are most relevant to the thing/phenomena – as Cox (1981) always reminds us, our knowledge is always for someone and some purpose. This flexibility of selection is anything but arbitrary in the sense that there exists, of necessity, a logical relation between these elements with respect to the whole. For example, in the context of IR, we might say the environment, economy, and politics are “logically internal” to one another in that the social relations contained in each are necessarily intertwined and mutually dependent. For methodological purposes, these abstractions are of one particular aspect of the totality. As Ollman (1990, p. 39) writes, “boundaries are never given and when established never absolute”. In other words, the object of study is the premeditated range against which the dialectician determines what and how to abstract – but this is never mistaken for the totality itself – and which compels thought to constantly place its abstraction back within the whole.

Movement Two: Levels of Analysis

As already mentioned, the choice of subject matter is not arbitrary for dialecticians. Given its acceptance of the ontologies of flux and internal relations, those who are concerned with using dialectics are typically concerned with questions of how and why things are seen to change as they do – and how relations between things generate these ongoing processes of flux within a given context and as seen from a specific perspective. Ollman (2003) classifies three strategic modes of dialectical analysis, namely: level of extension, level of generality, and vantage point (which we consider as so important we treat it as a separate “movement”). These assist analysis to recog-

nise the internal relations and the changes that occur when abstractions are understood from different positions, functions, or points of entry. The level of extension refers to the boundaries of a particular spatial and temporal totality of related parts. The level of generality brings a particular function or quality of the abstraction into clear focus, which, in turn, allows thought to discern the distinct relations of each part in relation to the totality. This involves a shift from particularity to universality, or difference to equivalence respectively, of the functions and qualities of each element in relation to each other. Vantage point refers to the point of entry in which a particular abstraction occupies a central position to examine its relative importance in function and purpose to other elements and the totality. With each change in position, in the words of Ollman (2003, p. 75), “there are significant differences in what can be perceived, a different ordering of the parts, and a different sense of what is important”.

The level of generality refers to the breakdown of parts from the most specific quality to the most general. If we look at the idea of subjectivity, an example taken from Ollman, from its most specific to the most general quality, the “subject” can be subdivided into any number of forms of their identity: as unique individual, occupier of specific trade/profession, producer/consumer of goods and services, embodiment of surplus value, citizen of society, species in the natural world and, most generally, an element of the metaphysical realm (Ollman, 2003). Thus, abstractions of any kind are necessarily situated in one or another category of level of generality. This is intended to compel thought to move abstractions across these various levels in order to perceive all the different relations, interactions, contradictions, and functions crucial to understanding the object in its complexity. This analytical process of re-abstraction (as verb and noun) is imperative for the immanent relations to become apparent. At this level of generality, the abstractions (as nouns) undergo a process of deliberate conversion from being temporally fluid to temporally stable. This temporal stability by means of the process of re-abstraction enables thought to capture, however momentarily, the interaction and interpenetration of different variables (abstractions as nouns) and the set of conditions within and among these variables regarding potential change.

Movement Three: Vantage Point

Vantage point (often referred to, unhelpfully, as the “interpenetration of opposites”) or what we would prefer to call “dialectical relativity” goes to the idea that how a thing/phenomenon appears is due to its conditions and the conditions of the observer. It is this “perspectival element” (Ollman, 1993, p. 16) that ensures dialectical analysis remains relative and requires constant reflexivity on behalf of the observer: the dialectician. Arguably, one of the earliest to formulate the importance of vantage to dialectical analysis in Western philosophy was Aristotle who pushed for the examination of objects/subjects from “each side” in order to expose the

truth/falsity of such claims.⁶ He showed how the alteration of vantage and context can reveal different things about the object/subject. This was the key reason why Marx praised Aristotle as the “greatest thinker of antiquity” (McCarthy, 1992, p. 2). Aristotle placed vantage points (from “each side”) to context, relation, and opinion as essential to the dialectical process. Given his Principle of Non-Contradiction ($A = A$), that something cannot “be” and “not be”, the addition of vantage point helped situate analysis in a reality in which the dialectician and interlocutor were present and relative within their knowledge community. In this manner, Aristotle introduced many of the categories of dialectical thought later developed in Hegel’s *Logic* (Being, Quantity and Quality, Part and Whole, Necessity and Accident, Potential and Actual) through which dialectics became a system of investigating the many aspects under which an object can be regarded – a way in which thought could apprehend that $A \neq A$ or that $A = A$ dependent on perspective.

Earlier still, we can locate a related form of thinking in the concept of *Anekāntavāda* – the “many sidedness of reality” – that emerged at the beginning of 500 BCE in the thought of Mahāvīra and the Jainist theory of judgement (Schwartz, 2018, p. 91). Jainist ontology holds that no substance will terminate, nor any new substance originate in endless time, and that things are always undergoing change. Of this endless change, we perceive mere single facets of this process for a thing cannot be held or known all at once by the human mind. The stable character or appearance of identity is merely relative to one of perspective (Wald, 1975). *Anekāntavāda* led Jainist thought to commit to a range of epistemological choices: plurality, an ethics of toleration, and, most importantly for our purposes, the multiplicity of viewpoints. As all perspectives are necessarily one-sided and cannot comprehend the entire truth, *Anekāntavāda* compels thought to *Nayavāda* (partial viewpoints) and *Syādvāda* (conditional predication, or the dialectic of seven-fold predication). *Nayavāda* is the theory of partial viewpoints and the necessity of the plurality of perspectives. From this position, to gain knowledge/experience from only one *naya* (one individual character) would be to become like one of the seven blind men, who, each feeling separate parts of an elephant, conclude the single part they hold represents the elephant’s true form. *Nayavāda* therefore pushes thought towards the recognition that the viewpoints we adopt are limited by our subjective capacities (i.e. our position, fallibilities, vantage, experience, and so on) and that the viewpoints we adopt are defined by the very interests or the purposes by which we pursue thought (including not only personal biases and social conditions, but also the goals of knowledge). It does not reject such incomplete knowledge but sees in them *partial* (limited) expressions of the whole, elements that allow us to comprehend a part of reality (Shah, 1998). As such, it developed a method – the seven-fold predications of *Syādvāda*, or the seven categories – to form a system of logic to exhaust the possibilities of *all* knowledge claims. This does so by emphasising the relativity of each predication. That is,

⁶ See *The Politics*, II, s 3; 8. This was also taken up by Al Farabi, in *Ibna Sina’s Logic of the Shifa*; and Ibn Rushd’s short and middle commentaries, as well as by Maiomonides.

“Syād” – loosely translated as “from some viewpoint” or “may be” – is affixed to every statement to demonstrate its conditional or partial aspect, and, thereby, every such statement is able to retain its *relative* truth. When expressed as a whole, these perspectives can cover all claims to knowledge of a thing/phenomena. The Syādvāda are: (1) may be, it is; (2) may be, it is not; (3) may be, it is and it is not; (4) may be, it is indescribable; (5) may be, it is and yet is indescribable; (6) may be, it is not and it is also indescribable; (7) may be, it is and it is not and it is also indescribable.

None of this should be mistaken as implying that dialectics reverts to an absolute relativity. Not all perspectives are equally valid, as Ollman often repeats. Alongside the levels of extension and generality, abstractions can be “manipulated” into vantage points through which to view the distinctive relations that exist within the whole. This can be seen as a change of perspective and focus from which to understand more comprehensively the complexity of internal relations. Such representations should not be mistaken as “either/or”, or, as “static/fixed” notions of identity. Instead, different vantages expose the different embodiments and facets of what appears to a perspective as identity. Hence, the mode of vantage point serves as a systematic exposition of the complexity of the social relations that exist within the relational whole. Context is of crucial significance to comprehend internal relations, as the variables do not interact with the context and vice versa, but instead the context exists within the representation of the variables.

Movement Four: Contradictions

Contradiction is the best known aspect of dialectics and its most important aspect – as stated by Hegel (in Brincat, 2009, p. 456), contradiction “is the root of all movement and vitality; it is only insofar as something has a contradiction within it that it moves, has a drive and activity”. Premised on the ontologies of flux and internal relations, contradictions appear through dialectical analysis because its approach does not view things as static and lifeless, or as externally related and independent, or with fixed identity. Rather, as stated by Engels, “as soon as we consider things in their motion, their change, their life, their reciprocal influence on one another. Then we immediately become involved in contradictions” (in Ollman, 2003, p. 84). Dialectics enables cognition to move beyond the appearance of contradiction as paradox or opposition to interrogate the relations of which it is constituted. For Ollman (2003, p. 17), contradiction is best described then as the incompatible development of different elements within the same relation, that is, elements that are interdependent. He continues:

Consequently, their paths of development do not only intersect in mutually supportive ways, but are constantly blocking, undermining, otherwise interfering with and in due course transforming one another ... The future finds its way into this focus as the likely and possible outcomes of the interaction of these opposing tendencies in the present, as their real potential.

For example, wealth and poverty within the capitalist world economy are revealed as two sides of the same coin; they cannot be conceptualised without or in the absence of the other. In fact, the existence of one presupposes the other. Contradictions are the unions of such processes, as they undermine and support each other and must therefore be properly regarded as different elements of the *same* unit as it moves and shifts over time, historically and organically. As Ollman explains, contradiction contains various movements including mutual reinforcement and subversion, escalation, transformation, and, lastly, resolution. For analytical purposes, abstractions (and re-abstractions) of these same relations expose these contradictions in their various movements and give content to the internal relations of each, helping thought to move beyond the appearance of contradiction to its essence as the possible outcomes of this interaction at a given moment.

It is these inner contradictions within internal relations that are responsible for all change. Yet non-dialecticians typically focus on one “factor” or one “determination” in their linear and mono-causal narratives because they cannot regard all the sides of the contradiction equally, nor do they have a method by which to abstract these many sides from one moment to the next. The result is a one-sided analysis that leads to causation bias. Such approaches, as stated by Ollman (2003, p. 18), “can never adequately grasp the way processes actually interpenetrate, and can never gauge the forces unleashed as their mutual dependence evolves from its distant origins to the present and beyond”. In distinction, for dialecticians, tracing how certain social contradictions unfold – whether those within capitalism, the state, or patriarchy (and so on and so on) – is a key way for “discovering the main causes of *coming* disruptions and *coming* conflict” (Ollman, 2003, p. 18). It is because of its perspective – its vantage – that dialectics can discern contradictions that exist in fact but which other approaches would miss, misconstrue, or ignore (Ollman, 2003, p. 108). Dialectical analysis, taken in its methodological form, is therefore fundamental to the “tracings” of such contradictions by focusing on the movements/forces/relations that simultaneously reproduce the existing status quo (or equilibrium) and those that are undermining it (Ollman, 2003, p. 85).

Over time these contradictory relations may lead to the overwhelming of one side or the other, leading to either partial or total resolution. However, real contradictions – such as those in the social life of IR – are categorically different from contradictions in logic. Whereas logical contradictions are a sign of error that necessitates reformulation and correction, in relations of “real” contrariety between persons/groups, these social contradictions are unsuccessfully mediated problems of intersubjectivity that may, or may not, be sublated (Brincat, 2011, p. 678). Such a move was made explicit by Adorno (in Alker, 1982, p. 85) in his critique of the material contradictions in liberal society:

If social science takes the concept of a liberal society as implying freedom and equality ... [and then] disputes, in principle, the truth content of these categories under liberalism – in view of the inequality of the social power which determines the relations between people – then these are not logical contradictions which could be eliminated by means of

more sophisticated definitions, nor are they subsequently emergent empirical restrictions of a provisional definition, but, rather, they are the structural constitution of society itself.

Dialectics exposes the unfinished process of the development of human potential, reveals its incompleteness, and exposes the potentialities that are as yet unrealised but which are, potentially, realisable. At this point dialectics moves towards a transformative critique of existing conditions that can overcome the separation between ideal as it appears (the promises of social order) and its actuality. But reality is seen as “complex multi-path developmental processes that can be interwoven or contradictory in numerous ways” (Patomäki, 2017, p. 173). As such, there is no predetermination, guarantee of progress, or any other teleological claim in dialectics because all such potentialities are dependent on the constellations of social relations that form the conditions of social change. Dialectics merely informs social analysis to the relations supporting or blocking such change. History has a “double character”, things/phenomena that may appear inert, or appear static in in the conditions of the status quo, are nevertheless potentially dynamic. They too form part of the arms of the spiral of history. As explained by Neufeld (1997), social contradictions cannot be sustained over time, and dialectics’ real value is in assisting thought to better understand how these antagonistic forms *may* resolve themselves. In this way dialectics can be an aid in human emancipation.

Movement Five: Open-endedness

Aetiologically the idea of dialectical analysis as a “crystal ball” is an impossibility, for one cannot not know *a priori* which social factor(s) will have causal effect, nor can one prove that certain processes are historically necessary (Ollman, 1971). So, the idea of dialectics’ detractors that it is either predictive or teleological is merely an aspersion by those who do not understand it. Distinctively, given the ontological interdependence of and between relations, the mode of dialectical enquiry does not allow for reductive explanations found in causation and determination. These may have specific truths within specific contexts but they are never complete or whole. As we have seen with the movement of “abstraction”, dialectics always requires any abstracted thing/phenomenon to be re-integrated into the whole, into the complete nest of internal relations. It requires thought to constantly move between these movements simultaneously, to never rest, or, to borrow from Tolkein’s *The Hobbit*, for mind to go “there and back again”. This was the essential part of Hegel’s *Logic* and should remain the key methodological insight of this endless movement of thought.

Dialectics does not claim that human comprehension can ever be complete. Rather, the process of comprehension is open-ended, an ongoing process of (potentially) greater knowledge of the totality with the acknowledgment that any such knowledge claim is ultimately partial and transient, based on vantage that is likely to change in time, place, and context. Positing internal relations as primary, Dietzgen (2010) shows the relativity of all truth claims, how they are all partial truths, but that knowledge can develop and expand, and therefore that there are better and worse

forms of thinking. In this way, dialectics can help overcome the limitations of many approaches to IR that get stuck within given causal explanations by ensuring that at its level of abstraction of the particular (i.e. where an object, phenomenon, or moment is analysed in its particularity) is always re-integrated within the whole, that is, within the manifold relations and interconnections that make up world politics.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have traced the importance of dialectical thinking in IR theory, detailed two of its core ontological premises in flux and the philosophy of internal relations, and outlined steps for its application that anyone interested in critical approaches in IR could take to deploy dialectics in their own research. Dialectics is best regarded as a process of thinking, an approach to thought itself, and should not be mistaken as the product thereof. The aim, at its core, is in getting us to think on “the problem of thinking” within a world that is not static or independent, but a world that is in flux and constituted by internal relations. Because of these ontological commitments of flux and internal relations, it pursues understanding relations further than any other theory and comes to a far greater analytical understanding of “*the between*”, the mutual implication of relationality itself that can be of acute significance when studying the dynamic forces of world politics in movement. But we must always remember that the focus of any emancipatory theory must be on using ideas to change the materiality of social conditions – to change how we relate to each other and nature – and not in using ideas to change ideas.

REFERENCES

- Agathangelou, A.M. & Ling, L.H. (2004), The House of IR: From Family Power Politics to the Poises of Worldism. *International Studies Review*, **6**(4), 21–49.
- Agathangelou, A.M. & Ling, L.H. (2005), Power and Play Through Poisies: Reconstructing Self and Other in the 9/11 Commission Report. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, **33**(3), 827–853.
- Alker, H.R. (1982), Logic, Dialectics and Politics: Some Recent Controversies, in H.R. Alker, Jr. (ed.), *Dialectical Logics for the Political Sciences*, Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities, 7. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1–96.
- Alker, H.R. & Biersteker, T.J. (1984), The Dialectics of World Order: Notes for a Future Archeologist of International Savoir Faire. *International Studies Quarterly*, **28**(2), 121–142.
- Ashworth, T. (2000), *Trench Warfare, 1914–1918: The Live and Let Live System*. London: Pan Macmillan.
- Barnes, J. (2013), *Presocratics-Arg Philosophers*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Benjamin, W., Spencer, L. and Harrington, M. (1985), Central Park. *New German Critique*, **34**, 32–58.
- Brincat, S. (2009), Negativity and Open-endedness in the Dialectic of World Politics. *Alternatives*, **34**(4), 455–493.
- Brincat, S. (2011), Towards a Social-relational Dialectic for World Politics. *European Journal of International Relations*, **17**(4), 679–703.

- Brincat, S. (2014), Dialectics and World Politics: The Story So Far ... *Globalizations*, **11**(5), 587–604.
- Brincat, S. & Ling, L.H.M. (2014), Dialectics for IR: Hegel and the Dao. *Globalizations*, **11**(5), 661–687.
- Cox, R.W. (1981), Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, **10**(2), 126–155.
- Cox, R.W. & Schechter, M.G. (2002), *The Political Economy of a Plural World: Critical Reflections on Power, Morals and Civilization*. London: Psychology Press.
- Dietzgen, J. (2010), *The Nature of Human Brain Work: An Introduction to Dialectics*. Oakland: PM Press.
- Dunayevskaya, R. (2003), *Philosophy and Revolution*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Engels, F. (1925), Dialectics II, in A. Blunden (ed.), *Dialectics of Nature*. [online] Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/ch02.html> [Accessed 9 December 2018].
- Finnemore, M. and Sikkink, K. (1998), International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International organization*, **52**(4), 887–917.
- Graham, D. (n.d.), Heraclitus, in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [online] Available at: <https://www.iep.utm.edu/heraclit/> [Accessed 9 December 2018].
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1975 [1830]), *Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (3rd ed.) (W. Wallace, trans.). London: Clarendon Press.
- Heine, C. and Teschke, B. (1996), Sleeping Beauty and the Dialectical Awakening: On the Potential of Dialectic for International Relations. *Millennium*, **25**(2), 399–423.
- Johansson, I. (2011), All Relations Are Internal – the New Version, published as: Toutes Les Relations Sont Internes – La Nouvelle Version. *Philosophiques*, **38**(1). [online] Available at: <http://www.unige.ch/lettres/philo/mulligan/festschrift/Johansson-paper.pdf> [Accessed 9 December 2018].
- Lenin, V.I. (1999), Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism, in *Lenin's Selected Works*, Volume 1. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 667–766.
- Lieberman, K. (2007), *Dialectical Practice in Tibetan Philosophical Culture: An Ethnomethodological Inquiry Into Formal Reasoning*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Ling, L.H. (2013), *The Dao of World Politics: Towards a Post-Westphalian, Worldist International Relations*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Marlin-Bennett, R., & Biersteker, T.J. (2012), Introduction, in R. Marlin-Bennett (ed.), *Alker and IR*. London: Routledge, 1–11.
- Marx, K. (1959), *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. [online] Marxists.org. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/epm/index.htm> [Accessed 9 December 2018].
- Marx, K. (1990), *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Volume I*. London: Penguin Books.
- Marx, K. (n.d.), *Marx–Engels Correspondence 1867*. Marxists.org. Available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/dietzgen/1867/67_11_07.htm [Accessed 9 December 2018].
- McCarthy, G.E. ed. (1992), *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth-Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Neufeld, M. (1997), The “Dialectical Awakening” in International Relations: For and Against. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, **26**(2), 450.
- Ollman, B. (1971), *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ollman, B. (1976), *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ollman, B. (1990), Putting Dialectics to Work: The Process of Abstraction in Marx's Method. *Rethinking Marxism*, **3**(1), 26–74.
- Ollman, B. (1993), *Dialectical Investigations*. New York: Routledge.

- Ollman, B. (2003), *Dance of the Dialectic*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Ollman, B. (2015), Marxism and the Philosophy of Internal Relations; or, How to Replace the Mysterious “Paradox” with “Contradictions” that Can Be Studied and Resolved. *Capital & Class*, **39**(1), 7–23.
- Pannekoek, A. (1902), *The Positive Outcome of Philosophy by Joseph Dietzgen* [online] Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/dietzgen/1869/brain-work/introduction.htm> [Accessed 9 December 2018].
- Pannekoek, A. (2003), *Lenin as Philosopher*. L. Richey (ed.), Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
- Patomäki, H. (2017), Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crisis. *Journal of Critical Realism* **16**(5), 537–543.
- Price, R. (1995), A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo. *International Organization*, **49**(1), 73–103.
- Rosenberg, J. (2012), The “Philosophical Premises” of Uneven and Combined Development. *Review of International Studies*, **39**(03), 569–597.
- Ruegg, D.S. (1981), *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Sayers, S. (2015), Marxism and the Doctrine of Internal Relations. *Capital & Class*, **39**(1), 25–31.
- Schwartz, A.W. (2018), *The Metaphysics of Paradox: Jainism, Absolute Relativity, and Religious Pluralism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Shah, N. (1998), *Jainism: The World of Conquerors*. Sussex: Sussex Academic Press.
- Shahi, D. (2018), *Advaita as a Global International Relations Theory*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Schwartz, A.W. (2018), *The Metaphysics of Paradox: Jainism, Absolute Relativity, and Religious Pluralism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Sinclair, T.J. (2016), Robert W. Cox’s Method of Historical Structures Redux. *Globalizations*, **13**(5), 510–519.
- Tian, C. (2005), *Chinese Dialectics: From Yijing to Marxism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Wald, H. (1975), *Introduction to Dialectical Logic*. Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner Publishing Company.
- Williams, R.R. (2007), Double Transition, Dialectic, and Recognition, in P.T. Grier (ed.), *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel’s Logic, Philosophy of Spirit, and Politics*. New York: SUNY Press, 31–62.