PROMOTING CURIOSITY
INTRODUCING PORTUGAL TO CRITICAL THEORY [1]

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In 2019, International Relations (IR) scholars celebrated the centenary of the establishment of the first Chair in International Politics at the University of Aberystwyth. Since this relative autonomisation in the face of Political Science, IR have been the stage for a variety of debates, turning points and the emergence of new schools of thought that challenge their ontological, epistemological and methodological groundwork. However, involvement in these discussions has been geographically uneven. There are epistemic spaces, such as the Canadian and Brazilian academias, which are engaged in the production of this theoretical pluralism, and other spaces that remain withdrawn from the debate, such as the Portuguese academia, whose contribution to this production is scarce, a generalised doxic adherence being in place instead to the so-called mainstream approaches of IR. In this sense, the work *Emancipar o Mundo: Teoria Crítica e Relações Internacionais* [Emancipating the World: Critical Theory and International Relations] is a necessary – and clearly overdue – step towards the greater involvement of the Portuguese academia in the construction of pluralism in IR.

In the Introduction, José Manuel Pureza and Marcos Farias Ferreira explain that the study purports 'to provide a voice to an understanding of the world which is dissatisfied with the power relations that inhabit it and with the theory that legitimises them' (p. 22). They therefore propose a common ground for critical approaches that can be used as a critical referent: the works of the Frankfurt School, the Cox/Linklater axis, the distribution-recognition nexus, the idea of the immanent possibility of social change and resistance, and the purpose of revealing structures of domination, exclu-

sion, privilege and discrimination in the world order.

In chapter 1, André Saramago retrieves the notions of 'orientation' and 'cosmopolitanism', suggesting that the growing global interdependence imposes the need to develop more cosmopolitan understandings that encompass the 'totality of global human conditions' (pp. 25–26). Saramago proposes to discuss the limits of international Critical Theory through the contribution of one of its founders, to advance a way of articulating the condemnation of historically constituted forms of domination and the projection of a more democratic collective consciousness based on the principle of human dignity. Saramago suggests, then, a sociological-historical approach, in the wake of Norbert Elias' 'procedural sociology', which, going beyond the philosophical-utopian orientation of the Frankfurt School, advances an international Critical Theory based on the empirical reality of historical changes and makes social struggles in the present world order intelligible.

In chapter 2, João Nunes examines a crucial dimension of international security: global health. Understanding power as domination and domination as a critical lens, Nunes looks into the 'systematic reproduction of invisibility' in the dominant biomedical-neoliberal narratives in terms of national and global health governance (p. 52). The critique of global health, for Nunes, by revealing dynamics of exclusion and oppression, may offer greater visibility to groups (and regions) whose daily, bodily and localised experien-

ces of disease and health remain neglected. Indeed, an 'international political economy of everyday life' is what, for Nunes, makes it possible to research the tangible impacts of global power dynamics and structures – such as capitalism – on actual social relations, and to assess the immanent possibilities of emancipatory transformation.

Chapter 3, penned by Sarah da Mota, compares the imaginaries of (in)security that have spanned the international security system since the end of the Cold War, and analyses its effects on the use of military force. Exploring the Cox/Linklater axis in order to develop the concepts of 'individualisation of security' and 'dehumanisation of security', Mota shows how, both in the period of NATO's interventions in the Balkans, for the first concept, and in the post-11/09 period, to the second, these patterns, instead of materialising the emancipatory potential of the two periods, started from a particularist and exclusivist biopolitics, and replicated the military hegemony of the main security actors. Thus, by making the conditions for military action more flexible, these patterns eventually encouraged wars on behalf of the individual (pp. 78–79). Security practices that, when they dismiss the human element, neglect the security interests of the vulnerable (p. 83).

In chapter 4, João Terrenas proposes to retrieve the 'emancipatory potential' of Critical Security Studies through methodological practices that require more reflective and collective commitments on the part of those who do research, such as

autoethnography and collaborative ethnography (p. 93). For Terrenas, a critique based on collaborative practices is offered to 'real people in real places' (p. 95), inasmuch as it draws on the daily experience of (in)security of vulnerable groups to challenge hegemonic narratives and power relations. The 'ethnographic turning' brings close together – emotionally and analytically – those who do research and those who are exposed to experiences of insecurity, on the one hand, and to alternative ways of 'being and being in the world', on the other (p. 95). Those who research from a critical point of view, according to Terrenas, have the ethical responsibility of contributing to the mitigation of the insecurity of those who are studied and written about, either by making marginalized groups providers (not merely receivers) of their own security, or by making them active participants in the production and communication of knowledge that informs their security practices.

In chapter 5, João Rodrigues examines, starting from an analysis of the history of international political economy, the emergence of consensus and disagreement in the field of economic policy since the 1970s. Rodrigues highlights, first, the political, anti-imperialist and anticolonial project of the new international economic order (NIEO), whose failure, as a counter-hegemonic consensus and structure to the 'embedded liberalism' of the post-World War II, ended in the stabilisation of the Washington Consensus (1989). The latter, according to Rodrigues, is established as a post-Cold War consensus, supported by a hegemonic structure that places the United States, the organisations it has controlled (e.g., IMF) and its main economic partners in London and Brussels at the centre of international economy (p. 125). It is indeed this transatlantic sharing of the burden of maintaining the structure that, in the European context of the 1990s, leads Rodrigues to the recognition of a decline of the initial consensus: the Brussels-Frankfurt Consensus, promoted by Jacques Delors' European Commission, supported by a German regional hegemony, evident in the ECB troika, European Commission and IMF. Finally, Rodrigues analyses synthetically the sprouting of a Beijing Consensus, a counter-hegemonic movement led by the People's Republic of China after the crisis started in 2007–08, arguing, however, that it is still premature to declare its emergence or to uphold the crisis of the North American hegemonic structure (p. 141).

In chapter 6, starting from the demystification of the idea that the Anthropocene is a choice of the majority of the world population, João Camargo advances a critique of the inability to build narratives capable of rousing a collective effort in favour of climate justice and against climate change (p. 148). In this sense, Camargo proposes the construction of a metanarrative, a 'Great History', which contests, on the one hand, the dominant narratives of technological positivism and the powerlessness of the human species in the face of the advance of climate change, and, on the other, the alternatives of the 'climate Behemoth'. According to

Camargo, climate change and global climate justice can form this alternative metanarrative – eco-socialist in nature, guided by principles such as democratic production planning, the fair distribution of resources and multilateralism – with objective empirical foundations, from Rio (1992) to the IPCC Report (2007) (pp. 150, 151, 167).

In chapter 7, Bruno Góis lays the groundwork for a Marxist-inspired 'international policy for the 99%' (p. 171). Retrieving the basic premises of Marxism and starting from the space opened by Marxist political economy, Góis suggests that historical materialism may be the touchstone of such proposal, if understood as a critical ontology that recognizes a broader set of ontological units, from classes to genders, without, however, denying the relative autonomy of the State (p. 176). Nevertheless, and as the analysis of anti-austerity movements illustrates, the proposed critical ontology – which carries a clear reference to Cox's critical realism and conceptual triad – does not leave aside a critique of the assumption of the monolithic nature of the State (p. 177).

In chapter 8, Sofia José Santos develops a critique of the Internet and the web from the viewpoint of the Critical Studies of the Internet (p. 187). Santos challenges the democratic character and horizontality of the Internet, describing it, instead, as a space of power and counterpower in international relations, in which the offline and online worlds interpenetrate. Observing the expansion of the big data, Santos illustrates how offline power relations (e.g.,

control over algorithm generation) are, on the one hand, constitutive of the distribution of online power that defines the 'place of enunciation' of each actor, and, on the other hand, materialise and are replicated through online practices that deepen the opacity of the network (p. 192). Moreover, and starting from the analysis of narratives and counternarratives of (in)security about migrants and refugees conveyed by the European media, Santos shows how the Internet can simultaneously fulfil its emancipatory potential if it promotes the visibility of more democratic and inclusive security conceptions and if it facilitates the conversion of micronarratives of (in)security of subaltern subjectivities into macronarratives (p. 200); or operate as a mechanism of domination through algorithms that tend to highlight security conceptions that reproduce racial, gender or epistemic hierarchies, sealing off the place of enunciation to subaltern subjectivities (pp. 202–03).

In chapter 9, Sílvia Roque and Rita Santos examine the points of dialogue between Critical Theory and feminist approaches, either by exploring the critical dimension of the latter, or by questioning whether the former should be feminist (and postcolonial) (p. 231). According to Roque and Santos, the sharing of assumptions (e.g., criticism of positivism) notwithstanding, the former tends to undervalue the process of 'theoretical masculinisation' which silences gender/gender hierarchies in international politics and IR (p. 215). Thus, Roque and Santos conceive the 'feminisation of critical theory', the refor-

mulation of the latter as something that can be rendered more attentive to the structures of gender/gender inequality and to the sexual/genderised relationships that permeate daily life, in so far as patriarchy is inseparable from other hegemonic structures of domination, such as neoliberalism or colonialism, with which it maintains relations of mutual reinforcement (pp. 221, 227).

Finally, and in the same vein as the previous chapter, chapter 10, written by Marta Fernández, develops the dialogue between Critical Theory and postcolonial and decolonial approaches. By proposing the decolonisation of European Critical Theory through the idea of 'coloniality of power and knowledge' (pp. 237–38, 250), Fernández demonstrates the violent and extra-European origins of Modernity and the ontological interdependence of the European world *vis-à-vis* non-European worlds. Fernández proposes the recognition, on the part of European Critical Theory, of subalternised bodies and temporalities, and of the experience of colonial genocide, which is interrelated with the experience of the Holocaust, without jeopardising the uniqueness of both (pp. 241–42). By provincialising western experience and agency, Fernández argues that it is possible to visualize the subaltern expression of subtle and daily acts of resistance that have little to do with the counter-hegemonic discourses and practices anticipated by the Eurocentric and racially omissive model of the Frankfurt School (p. 250). Only openness to discourses and practices oppressed by colonial power will enable, for Fernández, the dialogue with 'other temporalities and multiple worlds' (p. 253) that underlies the new critical aspirations of emancipatory transformation.

In sum, it is not in excess to recognise the pertinence of this collective work for the study of IR in Portugal. However, it is clearly an overdue introduction to critical approaches and its various feminist, postcolonial, decolonial and neo-Marxist variations. These represent no novelty in IR, but their echoes have been limited as far as Portugal is concerned: in this regard, it is worth mentioning the contribution of Studies for Peace – which perhaps would deserve their own chapter in the scope of this work. Similarly, since the dialogical and plural elements of the critique are exposed, it would have been relevant, at the beginning of each chapter, a self-analysis by its author. To begin with, such an analysis would reclaim the personal dimension inscribed in each chapter and attest to the extent of the structuring promoted by the passage through educational institutions such as the University of Aberystwyth or the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, whose ethos predispose those who engage in research to the elaboration of analyses of international relations from critical approaches. Thus, answering the question 'where was it written?' would only enrich the book's already well-achieved purpose: the multi-angular identification by a group composed of people with different experiences and trajectories – who, in some cases, intersect – of the intrinsic interconnectivity of the various structures of dom-

ination that frame international relations and IR; and, in the wake of this identification, the recognition of the immanent potentiality of emancipatory transformation, materialised by the multiple resistances to the totalising force of these power relations. In the end, perhaps the most relevant contribution of the work will be, in the wake of the 'translation work' proposed by Boaventura de Sousa Santos,[2] that of advancing the 'reciprocal intelligibility' between the different critical approaches that share the polysemic project of emancipation. R:I

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ENDNOTES

[1] A previous version of this review was published in Portuguese in the journal *Relações Internacionais,* no. 73, March 2022.

[2] SANTOS, Boaventura Sousa – 'Para uma sociologia das ausências e uma sociologia das emergências'. In *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais.* No. 63, 2002, pp. 237–80.

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