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Causes of a Divided Discipline: a critical examination of the concept of cause in International Relations theory

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Abstract

The 'philosophical turn' taken in International Relations (IR) theory has contributed to the discipline acquiring a deeply divided self-image: fundamental philosophical rifts have been seen to divide the discipline between the causal (rationalist) and the non-causal (reflectivist) theoretical approaches. This paper explores and challenges this disciplinary division by examining and attacking the way the central concept of cause has been conceptualised in IR theorising. It is seen that causation is conceptualised in a largely Humean manner in all IR theorising, even among those (i.e. reflectivists) who reject it. Moreover however, it emerges that all camps in IR (even reflectivists) 'do causes' in a common-sensical manner behind (and beyond) the philosophies they profess. In order to make sense of the confusing and contradictory way in which IR theories deal with causes the paper turns to a philosophy of causation that challenges the narrow Humean conception of causation. The 'critical realist' reconceptualisation of causation that follows allows us to rethink not just the role of causes in IR but also 'divisive' issues such as the reasons-causes dichotomy, the constitutive-causal theorising divide and the free will question. It will be seen that wider philosophical accounts of causation can bridge gaps in the 'divided discipline' with important consequences for metatheory, substantive theory, normative theory and disciplinary self-image in International Relations theory.

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Introduction

Some consider it the 'cement of the universe', the very notion people can build their lives around; others detest the idea with vehemence as it seems to render people 'helpless victims'. Philosophy, especially modern but also classical, has found it extremely difficult to come to grips with the concept of causation. Philosophy of science and of social science, as well as many disciplines, scientific or less so, have been equally bewildered by the complexities of this seemingly straightforward concept that can common-sensically be seen to refer to a relation, a thing or an act which gives existence to, or contributes towards the existence of any thing; which produces or generates a result; to which the origin of anything is to be ascribed.[2]

The discipline of International Relations (IR) has also been bewildered in its understanding of the concept of causation. IR has always been something of a 'divided discipline'; theorists of different schools have for long tended to disagree on the solutions, and the causes, of the problems of world politics. However, in addition, in the wake of the so called philosophical turn that brought with it the rise of the post-positivist theorising in IR it has become questionable to even talk of causes. Deep philosophical rifts have been seen to divide the discipline between the 'causal theorists' often equated with the term rationalists and the 'non-causal' theorists commonly labelled as reflectivists.[3]

Despite having 'turned philosophical' in the last decades the discipline of IR is still lacking in reflecting more deeply on its meta-theoretical foundations. The most glaring omission in this respect is in thinking through the central concept of causation. It will be seen that a very narrow Humean conception of causation is dominant in the discipline and that this view of causation is scrutinised by few, not even those who reject it. As a result, meta-theoretical dichotomies (between causes and reasons, causal and constitutive theorising, determinism and voluntarism) that derive from this simplistic notion of causation have started to define the discipline and the scope of theoretical approaches within it while alternative conceptions of causation are forgotten or blatantly ignored.

There are a few IR theorists that have raised the issue of causation and that have attacked the way the polarising meta-theoretical debate in IR has been conducted.[4]

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[2]See Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.110, Frank Aveling, *Catholic Encyclopedia* (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm) 6/9/2001

[3] Terms introduced by Robert Keohane. See Keohane, 'International Institutions: two approaches', reprinted in James Der Derian, *International Theory: Critical Investigations* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 279-307.

[4] See Heikki Patomaki and Colin Wight, 'After Postpositivism? The promises of Critical Realism' *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 44, 2000, pp. 213-237.

What is still needed, however, is a focused exploration of the central issue of causation in the discipline. The issue of causation gets easily tangled up, often misleadingly, with a whole array of other meta-theoretical issues for example the material/ideational dichotomy, the holism/individualism question, the ontology/epistemology debate, and the explaining/understanding divide. While some overlap between meta-theoretical questions is unavoidable (especially with the last two), in certain corners the entanglement of issues has created a bias in the way causation is treated. This paper seeks to focus the discussion on the principle of causation itself and, by examining the implications various conceptions of causation have for how we answer and ask questions in studying world politics, to take a step towards providing a more sophisticated basis for the debate about causes in IR.

The questions involved in an examination of the concept of causation include abstract philosophical ones. What constitutes a cause and causation? Are causes merely theoretical or imagined or something real? How can we theorise about causation in the social world? What is the relationship between causes and intentional action? Further, are we bound by causes or can we resist them? However, it will be seen that these philosophical questions, and how you answer them, raise many crucial questions with regard to IR theory. What conceptions of causation are at work in IR theories? Are these adequate philosophically and substantively? Can we and should we theorise IR in a causal or a non-causal manner, or both? On what basis is the distinction between causal and non-causal theorising made? What alternative conceptions of causes could we aspire to in IR? What would be the implication of these for IR theorising?

I shall approach the topic through, in the first section, outlining four philosophical approaches to causation: the Humean, the anti-causal, the 'pragmatist' historicist and the realist approaches. After the philosophical introduction necessary to introduce the concept of causation I shall move on to analyse the conceptions of causes at work in IR. Here the focus will be on the presently dominant self-image of IR as a 'divided discipline' torn between the 'causal' and 'non-causal' approaches. However, this reading will be challenged: the central contention in the second section is that Humean causation (philosophically) dominates in IR but also that, interestingly, there are tensions between what theorists philosophically espouse and practice. It emerges that most, indeed one might say all, theories 'do causes', though not in the conventional positivist sense.

The third section will seek to provide tentative basis for moving beyond the simplistic and largely inadequate accounts of causation in IR. I shall seek to draw on an alternative conceptualisation of causation provided by critical realism to demonstrate how the concept of causation can be rethought and how this rethinking allows us to

question and challenge many of the divisions in the discipline of IR, such as the reasons and causes dichotomy, the causal and constitutive theory divide and the supposed opposition between causation and free will. The central contention of the paper is that we need to (re)turn to wider conceptions of causation than what IR so far has been willing to engage with.

1. Causation as a philosophical problem

The purpose of the first section is to give the reader a philosophical introduction to the controversies surrounding the concept of causation (emphasis being on modern philosophy). I shall discuss four broad categories of how causes have been conceptualised in the philosophy of science and of social science. It must be noted that this categorisation is a simplification in that the categories outlined here are not inclusive of all accounts of causation and in that within approaches described there are important differences. However, categorisation of philosophical stances is necessary for the sake of the analysis pursued later on.

1.1. Regularity theory of causation

Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* outlined the classical metaphysical account of causation. For Aristotle there were four types of causes: the material (indeterminate potentiality of things), the formal (permanent essences of things), the efficient (agency which brings about an effect) and final (teleological) causes.[5] Any explanation of the state of the world would include references to all, or most, of these different kinds of causes that in their different ways were seen to necessitate (though not deterministically in the modern sense) certain effects.

However, in contrast to this rich multi-levelled conception of causation, in modern philosophy, the concept of causation has become narrowed down to the notion of efficient, or moving, cause. This powerful, yet rather narrow conception of causation, has its origins in Descartes, Locke and Berkeley[6] but became most pronounced in David Hume's and Immanuel Kant's accounts of causation.

Hume was famously critical of the idea of causation. The focus of his scepticism was the idea of 'necessity'[7] between a cause and an effect. Contrary to Aristotelian and rationalist accounts of causation that presumed a necessary connection between a cause and an effect, Hume's strictly empiricist philosophy brought with it the notion

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[5] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (London: Penguin, 1998), Book IV, p. 115.
[6] See William Wallace, *Causality and Scientific Explanation*, vol.II (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972-74), pp. 14-38.
[7] Natural necessity refers to necessity between (ontological) elements in the world, i.e. things having causal powers to cause an effect. Logical necessity refers specifically to relations between statements (e.g. 2+2=4). Both notion have been used by different philosophers to refer to the nature of causal necessity.

that there is no logical, nor natural, necessity between a cause and an effect, but that a cause is simply "an object precedent and contiguous to another…where all the objects resembling the former are placed in relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects that resemble the latter".[8] Causation then is a notion we infer (through 'custom' or imagination) from experiencing certain events in succession.

Kant in response to Hume in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, attempted to overcome aspects of Humean scepticism about causation.[9] Kant argued that causation as a necessary relation can be assumed to exist. However, Kant too denied natural necessity between a cause and an effect and argued that any necessity there is in causal relation is imposed upon it by the human mind (succession of events perceived through the *a priori* categories of space and time). Yet Kant's account is still mainly empiricist as it is based on observing regularities of events. It is therefore not very different from Hume's that also recognises the role of mind in 'imagining' causation.[10] Indeed, together Kant's and Hume's accounts, along with Mill's theory of causation,[11] can be regarded as the basis for the so called Regularity theory of causation.

The essence of the Regularity theory of causation is that based on one's systematic observations of the world one can infer causal relations between events. That is when Y type events seem to follow X type events - and the types of events are observed independently from each other - there can be assumed to be a causal connection between the two, the precedent events being the cause of the following. The Regularity theory of causation is grounded on the belief in the objectivity of empirical experience in providing knowledge and thus rejects any unobservable notions of natural necessity between causes and effects.

Importantly, the Regularity approach entails the metaphysical assumption of 'regularity determinism', that is "for every event Y there is an event X, or set of events X1…Xn [from Mill], such that X, or X1…Xn, and Y are regularly conjoined under some set of descriptions; thus *whenever X (or X1…Xn), then Y*".[12] The presumption of the Regularity theory of causation is 'closure' between causes and effects, thus in Hume's words "the same cause always produces the same effect and the same effect never

[8] David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigge 2nd ed.,(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) Book I, Part III, p. 170.
[9] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kemp Smith 2nd ed., (London: Macmillan, 1973) p. 44.
[10] Though regularity had precedence, Hume's account contains with it a tension between his two definitions of causation one stressing regularity, the other 'imagining' the causal connection. See Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part III, pp. 170, 10-13.
[11] Mill elaborates on Humean account by taking into account 'antecedent events': causation for him consists in complex set of causal conditions. See John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, 8th ed., (London: Longman, 1970) Book III, Chapter 5 Section 3. His account still presumes regularity of same (type) events and 'efficient causation' even if not in singular. See Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), pp. 72-3.
[12] Ibid. p. 69

arises but from the same cause".[13] This is significant as this form of determinism differs from other forms of determinism in its restrictiveness and assumption of closure.[14]

The Humean empiricist 'Regularity' account of causation has become a building block of the natural sciences, as well as of the social sciences, in the course of 19th and 20th centuries. Especially the 20th century has been dominated by 'positivist thinking' that draws heavily on the Regularity conception of causation. The descendants of the classical empiricist philosophers have, however, taken many forms. The logical and early 'naïve' positivists were in 1960s succeeded by the 'covering law positivists'.[15]

The central tenet of this latest form of positivism is the belief in science, understood as the discovery of laws of nature and behaviour (covering law positivism has been widely adopted also in social sciences). The deductive-nomological, or covering law, model of explanation grounds itself on the Humean conception of causation: through gathering evidence of regularities and correlations (and relating them to prediction) we get insight into 'causal relations' in the world. In Popper's words: "to give a causal explanation of events is to deduce a statement which describes it using as premises of deduction one or more universal laws, together with certain singular statements, the initial conditions".[16]

Essential here is that regularity between observed events is necessary and sufficient (with the qualification of falsifiability) to establish causal relations while at the same time, fundamentally, 'causal relations' are only assumed connections. Due to their focus on the empirical the positivists do not tend to address causes beyond their empirical facets and do not give causes any deeper ontological standing.

1.2. Anti-causal approaches

The most influential criticism of positivist causal analysis, as applied to the social world, came in the 1940s/50s from Ludwig Wittgenstein and his followers G.E.M. Anscombe and Peter Winch. Wittgenstein, who started out from a Kantian conception of causation, developed in his later linguistic philosophy the notion of causes as part of representation: causes became to be seen as arising entirely from grammar and language.[17] Central to this conception of causation is that though causation is central for language and meanings it involves no necessity. Furthermore, not only are causes

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[13] Hume, *Treatise*, p. 173.
[14] Compared to ubiquity determinism (every event has a cause) and intelligibility determinism (every cause has an intelligible cause). See Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, p. 70.
[15] Associated with the works of Popper and Hempel. Karl Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, (London: Hutchinson, 1959) Carl Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and Other Essays in Philosophy of Science* (New York: Free Press, Collier-Macmillan, 1965).
[16] Popper, *Logic of Scientific Discovery*, p.72.
[17] H-J. Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), p. 70-72.

'non-necessitating' generally but in understanding human life, Wittgenstein argued, one should concentrate on interpretation of meanings. How to 'go on' in the social world involves interpreting a rule, and this interpretation process is not causal.[18]

This insight was picked up by Anscombe and Winch that developed Wittgenstein's notion of 'non-necessitating' causes and linguistic interpretation. Examining the social world through rule-based notions of language and meaning these philosophers came to the conclusion, *contra* empiricists and positivists, that simple empirical observations of behaviour are not sufficient in accounting for human action and that treatment of the 'self' as an intentional object whose reasons and motives for action are distinct from 'causes' of natural kind should be given a central role in the social sciences.[19]

Methodologically, this meant that human actions should be studied 'from within' through hermeneutic approaches in order to fully understand the meanings and reasons that actors hold.[20] Causal analysis in human science was seen as a wasted effort. Relations between events and human reasons for action in the social world were seen as 'internal' not necessitated by 'causes' of independent and external kind.

This was a damning account of causation in the human sciences and has been more recently followed up by many social constructivist and postmodernist theorists. These theorists and philosophers have similarly argued that ideational discourses and language 'constitute' the world through meanings that actors give to things and that thus there are no causes in the social world. In the extreme, as with Lyotard the idea of causation can be seen as a form of 'metanarrative' imposed on the world by modernist science that looks for stability and control.[21]

The hermeneutic rejection of causation in favour of 'reasons account' of social action has given rise to some powerful dichotomies in the social sciences: between the anti-causal and the causal approaches and between theories of intentional action and 'caused' behaviour. Possibly the greatest divide that has arisen has revolved around the question of whether reasons can be causal/caused. While powerful, however, the anti-causal approaches can be seen to work on the basis of a largely Humean conception of causation (reasons seen to apply in the social world because X1…Xn -> Y does not).

Finally, it is also important to note that these anti-causal approaches are also anti-realist: they assume primacy of ideas in shaping 'what the world is'. This leads these

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[18] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Anscombe 2nd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967) pp. 59-60, 72-3.
[19] See G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957). Peter Winch, *Idea of Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1990).
[20] There are many hermeneutic methods varying from ethnomethodology to linguistic philosophy and anthropology – central to all, however, is understanding action 'from within'. See for example Zygmunt Baumann, *Hermeneutics and Social Science; approaches to understanding*, (London: Hutchinson, 1978).

approaches to scepticism of anything 'real' and 'necessary' outside the human mind. Thus, it can be concluded that neither of the approaches reviewed so far have really engaged with the notion of cause and necessity, nor have given causes any real ontological standing.

1.3. 'Pragmatist' historicist perspectives on causation

The debate on the nature of the social world, and on the status of reasons and human mind as opposed to causes, has raged on between the schools above. Due to the framing of the debate, however, the discussion has been very static: positivists have reaffirmed the importance of causes as empirical regularities while the hermeneutic and postmodernist theorists have rejected causes outright, seeing the social world instead as unique and built from within through meanings and intentional human action. However, outside the realm of the philosophy of social science interesting debates have taken place within the philosophy of history. Here three 'pragmatist'[22] historicist conceptions of causes, Collingwood's, Dray's and Carr's, will be examined.

Collingwood's philosophy of history is often equated with the Wittgensteinian idealist philosophies of the social world. While many similarities are present, most importantly the emphasis of human thoughts as primary movers as well as the idea of re-enactment[23], Collingwood introduces an interesting twist on the conceptualisation of causes. For Collingwood the concept of causation has three different senses[24] but most interestingly Collingwood introduces the 'Manipulability' conception of causation: "for any given person, the cause...of a given thing is that one of its conditions which he is able to produce or prevent".[25] Collingwood demonstrates how agents call things 'causes' because they feel they can control these aspects to desired ends; cause is the 'handle' by which to manipulate one's environment.[26] This is a strongly anthropocentric idea of causation for what has logical primacy is the way man looks upon the world rather than what the nature is.[27]

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[21] Implied in the discussion of modern and postmodern science. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition; a report on knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 53-62.

[22] 'Pragmatist' being a term that Dray uses. There is no evidence, however, that this derives from Dewey's and James's pragmatist philosophy. Rather it is to be associated only with R.G. Collingwood's 'manipulability' account of causation. See William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 98-114.

[23] See William Dray, *History as re-enactment, R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

[24] Collingwood recognised physical causes (Sense III - here he follows directly the Humean conception of causation) but rejects them as having a role in human history. Sense I entails "affording [someone] a motive for doing" something in the form of giving them a reason that they deliberate and (possibly) act on. See Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. 313-324, 285, 290-4. See also Dray, *Philosophy of History* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 43.

[25] Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics*, pp. 296-312.

[26] Ibid., p. 296.

[27] Ibid., p. 310.

This conception of causation led Collingwood to assert the principle of 'relativity of causes'; people, historians among them, use the notion of cause from their own subjective perspective and often to assign blame. Now Collingwood does not explicitly reject the fact that there are many necessary conditions behind events, yet he states that we can only say what a 'cause' is from our subjective point of view and in reference to what we can control. Hence (against Humeans) "for a mere spectator there are no causes".[28]

This 'manipulability' line of thinking is further developed by Dray. Dray's central focus is to challenge the positivist covering law model of causal explanation which in his view uses the notion of cause carelessly, without discussing 'causes' of things, merely regularities and supposed laws of behaviour - which he thinks are neither *possible* or *necessary* in explanation.[29] For Dray causes are more than just regularities in the sense that in explaining historical events it is more important to show that condition X (say, Hitler as the leader of Germany) was necessary for an event (World War) rather than demonstrating the regularity of X (Hitler like leaders).

Yet, though things are seen to have necessary conditions Dray, too, focuses on the 'pragmatic' notion of causes as a means to explaining and manipulating the world around us. To posit causes, Dray argues, there is no need to have knowledge of the laws, or the mechanisms, behind events if we can by simply manipulating (what we think are) causes bring about the effects we desire. Dray's argument is that pragmatic causal thinking and explanations are widespread in everyday life; that people explaining the social world routinely talk of the world in reference to some (pragmatic) causal framework.

Though (pragmatic) causal accounts are wide-spread, Dray stops short of saying that we can know the 'real' causes of anything; primacy for Dray is in that people can talk of, categorise and manipulate causes in everyday life and explanation.

> It is true that in explanatory statement…one or a few conditions are picked out as 'the cause'. But this does not…confer upon the causal conditions any mysterious ontological priority. It merely satisfies certain pragmatic criteria of importance.[30]

E.H. Carr's explication of causes in *What is History?* shares with Collingwood and Dray the emphasis on causes as (subjective) means of explaining. Studying causes, which is what history is about, involves having to constantly ask why something happened (what caused it) and then hierarchically ranking the causes which are always multiple

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[28] Ibid., p. 306.
[29] Ibid., pp. 86, 18, 97.

and complex. Historians, he argues, are famous not for their research of events but for the causes that they rank high in their explanation of an event.[31]

Yet, it seems, Carr's account confers importance also to the 'real existence' of causes in the world. He states that "the axiom that everything has a cause is a condition of our capacity to understand what is going on around us".[32] Also, he argues that there are no such things as accidents since the "so called accidents represent a sequence of cause and effect interrupting, and so to speak clashing with, the sequence which historian is primarily concerned to investigate".[33] Thus for him, it seems, humans not only use causes as a means to understand and pragmatically manipulate the world, but also their thought and action is conditioned by existence of causes that filter through to all actions (even accidental or 'free' ones). This implies something more than the anthropocentric pragmatism of Collingwood and Dray; it seems to imply, at least on some level 'realness' of causes. This leads us to the final category of causal accounts, realism.

1.4. Realist conception of causation

Besides the 'pragmatist' challenge to the Humean notion of, and idealist rejection of, causation advocates of the 'necessity theory' of causation have launched a powerful attack on Humean causality, one that challenges the very basis of it, the rejection of natural necessity between causes and effects.[34] Through reviving the notion of causal necessity the deep Humean empiricism - and the anti-realism that flows from it - is put under threat.

Against the Humean emphasis on the *experienced* for the necessity theorists things can have *real* causal powers and that thus there can be said to be a *natural necessity* between a cause and an effect. Important for the realist account of causation is the emphasis on making an ontological distinction between causes and events (as the empirical facets of causes) because, it is argued, "the Humean account depends upon a misidentification of causal laws with their empirical grounds".[35] For realist necessity theorists, much like for Aristotelians, what is important in tracking causal connections is not identification of law-like regularities in empirical events but description of

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[30] Ibid., p. 114.
[31] E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, 2nd ed., (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 90.
[32] Ibid. p. 93.
[33] Ibid. p. 99.
[34] Famously Rom Harre and E.H. Madden with their *Causal Powers; a theory of natural necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), *J.L.* Mackie with *The Cement of the Universe; a study of causation* and Bhaskar with *The Realist Theory of Science.*
[35] Bhaskar, *Reclaiming Reality; a critical introduction to contemporary philosophy* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 16.

properties, liabilities and generative mechanisms that (in an almost common-sensical way) *make things happen.*

Importantly, just because causal structures (behind observed events) are often unobservable, sometimes unexercised, or exercised unrealised, this does not entail rejection of their reality or necessity. Hence Roy Bhaskar's powerful assertion: "to be is not to be perceived [but] to be able to do".[36] Bhaskar argues on the basis of the notion of different ontological levels (real, actual and empirical) that absence of empirical regularity does not mean non-existence of real or necessary causes on the deeper ontological level. This is a radically different interpretation of causation for it changes the focus of discussion in philosophy of causation from the epistemological presumption 'what can be known' about causation to ontology 'what causes are'.[37]

Crucial for realist accounts is the distinction between open and closed systems. In experimental environments one can sometimes isolate the effects of single causal mechanisms, the closed systems presupposed by Hume. However, most of the natural world, and especially the social world, can be seen to consist of open systems in which "multiple generating mechanisms operate simultaneously on various levels" and "are in constant flux".[38] Realism can deal with this invariance and complexity of causation because lack of regularity and closure does not mean lack of causally necessary relations; it simply shows that objects of study are different in their (ontological) nature. Hence the social world, and other natural fields that consists of open systems, can be considered valid objects of science.

The central paradox in social scientific search for causes has of course been that on one level "we want causal explanation that will explain the intricacy, complexity and the sensitivity of our behaviour" but we also want to "explain its spontaneity, creativity and originality".[39] The realist conception of causation, built as it is on the distinction between the real and the empirical levels or reality, allows us to transcend the regularity determinism of the Humean empiricist causation. Significantly, because the realists reject the covering law model of explanation even for the natural sciences objections to causes as part of the social world are harder to make.

Realist conception of the social world, often called 'critical realism'[40], allows more room for intentions, ideas, and free will while still holding onto the metaphysical claim that human action, like natural events, is caused. For 'critical realism' social causes are not

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[36] Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism; a critique of contemporary human sciences* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 12.

[37] As it derives from a 'non-epistemic' philosophy. Stasis Psillos, *Scientific Realism; how science tracks the truth,* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. xxi.

[38] Porpora, *The Concept of Social Structure* (West Port: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 7.

[39] John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 141.

"sequential chains of events [like in positivist social science] but social conditions in the form of structural complexes".[41] This reconceptualisation of causation redefines debates in the philosophy of social science with significant consequences for our analysis of causation in IR.

2. Causation in International Relations Theory

2.1. IR and the notion of 'two stories'

The focus will now turn to an analysis of how causes and causation have been thought of in IR theory in light of the philosophical categories outlined above. The structure of this section will follow the presently widely accepted notion that there are 'two stories to tell' in IR, the causal and the non-causal, or 'constitutive'. This self-image of the disciplinary philosophical basis was made especially salient after the publication of Hollis and Smith's *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Hollis and Smith claim that there is a fundamental philosophical divide in the social sciences between two legitimate, yet mutually incompatible philosophies, the explanatory theories seeking to explain the social world through causal analysis and the understanding methods that seek to understand human action 'from within' through inquiring into the meanings and reasons of human action and thought. [42]

This conception of philosophy of social science as fundamentally dichotomised between the naturalists and the anti-naturalists[43] is now accepted widely in IR. The contemporary disciplinary self-image maintains that there are two separate camps in IR: the 'rationalists' (Neorealists, Neoliberals) that analyse world politics through seeking out causes and the 'reflectivists' (critical theorists, feminists, radical constructivists and postmodernists) that reject the notion of causal analysis as not only misconceived but as ultimately dangerous. Between these two stories Alexander Wendt has tried, controversially, to construct a 'middle way'.

The aim here is to analyse the notions of causation that these different camps adhere to, *as well as* those they use in substantive theorising (not always the same thing). A in-depth analysis of the use and understanding of causation has been evaded in IR so far, a regrettable but, for many, a convenient omission; for what will emerge from our research is that conventional notions of causal analysis in IR have been largely

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[40] Bhaskar's 'critical naturalism' envisages social science as an 1) explanatory science, 2) science without closure and 3) science with a hermeneutic premise Andrew Collier, *Critical Realism; an introduction to Roy Bhaskar's philosophy* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 161. See also Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism*
[41] Christopher Lloyd, *Structures of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 161
[42] Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
[43] Referring to the debate between the positivists and the hermeneutic theorists, i.e. those who think science of the social world is possible (through natural science methods) and those who reject any notion of science

Humean but also that causal analysis conceived of in a more common-sensical (or realist) fashion can be detected. It is seen that causal analysis is more widespread than thought in IR though under different labels and wrapped in confusing terminology.

2.2. The 'causal analysts'

The notion of cause has been central in IR from its inception, due to the fact that IR arose as a discipline to tackle the causes of war. Early 'idealist' theorists aimed to locate the cause(s) of war and address them accordingly. Later on, against the "method of single cause"[44] of the 'idealist' theorists, E.H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau pointed to the multiplicity and complexity of causes of war. Causes for them were complex involving "interminable chains of cause and effect"[45] as well as immutable aspects (human nature) that were not to be easily 'remedied'. More important than pointing to 'the' cause of war was to have a deep understanding of the historical complexities and political contexts on the basis of which to make judgements on events. Actual conceptions of causation were undeveloped and rarely explicit in the early discipline. Yet it seems that the early approaches from idealists to realists followed largely the 'pragmatist' historicist lines, with Carr bringing in some realist aspects.

However, with the rising dominance of positivism (first in the behaviouralist then in the late 1970s in the Popperian form) many IR theorists, Kenneth Waltz as the leading figure, sought to 'scientificise' IR theorising. Instead of having to make complex and subjective historical judgements about the causes of war, Waltz sought to produce a theory that isolated and abstracted the causes of war into a neat theoretical framework. Waltz's *Man, State and War* set the scene for separating human nature, the state and the international system as 'causal levels' in IR. *Theory of International Politics* then elaborated on Waltz's third causal level, the international system.

Placing Waltz into clear philosophical categories is not straightforward. Waltz refutes 'naïve positivist' theorising that infers causes simply on the basis of correlations and induction. For Waltz creative theorising is needed to truly explain (rather than merely describe in statistical form) conjunctions of events. Moreover, at times it seems, like a realist, Waltz wants to explain mechanisms and connections behind mere observations for he wants to "lay bare the essential elements in play and to indicate the necessary

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in the social world. On an account of the debates see for example Finn Collin, *Social Reality* (London: Routledge, 1997).
[44] See Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man and Power Politics* (London: Latimer Press, 1947), pp. 95-97, 127-30.
[45] Ibid. 129.

relations of cause and interdependency [in world politics]".[46] Waltz also exhibits signs of pragmatism. For him there is no truth in theorising, theories are judged merely on the basis of their usefulness in explaining events.[47]

Despite the surprisingly mixed, and thus less crudely positivist philosophical basis than often credited with, Waltz can however be placed in the Humean corner in terms of his conception of causation. Firstly, throughout his reflections on philosophy of theorising Waltz displays a very Humean scepticism of anything 'real' behind theories and observations. Theory idealises, abstracts and isolates a realm of reality for explanatory (and control) ends but does not reflect reality.[48] Similarly, causation at the systemic level is only an assumed connection between things, not a description of reality for Waltz.[49]

Secondly, though Waltz does not see correlation as enough for causation his aim is to explain observed regularities. He makes it clear that showing regularity is not necessarily sufficient to establish causation (one needs theory too), yet he implies that it is necessary. The cause of recurrence of war, then, must be equally recurrent and constant as the effects, hence the idea of anarchy as the 'underlying cause' of war.[50]

Most importantly, in addition, a metaphysical assumption of regularity determinism can be seen to underlie, even if unintentionally, his theory. This gives rise to an interesting tension in his theory. Waltz's model has always been criticised for being rigid, atomistic and deterministic. Yet at the same time he has argued that anarchy is only an indirect, underlying cause of war. In 1986 Waltz even admitted that the structure of the international system only 'shapes and shoves' because "not only do unit level and structural causes interact but also because the shaping and shoving of the structures may be successfully resisted".[51] This admission, whilst showed that Waltz did not mean to espouse causal determinism threatened, nevertheless, to destroy his theory.

This was the case, it could be argued, because Waltz - and his critics - were not able to see beyond a narrow Humean conception of causation. It seemed to many critics that when Waltz made his concession to non-deterministic causation, anarchy was no longer a 'cause' of anything because they thought a cause has to operate constantly[52] – a Humean presupposition from their side. Waltz himself found it difficult to deal with this criticism because he could not see beyond espousal of the regularity deterministic Humean model (when X, then Y) even though his theory was clearly about the (realist)

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[46] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (London: Mcgrew-Hill, 1979), p.10.
[47] Ibid., pp. 6-8.
[48] Ibid., p. 8.
[49] Ibid., pp. 5, 43-46.
[50] Ibid., p. 66.
[51] Kenneth Waltz, 'In Response to my Critics' in R. Keohane, *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 343.
[52] See for example Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding*, pp. 105, 115-117

underlying structural powers of things "which may be persistent and strong…but not be reflected in all particular outcomes".[53] The Humean model is known for leading theorists to excessive parsimony, rigid isolation of systems, and use of atomistic individuals (in Waltz's case states) because it is only through this attempt to achieve closure that one can come close to the invariances required by the regularity deterministic causal model. Waltz gets caught up in these problems as a result of his lack of reflection on possible alternative notions of causation. Due to his acceptance of a Humean regularity model Waltz is led, inadvertently, into isolating and idealising structural causes into (regularity) determinate causes.

There is a further tension in Waltz's theory. Despite his anti-realist stance on the role of theory, Waltz implies different things in his substantive theorising, indeed it seems that he does consider anarchy a 'real causal structure' that creates certain effects in the world. Thus while on the one hand he wants to explain the realness of the systemic causal level, on the other he shies away from making such claims.

A useful way to see these tensions in Waltz is as a result of a discrepancy between what Bachelard refers to as the 'diurnal' (philosophy implicit in spontaneous practice) and 'nocturnal' (philosophy espoused when theorists reflect upon practice) philosophies.[54]   Due to his espousal of a nocturnal Humean model Waltz's theory becomes too rigid and deterministic for his own purposes and his substantive theoretical claims (that work under a different 'diurnal', more common-sensical philosophy) are undermined. Thus the lack of knowledge of alternative philosophies of causation can be seen to have interesting and far-reaching effects in Waltz's theorising.

If Waltz's account of causes is ambiguous then what about the many causal analysis provided by his followers? The Neorealist and Neoliberal schools have prided themselves on their rigorous causal analysis of wars, conflicts and international co-operation. However, what are the assumptions going into such causal analysis?

One easily gets excited about the potentials of rationalist causal analysis by glancing at the title of Nicholson's *Causes and Consequences in International Relations; a conceptual study*; surely here is someone determined to provide a well-considered model of causal explanation for IR. Yet one is quickly disappointed to find no real definition or discussion of causation (which is implied to be something related yet not equal to correlation), only one index reference to a cause (which warns one of the

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[53] Waltz, 'In response to my critics', p. 344
[54] See Bhaskar, *Realist Theory of Science* p. 255.

treacherous concept of causation!) and reads that Nicholson's central question in the book is to establish how generalisations are possible in IR theory.[55]

The conclusion one has to draw is that what is at work here is more explicitly (than in Waltz) the Humean conception of causation as regularities of events. Nicholson attempts to deal with causation simply through examining - and then espousing - the covering law model firmly embedded on Humean causation. This is compounded by Nicholson's warnings about taking causes as if they necessitated their effects and, indeed, by his overt fear of the "philosophically treacherous problem of causation".[56] The paradox one is presented with is that Nicholson, like many rationalists, finds looking for causes to be the central pillar of science of IR[57], yet he distrusts talk of causes and thus sees them only in terms of generalisations.

King, Keohane and Verba are another example of a similar tendency and are in a telling position as they have assumed the mantle of methodological role models of 'rationalists' in IR. Indeed, they have attempted to 'lay down the law' on how to do causal analysis in social science, for we need to, in their view in a disciplined 'scientific' manner, categorise causal tendencies in order to control and order the world. Yet, what one finds in *Designing Social Inquiry* is not a discussion of causation but a discussion of the methods for the discovery and classification of events to be observed in inferring 'causal relations'. King, Keohane and Verba remind that correlation is not always causation but assert that by 'disciplining' causal theorists sufficiently (i.e. making them follow proper mathematical procedures, careful picking of variables and ensuring falsifiability) we can make claims about causal relations.[58] The emphasis is Humean/positivist: observe empirical regularities, make theoretical inferences. 'Causes' involve not saying what, and how, something is 'causing' something else but what is (statistically) the 'mean causal effect' of a variable when test environment has been trimmed to perfection.[59]

The last two accounts are philosophical/methodological. Are these accounts exercised in practice? Glancing through (American) leading journals in the discipline one realises that this is by and large the case. Most work is statistical and there is little willingness to go beyond statistical description of causes to explain the causal connections behind

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[55] Nicholson, *Causes and Consequences in International Relations; a conceptual study* (London: Pinter, 1996), pp.145, 155, 31.
[56] Ibid., p. 146.
[57] Ibid., p. 143.
[58] King, Keohane and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry; scientific inference in qualitative research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp.75-114. Same logic of inference is seen to apply both to quantitative and qualitative inferences.
[59] These methodological guidelines can also be applied to ideational explanations. See R.O. Keohane and Judith Goldstein, *Ideas and Foreign Policy: beliefs, institutions and political change* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1993).

correlations.[60] For example, in the co-operation literature the only causal mechanisms referred to are Game Theoretical/formalistic mechanisms operated by rationality assumption or mathematical logic, not by natural necessity of any kind.[61] In democratic peace literature, on the other hand, though democracy's propensities for peace are implied, there is little explanation of *why* democracy seems to correlate with peace.[62]

What we have found in this section, then, is firstly that the supposed 'causal analysts' in IR are dominated by a Humean conception of causation as regular conjunction of events yet not as 'real' in any deeper sense. Indeed, paradoxically, it seems that the 'causal analysts' in IR are not in fact interested in 'causes' as much as generalisations about their effects. It has been seen that rationalists, at least on the basis of their professed philosophy, are anti-realist in their conception of causes.

Secondly, however, we have also noted that certainly in the case of Waltz and also with regard to some other substantive works, there seems to be a discrepancy between the philosophy espoused (Humean) and the substantive theoretical claims made (anarchy is the real underlying cause of war, structure of democracy enables international liberal peace).

Moreover, one can observe pragmatist features in rationalist causal analysis. Waltz as well as King, Keohane and Verba emphasise causal theory as a 'means of control' revealing surprising similarities with 'manipulability' thinking. Thus, interestingly, rationalist causal analysis can be seen to be a mix of elements: philosophical anti-realism and anthropocentric pragmatism (also anti-realist) as well as, in their substantive work displaying signs of common-sensical realism.

2.3. The 'reflectivists'

One of the most interesting challenges to IR theory has arisen in the course of the 1980s and 1990s from critical approaches to social theory. These are often referred to in IR as 'reflectivist' or 'constitutive' theories. These approaches are difficult to categorise, however, due to their diverse background influences as well as to their self-avowed disinclination to being 'reviewed'. Moreover, these problems are compounded with regard to our topic by the fact that 'constitutive' theorists do not actually explicitly talk of causation. Nevertheless, three reflectivist approaches and their ideas on causation will be analysed here.

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[60] See for example the past and latest volumes of *International Studies Quarterly*, *International Organisation, World Politics* and *Political Science Quarterly.*
[61] Especially the neo-neo debate starting with the Forum on Co-operation in *World Politics*, vol. 38, 1985
[62] See for example Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace; principles of post-Cold War world*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Firstly, the discussion focuses on Critical Theory. Central to Critical Theory approaches of Robert Cox and Andrew Linklater is to oppose reifying and self-interested theorising in IR (for them exemplified in rationalist theorising) and to thus open up possibilities for eliminating constraints on human freedom. To do this they introduce the Frankfurt school notions of 'knowledge constitutive interests' and 'self-reflexivity' into theoretical processes in IR.[63]

Reading Critical Theory writings one realises that both Cox and Linklater show great wariness of 'causal' theorising. Neither likes to mention 'causes' explicitly in their work and when they do this is done only in criticising causal analysis of rationalism/positivism. Cox for example notes that the concept of cause is applicable strictly to the positivist framework and when rejecting the role of law/regularity explanations in 'historicist' explanations he notes in a footnote that we "can[not] speak of 'cause' in historicist discourse, except in the most trivial sense".[64] Both Cox and Linklater seem to associate causation with positivism and its covering law theorising, the deterministic assumptions of which they specifically seek to criticise. As a result, they avoid talking about causation in their theories.

However, one wonders whether the historical materialism of Cox and the normative theory of Linklater have a deeper interest in causal theorising. Indeed, central to the emancipation at the heart of Critical Theory would seem to be precisely tackling the causes of injustice and disenfranchisement. The interesting paradox with Critical Theorists' rejection of causation is that they depend upon a notion of causes while seem to lack any developed notion (beyond positivism) of what it means.

Secondly, poststructuralists, similarily, harbour a dislike of causation and explicit references to causation are few. David Campbell is one of the few who dares to address the issue. In his *Writing Security* he explicitly declares that the purpose of his theory is not to give causal explanations and that, on the contrary, the postmodernist interpretive position he associates himself with is opposed to "cataloguing, calculating and specifying real causes". Instead, Campbell maintains that his poststructuralist theory aims to inquire into the "political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another".[65]

R.J.B. Walker, too, refers to causation - as part of his critique of the ahistorical, deterministic form that structuralism in IR. He states that the idea of causation is "problematic especially given that most popular accounts if causality are still informed

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[63] See for example Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: critical theory and international relations* (London: Macmillan, 1990).
[64] Robert Cox, 'Realism, Positivism and Historicism', *Approaches to World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 51 On Collingwoodian influences see p.59.
[65] David Campbell, *Writing Security; United States foreign policy and politics of identity* , 2nd ed., (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.4.

by images of billiard balls colliding in a Newtonian universe".[66] He implies that causation might have something to it, yet he states that as it stands the notion is to be attached to Newtonian mechanics, reductionism, Darwinism and determinism. Walker does nothing to provide a way forward from the biased conception of the notion. On the contrary he seems quite happy to just dismiss the issue of causation. A worrying omission, it could be argued, from someone involved in rethinking of concepts and in challenging biased and established ways of theorising!

There is a twist, analogous to that found in Critical Theory, in the analysis of causation in poststructuralism, however. While poststructuralist theorists reject causation as a principle due to the fact that they associate it with determinism and other biases they themselves seem to engage in what might be termed 'causal analysis' conceived differently. While engaging in examination of concepts and how they relate to each other to create discourses, poststructuralist writings are also full of references to how particular 'conceptual resolutions' and discourses produce effects in 'practices' of people by constraining, making, encouraging, enabling, reproducing and reifying. Campbell himself said his theory analyses the 'consequences of different representations'. Now all these words can be considered causal insofar as they imply a 'producing' connection between things, in this case discourse and human behaviour and thought. Thus poststructuralists, it could be argued, engage in causal analysis of a common-sensical kind. On the basis of a deeper understanding of causation offered later it will be seen that the poststructuralist rejection of causation does not necessarily constitute a rejection of the principle of causation but rather arises from their acceptance of a Humean conception of causation.

Thirdly, the focus moves to feminism. Again, it is seen that despite often taking an explicitly 'constitutive' stand feminists do make a lot of causal claims. Cynthia Enloe is among the few feminists who quite openly admit to their commitment to causal analysis.[67] Central to her feminism is the claim that the social structure of patriarchy, unobservable though it is, works to produce empirical effects to women's detriment.[68] Importantly, Enloe seeks to not only to generalise about the effects of patriarchy but also to show the causal processes and links, ideational as well as material, that generate these effects.[69]

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[66] R.J.B. Walker, *Inside/Outside; international relations as political theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 96.
[67] Emphasised especially at a talk given May 10th, 2001 at University of Wales Aberystwyth.
[68] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases; making feminist sense of international politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 16.
[69] Ibid. See also Porpora, *The Concept of Social Structure* pp. 120-1.

It takes a lot of thinking and draining work to understand how notions about femininity and masculinity *create* and *sustain* global inequalities and oppression…yet truly effective international feminism requires us to make sense of how patriarchal ideas and practices *link* all sectors [of international and domestic politics and economics] together – and to other relationships whose gendered dynamics we have scarcely begun to fathom. [70]

This is a reasonably sophisticated and non-Humean, though still largely implicit, view of causation that seems to provide useful grounds for the feminist project in IR.

Yet there are many feminists who do not acknowledge the causal role of constructed 'femininities' and 'masculinities' in the world, instead it is argued, along poststructuralist lines, that certain ideas about masculinity and feminity are 'constitutive' of practice. In extreme, reading through Cynthia Weber's novel-style metaphoric queer theory one is easily convinced of the obsolescence of causal claims in feminist theorising.[71]

However, if feminists say that patriarchal, or in Weber's case hetero-normative, norms are 'constitutive' of societies and practice it is hard to see, on the basis of a common-sensical (or realist) idea of causation, why feminists are making such a claim if it is not causal. Even Weber, with her humorous novel seems to be making a point about how sexual representation is a causal factor in how states acquire and adjust their postures. Rejection of causes seems, again, to have less to do with rejection of the principle of causation and more to do with avoiding notions of determinism implied in many biological theories about sexual roles[72] and with the fact that ideas and discourses are seen as the primary 'producing' factor in feminism.

This section has raised interesting questions about causation in IR. It has demonstrated firstly that causation in 'reflectivist' IR is mixed up with many biases: positivism, determinism, materialism and even Darwinism. Moreover, we notice again, as with Waltz, that there seems to be a tension between the 'diurnal' and the 'nocturnal' philosophies. While rejecting and ignoring causation reflectivist theories do make implicit causal claims, in fact their theories seem to depend upon them being able to show how representations are causally relevant.

On the basis of the analysis here it emerges that the 'gulf' between causal and non-causal theorising in IR is not as great as is implied by the disciplinary conventions. Both 'camps' in IR work on the basis of Humean causation and both camps while anti-

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[70] Emphasis mine. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, p. 18.
[71] Cynthia Weber, *Faking it: US hegemony in the 'post-phallic era'* (London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1999).
[72] See Steans, *Gender and International Relations; an introduction* (Oxford: Polity, 1998), p.13.

realist in philosophy (avoid positing real causes) assume causes of some kind to be behind their theories.

2.4. Alexander Wendt and the 'middle way'

Alexander Wendt's constructivism proposes a "philosophically principled middle way" between rationalism and reflectivism in IR.[73] Wendt's proposed synthesis of metatheoretical divides in IR, among them the causal and constitutive theorising divide, has been far from uncontroversial, however. Rationalists have accused Wendt of conceding too much to reflectivism, while reflectivists, famously Steve Smith, have accused Wendt of understanding constitutive theory (and the reasons account) as a mere adjunct of causal theorising.[74] The argument here is that Wendt's metatheoretical groundings are indeed problematic in accounting for causation, however, not in the way suggested by the rationalists or the reflectivists but because he gets confused in his attempted reconceptualisation of causation.

Wendt explicitly seems to draw on the scientific/critical realist conceptualisation of causation to ground his synthesis of causal and constitutive theorising in IR. Thus he argues that causation is not about regularity but about why, in reference to generative mechanisms, something occurs.[75] He asserts, against the Rational Choice theorists that "causation is a relation in nature, not in logic" and against the reflectivists that ideas do not preclude causal effects.[76] He also, controversially, argues that all IR theories (can) do both causal and constitutive theorising.[77] So far so good.

However, Wendt also introduces curious seemingly Humean aspects into his account of causation. He asserts that a relation between things is causal when cause X is necessary for effect Y, and (unlike in his 'constitutive theory') *when X is prior to and independent of Y.*[78] Insisting on independence of causes and effects (as well as equating temporal priority with causal connection[79]) is a problematic qualification for causation, it could be argued, for realists specifically look for how things are *linked* on the deeper ontological levels. As Harre and Madden explain:

> The apparent independence of events upon which Hume's arguments ultimately rests is…an illusion which has been fostered by the undoubted fact that events

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[73] Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 2.
[74] Steve Smith, 'Wendt's world' in *Review of International Studies* 'Forum on Wendt', vol.26 (2000) pp. 156-9.
[75] Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 77.
[76] Ibid., p. 81.
[77] Ibid., pp. 165-6
[78] Ibid., p. 79.
[79] For an interesting discussion of temporal qualification for causality see Mackie, *Cement of the Universe*, pp. 160-92.

which are identified as cause and effect are capable of independent identification and thus independent description. But the descriptions under which they are independent do not include their causal efficacy or origin. Considered as causes and effects they are not independent for they are related through the generating mechanisms upon which they operate and through which they are produced.[80]

Also, especially having admitted the causal role of ideas and culture, it is difficult to see how Wendt can maintain this 'independence' argument in substantive theorising.[81]

To fully see the confusions in Wendt's account we need to also explore his account of constitutive theorising. Constitutive theorising for Wendt is something that accounts for "the properties of things by reference to the structures in virtue of which they exist", how a thing, *whether natural or social object*, is constituted.[82] This is a defensible position that draws on realism and the idea of the aim of science being the understanding of the constitutive structures behind the causal powers of objects, this in the social world involving ideas and meanings as well as (through them) material construction of social structures.

However, this constitutive theorising, as Steve Smith has pointed out[83], is not what hermeneutic positions have taken 'constitutive-ness' to mean, for it is not based on arguments about the 'internality' or 'anti-causal nature' of the social world. Wendt is aware of this and tries to differentiate his position from hermeneutic positions. Yet, Wendt also seems to be drawn to associating constitutive theorising with 'reflectivism' and also, it seems, the 'reasons account' becomes equated with constitutive theorising in the anti-causal sense.[84] Equally, it seems, Wendt's proposed causal account becomes at times associated and confused with the positivist/rationalist causal analysis (which is different from realist causal analysis).[85] Wendt seems then to largely accept the Hollis and Smith dichotomy though this is based on a Humean notion of causation.[86] In doing so he draws too distinct (and disciplinarily conventional) a line between causal and constitutive theorising than critical realism that he claims to draw from would warrant.

[80] Harre and Madden, *Causal Powers*, p. 130.
[81] Indeed, see his confusing account of causal and constitutive effects of culture, Wendt, *Social Theory*, pp. 167-178.
[82] Wendt, 'On Causation and Constitution in International Relations' in Cox, Booth, Dunne, *Eighty Year's Crisis; International Relations 1919-1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.107-112.
[83] Smith, 'Wendt's World', p. 157.
[84] See e.g. discussion on Campbell. Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 56. On reasons and causes Wendt, 'On the Via Media; a response to the critics', *Review of International Studies* vol.20 (2000), p. 170.
[85] See references to rationalism. Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 374. Also Wendt accepts the level of analysis problematique though it is based on a very Humean idea of causes. See Patomaki, 'How to tell better stories of world politics', *European Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 2(1), 1996, p.110
[86] See Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding*, p.3

This derives perhaps from Wendt's curious notion that in causal theorising X and Y are independent whereas in constitutive theorising they are not.[87] This distinction between causal and constitutive seems difficult to maintain. Constitutive theory can, indeed, be said to be that which explains structures and properties of things, how they are constituted. In the social world this often involves relationships of ideas and concepts. But this theorising is different only by virtue of explaining the status and structure of a social kind, not by virtue of its 'in/dependence from effects'. Also this constitutive theorising has an intimate link with causal theorising. Thus while reflectivists have (rightly) stressed the role of ideas in the 'constitution' of the social world (explaining how for example anarchy is constituted by certain ideas and concepts), it is important to notice that theirs theorising is causal theorising too (how this anarchy idea makes actors behave in certain rather than other ways).

It is also important to note that Bhaskar, who Wendt draws from, integrates the hermeneutic tradition into his account of social science on the basis that the hermeneutic factors are essential within a (non-positivist) causal understanding of the world and argues that the hermeneutic tradition in itself depends on a causal account of the world. Bhaskar justifies this with his explicitly non-positivist conception of causation and argues explicitly that *reasons are and must be causes* (discussed more later on). This is something Wendt does not seem to follow through with but at times concedes to the reflectivists.[88]

Wendt seems to have a two-fold problem then. He tries to outline but does not follow the realist model of causation. Equally he attempts to provide but does not stick to the realist model of constitutive theorising. Due to the confusions in Wendt's meta-theoretical groundings Humean aspects and anti-naturalist ones creep into his account. The problem with Wendt's account of causal and constitutive theorising, is not that he treats constitutive theorising as an adjunct to causal analysis (as Smith claims), but that he does not seem to be fully aware of the implications and the form of the realist reconceptualisation of causation. This leads him to espouse Humean requirements for causation, reasons as non-causal and himself as a 'positivist[89].

This section has demonstrated that the Humean account of causation is infectiously wide-spread in the discipline of IR. It dominates not only rationalist social science of IR but also reflectivism (that rejects it) as well as, paradoxically, Wendtian constructivism that specifically seeks to overcome it. The next section will seek to reconceptualise causation and hence open up possibilities for overcoming the dominance of the narrow and polarising Humean conception of causation in IR. As Patomaki and Wight have

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[87] Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 85.
[88] See Wendt, 'On the Via Media', p. 170

pointed out 'middle groundism' between two equally problematic meta-theoretical positions (Humean and anti-causal) does not seem to work,[90] what is needed is an original position that transcends, rather than seeks to synthesise, existing positions.

3. Rethinking causation, attacking disciplinary divisions

How do we get beyond the dominant Humean conception of causation and the dichotomies it has spawned in IR? How do we get rid of the biases that undermine the principle of causation? How do we solve the tension between what IR theorists espouse and practice? The aim of this section is to introduce alternative conceptions of causation into IR and to apply the critical realist philosophy of causation to the meta-theoretical dichotomies that have started to define the 'divided discipline'. The central dichotomies that we must rethink along with causation are the reasons and causes issue, the confusing use of 'causal' and 'constitutive' language in IR and the question of free will.

3.1. Alternative conceptions of causation in IR

Few have given causation much focused thought in IR as we have seen. This has resulted in an underdeveloped and unproblematised use, and rejection, of causation and causal theorising in IR. However, in the recent years challengers to the dominance of the simplistic conception of causation have arisen. Hidemi Suganami and Heikki Patomaki have, though in different ways, sought to overcome the simplicities and confusions of the rationalist, reflectivist and constructivist ideas about of causation through scrutinising and then rejecting the Humean conception of causation and the assumptions that flow from it.

Suganami's *On the Causes of War* demonstrates how there are grounds for rejecting the Humean regularity approach to causation as inadequate in accounting for causes of war. Suganami argues, using Waltz's theory as the target of his attack, that the rationalist notion of anarchy as an 'underlying cause' is not really 'causal' at all as anarchy, in terms of regularity, could as well be a cause of peace.[91] Account of causation needs to, he argues, demonstrate the connections between events not just state that events succeed each other.

While demonstrating that rationalist Regularity approach thus cannot explicate causes between things Suganami himself has drawn strongly on what seems to be a Collingwoodian notion of causation. "To study a cause", he states, "is to explain its

[89] Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 39.
[90] Patomaki and Wight, 'After Postpositivism?', p. 214
[91] Hidemi Suganami, *On the Causes of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 25.

occurrence, to render it more intelligible…to do this we need to show the sequence of events leading to it in such a way that a specific puzzle can be solved."[92] Suganami stresses how theorist/historian looking for causes must devise a narrative account through which (s)he can explicate and weigh hierarchically the importance of the causes (s)he is interested in. Suganami explicitly echoes Collingwood when he states that inquiry into the causes of war is inseparable from assigning blame and responsibility.[93]

Thus though Suganami rejects the Humean regularity causation he himself ends up rejecting any notion of being able to enquire into the 'real causes' beyond a narrative explanation of an event: "clearly any claim to know what really caused a given war is simply a claim to know what caused that war; nothing is added by the adjective 'really'".[94] His view of causation then exemplifies an epistemologically anti-realist pragmatist stance where causes, though important in making things intelligible, seem to lack any deeper ontological status.

While Suganami's approach is useful as it provides us with a new alternative way of conceptualising causes in IR, Heikki Patomaki's approach seems much more useful. Patomaki has sought to follow through with the 'critical realist' conception of necessary, all-encompassing but non-regularity-deterministic causation in IR. Thus he wants to show how discourses, beliefs and historical constitution of actors - all conventionally 'non-causal' - play causal roles in IR. Patomaki demonstrates how factors such as these (insufficient in themselves but together sufficient for production of an effect[95]) can be factored into the so called causal complexes. Causal complexes comprise, according to Patomaki, of five necessary elements of social being – historically constructed corporeal actors; meaningful, historically structured action; regulative and constitutive rules implicated in every action and the constitution of actors; resources as competences and facilities; and relational and positional practices.[96]

Patomaki argues that one should not really talk of causal mechanisms as Bhaskar does for this implies mechanistic causation; in the social world causality is always complex and there are never single causes at work.[97] The idea of causal complexes better conveys the form of causation to be looked for in social scientific theorising. However, echoing critical realism Patomaki's aim is, contra Suganami, to demonstrate precisely

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[92] Ibid., p. 139.
[93] Ibid., p. 151.
[94] Ibid., pp. 208-9.
[95] Exemplifying the INUS -condition definition of cause: 'cause is an insufficient but non-redundant element of a complex in itself unnecessary but sufficient for production of a result.' Mackie, *Cement of the Universe,* p. 62. Heikki Patomaki, 'How to Tell Better Stories in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations,* vol. 2 (1996) p. 112.
[96] Ibid., pp.114-5.

the 'reality' and the causal role of structures and powers in the social world despite their hermeneutic, historical, agential, and complex character.

To get knowledge of these complex causes and causally efficacious reasons for action we *require* hermeneutic methods and an open process of evidence gathering. Patomaki admits that interpretation is involved in weighing causal theories against each other, yet (against the incommensurability thesis) dialogue between interpretations is possible and disagreements between causal theories does not deny the existential status of real causes.[98] Drawing on the critical realist philosophy and the helpful writings of Patomaki I will now discuss how issues associated with causation can be rethought.

3.2. Reasons as/or causes?

One of the biggest divides in the modern and especially Anglophone analytic philosophy has been the reasons and causes issue: to what extent, if at all, can people's reasons for acting be considered as caused and as causal? This question has been the central dividing line between the positivist and the hermeneutic approaches in the social sciences, and emerged as such also in IR following the 'philosophical turn'. Especially the writings of Steve Smith who has vigorously defended the reasons account of the social world has raised the profile of this meta-theoretical issue. However, it will be argued that the debate over reasons and causes in IR has been conducted in a misleading (and arcane) way because it has been based on a particular Humean understanding of causation and intentional action. Instead drawing on critical realism I shall demonstrate that reasons are not only caused but causes themselves and that this has an important impact on how to conceptualise intentional action, agency and role of ideas in IR theory.[99]

The reasons account, that people's reasons for action cannot be considered causal because of the 'internal' meanings-defined nature of the social world, is predicated on a caricatured and narrow conception of causation: reasons are thought to apply in the social world because clearly the Humean causal model 'when X, then Y' does not work. This understanding of causation is evident in Smith's account: exploring different conceptions of causation has been ignored though even Winch, the 'father' of the reasons/rule model of the social world, has acknowledge the importance of examining alternative conceptualisations of causation.[100] Thus it is important to show what

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[97] Ibid., p. 118
[98] Ibid., pp. 105-133. See also Patomaki and Wight, 'After Postpositivism?', pp. 225-7
[99] See Bhaskar, *Reclaiming Reality*, pp. 11, 3. See also discussion of accounts that reject reasons as causes in *Possibility of Naturalism*, pp. 83-86.
[100] See Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding*, p.3. Winch, *Idea of Social Science*, p. xii. For Smith's reading of Winch's see Smith, 'Wendt's world', p. 158.

difference critical realist philosophy and its non-Humean conception of causation have for reconsidering reasons and for breaking down the polarisation between reasons and causes in IR.

If causation is not seen as co-terminous with regularity (that brings with it regularity determinism) and 'cause' is conceptualised ('common-sensically') as that which "so tips the balance of events as to produce a known outcome"[101] causal explanations can be seen to reach much deeper into social life than typical reasons accounts allow. We can see that there are many causes behind our reasons, even when we do not realise their causal role. The critical realist social ontology sees the world as structured through pre-existing and reproduced beliefs, ideas and institutions. These have causal power over us; they give us causal reasons, or a causal background, for acting - even when we decide to act against them. Indeed, "men make their own history, but not…under circumstances chosen by themselves".[102]

However, this is only half of the picture: Bhaskar argues that as well as pre-existing social structures (or other emergent properties) shaping and directing the reasons we hold and thus our behaviour, our *reasons must be causes* of our action because "the agent's reasons are a necessary condition for the bodily movements that occurred, in the straightforward sense that had the agent not possessed them they would have not occurred".[103] Now to give a 'reasons-account' then is to explicate those reasons that are *causally efficacious* in agents' actions.

Agents can be mistaken about their reasons for actions (rationalisations); however, this does not challenge the assumption that the agent's reason (though not necessarily the one cited by agent) was the cause of the action. In Bhaskar's words

> A person may possess a reason R for doing A, do A and R may not be the reason why s/he does it. It is only if X does A *because* of R that we are justified in citing R as the reason for A. And there would seem no way of explicating 'because' except in terms of causality…. Unless a reason could function as a cause there would be no sense in a person evaluating different beliefs in order to decide how to act. For either a reason will make a difference to his/her behaviour or it will not. In the former case it counts as a cause.[104]

What does this establishing of reasons as causes (and as caused) mean for our analysis of causation in IR? It shows that the social world deals with causes throughout

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[101] Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism*, p. 83.
[102] Marx, Karl, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p.15
[103] Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism*, p. 89.
[104] Ibid., p.90- 92.

but in a non(regularity)deterministic manner. If the reasons account is underlined by causes and agent's reasons have significance only if and in so far as they are causal, in terms of the disciplinary self-image this means that the sharp dichotomisation between causal and reasons accounts must be abandoned.

This in turn implies that hermeneutic methods must be accepted as having a fundamentally important role in analysing human action but *within* social science of IR (conceived of in a non-positivist manner) and in as much as they help to explicate important causal factors in social life. As Patomaki argues, hermeneutic methods are *needed* for causal analysis *because* reasons are causes.[105]

It means, moreover, that ideas and beliefs are, contrary to many positivist approaches in IR, central to social science despite of not being directly observable or (regularity) deterministic, for ideas give people reasons for acting. Indeed, it could be argued that it is through this conception of (causally efficacious) discourses and reasons that poststructuralists can make the claims that they do about the role of discourse in the social world. Without being able to say that discourses are causal it would be hard to see what the point of poststructuralist inquiries is. Feminists and critical theory, equally, depend upon this reconceptualisation of causes and reasons too.

Moreover, on the basis of this reading of critical realism, it can be seen that Wendt's efforts to keep reasons as independent of causes are flawed. Wendt cannot maintain the dualistic position on reasons and causes (that arises from his curiously partly Humean conception of causation). Indeed, a balancing act such as his is not just misguided but unnecessary on the basis of the reading of the critical realist meta-theoretical groundings espoused here.

3.3. Causal and constitutive theorising reconsidered

This divide between causal and constitutive theorising is supposedly the most crucial one in contemporary IR.[106] However, as has emerged from our analysis of causation, and of reasons and causes, distinguishing between causal and constitutive theorising is not as straightforward as many in the discipline, would hope. Indeed, on the basis of an alternative critical realist conception of causation, causes can be seen to run through the whole of the discipline. This raises an important question: what exactly is 'constitutive' theorising and its relationship to causal theorising?

It seems that the meaning of 'constitutive' theorising in IR is very vague, indeed, at times it seems to have simply a political function by implying theoretical positions that 'want a change' in conventional thinking. I shall here demonstrate possible meanings

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[105] Patomaki, 'How to tell better stories', p. 108

of 'constitutive' theorising and argue that all, except for one, of these meanings are causal (in the reconceptualised critical realist sense) and that the one that is not causal is not specific to just the social sciences and has close affinity with causal theorising and causal conception of the world.

Firstly, the idea of 'constitutive' theorising in IR is often related to theories that deal with ideas as the 'constituting' factor in society, how we are socialised into ways of thinking. However, as can be deduced from the section above and from discussions in the previous chapters it could be argued that the notion of ideationality is in itself hardly something that denies the philosophical principle of causation when it is not conceived of in the narrow Humean sense. In the common sense (or realist) meaning of the word we can see that beliefs and ideas, far from being non-causal, are among the most important causal movers in the social world (as well as being caused themselves). They 'tip the balance of events so as to produce results'.

The reflectivist theories in IR then can be seen as valuable in that they have focused more attention on ideas and discourses and their effects in IR. However, this does not change the fact that 'constitutive theorising' in this sense is to be taken as causal. Indeed, "if repugnant beliefs never did any harm – because never caused anyone to do anything – there would be little point in wasting breath to criticise them".[107]

The second meaning in which 'constitutive' is commonly understood is in reference to the role of theory: theory in most reflectivist IR approaches is seen as 'constitutive' of practice. However, even if it is accepted that theories that people 'create' 'make the world' (which without qualifications seems a far from simple assumption to make as theories arise not in a vacuum) is this 'theory-as-practice' account not a causal account as well? If my theory about the causes of war affects how states think they should behave, as is often argued about realism (which allegedly perpetuates militaristic and Hobbesian thinking), then is not my theory causal in that it influences how people think which is then translated into their actions; my theory gives people causally efficacious reasons for acting in a certain way.

"Social theory and social reality are causally interdependent…social theory is conditioned by and has consequences for society."[108] When causation is separated from (regularity) determinism theory-as-practice conception of 'constitutive theory' can in fact be described as 'theory-as-cause-of-practice'. Thus the critical realist reconceptualisation of causes does not deny the role of theory in making up the world – or in 'reifying' it. However, to deny the principle of causation does not help one to

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[106] Steve Smith, 'Ten Self-images of a Discipline: a genealogy of International Relations Theory' in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds), *International Relations Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), pp. 26-27.
[107] Sayer, *Method in Social Science; a realist approach*, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 111.
[108] Bhaskar, *Reclaiming Reality*, p. 5.

counter theoretical reification, on the contrary, making people think otherwise *depends* on exerting causal reasons (through other theories) for why they might want to change their thinking.

Thirdly, another common account of constitutive theory is the notion that as opposed to Humean causation (X causes Y when independent and prior to it) 'constitutive-ness' means that "X counts as Y in the context C".[109] The reference point here is the notion of 'rules' making things count as something. This social constructivist account is valid in the sense that social world is of course constituted by historical rule contexts. However, as realists such as Dessler and Patomaki explain these rules are causal in the sense that they constrain action and make action possible.[110] All explanations involve rules accounts but not only are rules produced by other causes but rules themselves constrain and enable behaviour to take a certain path (they 'tip balance of events') and thus they should be considered causal in nature.

The fourth sense in which 'constitutive' is used is in reference to what Wendt (initially) outlines as constitutive theorising. Constitutive theory in this sense has to do with explicating and describing the structure, properties and dispositions of a thing (in IR for example the Cold War or the European Union).[111] This constitutive theory is in itself non-causal form of explanation. Yet this conception is very different from the ones discussed above since this conception extends over both natural and social sciences and is intricately linked to causal analysis of (causal nature of) the world.

Thus the importance of the way in which Cold War is constituted by actors, ideas and practices derives from the way in which this allows us to explain the causal links in the world of international politics. Constitutive theory, inquiring how concepts link to each other to produce discourses, might be an interesting "end in itself"[112] for some (What was the Cold War? What is sovereignty? How is the discourse of national security constructed?) but this should not hide the fact that it is *intricately* linked to causal claims (What made US act like it did [in virtue of the nature of the Cold War]? Why do states and people act like they do [in virtue of discourse of sovereignty]? What effects does discourse of national security have?). Moreover, behind the ways things are constituted there are multiple causes, too, and these should not be forgotten as readily as they are in many reflectivist analysis.

What does the analysis in this section tell us of the causal/constitutive divide in the discipline of IR? It shows, as did the section on reasons and causes, that causal analysis conceived of on the alternative non-Humean basis, extends much deeper into

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[109] See for example Searle, *Construction of Social Reality,* pp. 43-45.
[110] David Dessler, 'What's at stake in the agency-structure debate?', *International Organisation* vol. 43.3 (1989), p. 455.
[111] Wendt, 'On Constitution and Causation', pp. 109-114.

IR theorising than commonly assumed. Thus this central divide too, is an arbitrary one. Poststructuralist, feminist and critical theorists have gone a long way in exposing some interesting previously unnoted insights about world politics (about capitalism, national security discourse, statism) - where they have done so it has been because they have demonstrated the causal link of certain discourses (or structures) to the behaviour, oppression or marginalisation of (groups of) people. They are thus also causal analysts!

3.4. Causation and the question of free will

The things discussed above are important in reconsidering explanatory categories and disciplinary self-image in IR. However, reconsidering causation also has normative consequences. The age-old philosophical debate over the relationship of free will and determinism underlies most IR theories implicitly, yet is rarely discussed out in the open. In IR dealing with causes has been mostly associated with determinism, whereas 'free will' is associated with notions of contingency, discourse and ideas. Freedom is seen to consist in the rather vague notion of 'creativity' or 'freedom to act' (in any possible way - thus humans voluntaristically 'make the world'); while to be caused to act is seen to involve not having a choice on how to act, to be a mechanistic robot of nature. These in-built biases that are also intimately tied to disciplinary politics, make it difficult to even discuss the principle of causation and its relation to free will. However, it is important to ask "why on earth should 'cause' turn an action into a mere happening and a person into a helpless victim?"[113] Equally why should normative ideals be somehow thrown out of the window by accepting causation? This debate raises interesting questions about the nature of determinism, about the in/compatibility of free will and determinism as well as about the definition of freedom.

Conventionally in moral philosophy there have been two positions on the relationship of free will and determinism: the incompatibilist position (that determinism must be wrong because it does not fit in with free will) and the compatibilist position (that acceptance of determinism would not result in the destruction of free will). However, there seem to be two fundamental faults in the way the conventional philosophical debate has been waged. Firstly, causal determinism has been understood as the Humean regularity determinism – causal determinism has widely been seen to imply universal causal laws and notion of predictability.[114] There has been no interest in

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[112] Wendt, *Social Theory*, p. 86.

[113] Davidson, 'Actions, reasons and causes' in *Actions and events: : essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) p.19.

[114] See for example Dworkin, *Determinism, Free Will and Moral Responsibility*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970), p.3, Fischer and Ravizza, *Responsibility and control; a theory of moral responsibility*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 14 Honderich, *How Free Are You? The determinism*

examining different notions of determinism and of causation, whether one has espoused incompatibilist *or* compatibilist position. Secondly, a position between compatibilism and incompatibilism has, confusingly, been lumped together with the compatibilist position, that is, the notion that the "truth of determinism entails the truth of free will".[115] Here I shall argue for this forgotten position through reconceptualising causation and determinism.

If one rejects the Humean regularity deterministic notion of causation, as has been suggested in the course of this paper, the terms of the debate over free will and determinism change. Causation can no longer be linked to determinism in the regularity sense: determinism of the form 'every event has a cause' (ubiquity determinism) can be recognised to be very different from and not to entail determinism of the form 'when X then Y' (regularity determinism).[116] It follows that causation, causal necessity and even determinism do not 'determine' the world – they constrain, enable and direct behaviour. Causation should be seen in terms of forces that can be counteracted rather than as laws.[117]

This sort of (ubiquity) determinism provides a much better basis of debating the question at hand for it does not eradicate notions of intentional action, freedom or the idea of moral responsibility, on the contrary it gives these things their true meaning. How? We must think of two forms of causal powers: the conditioning ones (social structures) and the agential ones (intentional action).[118] The human made essence of society is important. However, it is not something that denies the principle of causation for we are born into societies and structures (ideational and material) that we ourselves have not created but have to act in relation to. We have the (causal) capacity for intentional action too, but we can only use this capacity in (causal) structures that we are surrounded with.

Thus, as Carr too has argued, the tension between free will and determinism does not actually arise since humans depend on causes, not just in the sense that they use causes as a means to understand the world (which they do) but also in that their thought and action is conditioned by existence of causes.[119] Thus critical realist agency and intentional action is different from 'free agency' of voluntaristic/libertarian thinking. We need causes for 'free action' in the sense that 'free' makes no sense outside of a social context but also in the agential sense because if people are not

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problem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 3, Watson, *Free Will*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 2.

[115] As opposed to the compatibilitist position: "nothing follows from the truth/falsity of determinism for free will." See Dworkin, Ibid. p. 6.

[116] Refer to Bhaskar, *Realist Theory of Science*, p. 69-72

[117] Porpora, *The Concept of Social Structure*, p. 133.

[118] Lloyd, *The Structures of History*, p.127.

[119] Carr, *What is History?*, p. 95.

governed by their motives 'actions' are nothing but caprice.[120] Thus reasons must be causes (as well as effects of conditioning causes) and intentional action dependent on idea of causal necessity (ubiquity determinism). Moreover, we should not give up to the "error of voluntarism"[121] which is based on the illusion that society is based on nothing but 'free' intentional action and is thus freely to be 'created' at any time. The more meaningful way of thinking about agency and freedom is to consider change as transformation of those structures that preceded us or that we unintentionally made.

This in turn implies that it is more knowledge of causal structures that is the essence of 'free will' and freedom, not denying their existence. "Freedom cannot be grounded in ignorance! Or else we would have to reckon a falling man free in virtue of his ignorance of gravity."[122] Freedom exists in the capacity to use one's intentions to understand and transform the social world; this requires causal (and underlying constitutive) knowledge of the world as well as agential causal powers to give people different 'causally efficacious' reasons for acting. Stronger sense of being free than merely creating or thinking 'free' is in "transformation of the unneeded, unwanted and oppressive to needed, wanted and empowering sources of determinacy".[123]

This has important normative consequence in IR for it allows us to see how change in world politics should be pursued: not by advocating the rather meaningless notion of 'freedom as voluntarism' but by providing people with the knowledge of and powers to influence societal structures (ideational and material) so as to achieve change that is normatively more adequate. Many 'reflectivists' pride themselves on aiming for a positive normative change. The confusing language and voluntaristic/libertarian leanings of many reflectivists, however, have made their accounts seem immaterial in the struggle against oppression in the world. Though thinking differently is in many ways the first step towards transformation of world politics we cannot simply 'imagine away' social structures like states, capitalism or the international system. Accepting the causal role (in the non-regularity deterministic sense) of structures and discourses of world politics and countenancing these structures and discourses with other causally efficacious, but normatively more adequate ones, seems a more useful way of trying to achieve change in the world that we theorise about.

[120] Bhaskar, *Reclaiming Reality*, p. 177.
[121] Ibid., p.4
[122] Ibid., p. 162.
[123] Ibid., p. 178.

Conclusion

Nothing strikes me more than when I read the controversies of past ages than the fact that both sides thought that they were as completely opposed as two sides could be but in fact they were all the time secretly united – united with each other...by a great mass of common assumptions.[124]

What has emerged from the 'philosophical underlabouring' in this paper is that approaches in contemporary IR though seem completely oppositional are in fact united by common assumptions.[125] Both sides have accepted the narrow Humean model of causation as the unproblematised basis of thinking about causes without any awareness of what it entails or what possible alternative conceptualisations could offer. As a result, there is very little sophisticated understanding of, or debate on, causation and causal analysis in IR. Instead, while rationalist 'causal analysts' have generalised about effects and empirical facets of causes, 'reflectivists' have associated causation with positivist, deterministic and materialist theories and thus have rejected it. In the meanwhile Wendt has tried to rethink causation while still, paradoxically, not being able to escape Humean influences.

It is clear then that more focused thought must be paid to causation. Developing meta-theoretical basis of theorising gives not only deeper understanding of the dynamics to be looked for in theorising, but also allows one to avoid easy (meta)theoretical pitfalls. Indeed, it is important to notice that what has 'tripped' many IR theorists has been not as much their explicit espousal of the Humean theory (only some rationalists claim this) but their ignorance of alternative conceptualisations and thus their undeveloped and biased conceptions of causation. There is a need to explore possibilities of reconceptualising conventional categories of thinking and perhaps as a result to (re)turn to wider conceptions of causation.[126]

We need causal theories in IR that explain not regularity of events but the lack of invariance in social tendencies. We need causal theories that instead of generalising about 'observed' effects explain the mechanisms, or rather complexes (even if unobservable) that generate effects. Our causal theories must inquire into capacities and dispositions of structures and agents, and thus Aristotelian 'final', 'material' as well as 'efficient causes'. We need causal theories that recognise the causal role of ideas, reasons and discourses, but also their caused historical background.

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[124] C.S.Lewis, 'On the reading of old books', *First and Second Things* (Colling: Fount, 1985), p. 27
[125] Point made also by Patomaki and Wight, 'After Postpositivism?', p.216-7
[126] Dessler has stated his interest in developing the idea of 'material cause' and the Aristotelian ideas of societal activity. See Dessler, 'What's at stake', p. 452.

The 'critical realist' meta-theoretical grounding advanced here is not the only alternative to Humean thinking. However, it is proposed as a workable alternative as arguably this meta-theoretical grounding works better both philosophically and in substantive theorising. This is largely because, as we have seen, most theories in IR 'do causation' in ways close to the realist conceptualisation - though implicitly. Indeed, it is the tension between 'diurnal' and 'nocturnal' philosophies in IR that this paper has aimed to expose and resolve. Opening up the notion of causation according to the critical realist readings allows theorists involved in different sorts of theorising to do what they do (to look for the causes they look for) only without the confusing and conceptually biased terminology so wide spread in IR at present.

We have found that there is such a thing as 'constitutive theorising' in IR, however, this does not constitute a 'different story' because the value of these explorations comes from how they explain causal powers of social kinds. Moreover, behind constitutive things (e.g. the concept of sovereignty) there are a variety of historical and discursive causal factors that we cannot forget about. At the same time, causal accounts (common-sensically how something generated something) require constitutive understanding precisely because in the social world how people understand things causes them (gives them causal reasons) to behave like they do. Causal explanation is fundamental to IR because on the alternative reading of causation provided here causal necessity "is not merely as Hume says, *to us*, but also *in fact* the cement of the universe".[127] Thus, indeed, "if causal explanation is not thought to be the goal, then the problem of giving a convincing account of an alternative goal is seemingly insurmountable." [128]

Accepting, and let us not forget further developing, these alternative terms of seeing causation have important consequences for substantive theorising. It has been suggested here that accompanied with more developed and wider accounts of causation many IR theorists - from Waltz to feminists and poststructuralist, from critical theorists to constructivists - would make their theories considerably stronger. Through reconceptualisation of causation one cannot only improve causal theorising but also, as has been seen, one can start to rethink other issues like intentional action, role of ideas and even the notion of freedom which also helps improve theories' explanatory and normative capacities.

Another important insight can be drawn from the present study: this analysis has allowed us to challenge the present disciplinary self-image in IR. Thinking that dichotomies between reasons and causes, causal and constitutive theorising, free will

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[127] Mackie, *Cement of the Universe*, p. 3
[128] Lloyd, *The Structures of History*, p. 50.

and determinism are immutable has disguised how they have been constructed through a dominant philosophical trend (embracing both rationalism/positivism and most of reflectivism/post-positivism) that is imbedded in Humean conception of causality, deep anti-realism as well prioritisation of epistemology over ontology. The alternative conceptualisation of causation, by the realists and the critical realists has offered a way of reassessing all the previously accepted dichotomies in IR. Pioneering these ideas in IR Wight and Patomaki have in the recent years launched a 'critical realist' attack on the disciplinary 'divisions' in IR.[129] This study supports the efforts to transcend some of the unhelpful meta-theoretical divides in IR by having shown the inadequacies of the Humean notion of causation and demonstrating how causation conceived of differently does not by definition destroy reasons, intentional action, free will or positive normative change but is in fact a precondition to all these.

Furthermore, challenging the self-image that has defined the discipline also allows one to challenge the methodological rigidities that have flowed from it. It has been thought that the possibility of 'social scientific' IR depends upon quantitative 'causal' analysis. It has been noticed here, however, that positivist rationalist 'causal analysis' is not even full causal analysis since on a non-Humean conception of causality quantification is, though potentially useful, neither necessary nor sufficient for establishing causation. The 'social science' of IR can be seen as defined by the object of study, the human relations of world politics, not by methods. Hermeneutic methods, *because reasons are causes*, are equally scientific and necessary in hunting for social causation in world politics. Methodological and epistemological divides then become relatively unimportant: we need all the methods we have to find out about the complexity of social causes. Resorting to the notion that theorists are concerned in fundamentally different sorts of tasks is self-defeating for the aim of increasing our knowledge of international politics.

Thus the examination and reconceptualisation of causation has helped to expose the oppositional camps in IR for what they are approaches to the study of the social world that through a combined, instead of a divided, effort can give us a better understanding of world politics and thus give us better means to tackle the real causes of war, injustice, conflict or terrorism. This is important, not to satisfy aspirations of philosophical, theoretical or political superiority, but to, potentially, give us better means for dealing with and explaining world politics and thereby to make possible positive normative change in contemporary world politics.

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[129] See Patomaki and Wight, 'After postpositivism?'

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