Sergei Prozorov

HOW TO CRITICIZE WITHOUT EVER BECOMING A CRITIC

Abstract

The chapter attempts to elucidate the disposition of the critical IR scholar by exploring the resonances between the political subject and the figure of the critic. While the critical disposition is often contrasted with proper politics as overly negative and devoid of constructive effects, I shall argue that political praxis and critical activity share a similar modus operandi in overcoming exclusions, overturning hierarchies and abolishing restrictions in a given world. The political subject is not a poet, artist or 'world-maker'; it is rather a pitiless critic of the worlds s/he finds itself in. Critical IR is therefore a political intervention into the world of the IR discipline. This parallel between the critic and the political subject is also helpful for rethinking the critical disposition otherwise than in terms of identity. Just as the political subject is not an identity but a practice of dissolving identities, including one's own, the success of critical IR would not consist in consolidating into a new disciplinary identity alongside others, but in maintaining itself in excess of any disciplinary structure. To recall Marx, one must be able to criticize without ever becoming a critic.

Introduction

What has critical IR done? In the thirty-plus years of its existence as a recognizable approach or orientation in the discipline what effects has it produced? What has the critique of the discipline achieved? It is possible to answer this question in a myriad of ways, quite a few of which are ventured in this volume. For our purposes in this chapter, it is possible to categorize these effects in a threefold manner. Firstly, it has sought the the expansion of the field both theoretically (by introducing new approaches from philosophy, social and other sciences) and thematically (by introducing new themes of research from gender to science fiction). Secondly, it attempted to overcome, invert or at least disturb the hierarchies in the discipline (between high and low politics, levels of analysis, hard and soft power, quantitative and qualitative methods, etc.). Finally, it ventured the subversion of restrictions and assigned roles (for feminists to study national security, for third world scholars to study European integration, for poststructuralists to write IR textbooks, etc.).

Overcoming exclusions, overturning hierarchies, abolishing restrictions – there is a clearly political aspect to all three of these effects. In this chapter I shall argue that the task and achievement of critical IR does indeed consist in the politicization of the discipline. This view of politicization cannot but appear controversial for two reasons. Firstly, we are more accustomed to conceiving of politicization in terms of subjecting a field or process to the demands or judgment of a certain political principle or doctrine. From this perspective, the politicization of an academic discipline would entail its domination by some external political content, be it liberalism, socialism or nationalism, which, as experience teaches us, is never a good thing. Secondly, we tend to approach

politics in more constructive and affirmative terms as an activity that goes beyond mere abolition and overcoming of something. We therefore expect politicization to do something more to the discipline that rid it of exclusions and hierarchies, e.g. produce a different, new and better discipline. In this chapter I shall outline the notion of politicization which inverts these two assumptions. Firstly, the politicization we shall focus on is entirely immanent, devoid of any external doctrine and ideology and targeting the discipline's own 'doctrinal' hierarchies, exclusions and restrictions. Secondly, it will have its entire substance in the apparently negative acts of overcoming these hierarchies, exclusions and restrictions. As I shall argue, politics is not about the construction of new and better worlds, but about undermining and transforming the ones that exist. From this perspective, the political subject will have more in common with the critic than with the artist.

This claim cannot but appear controversial given the familiar references to 'building a better world' or a brighter future in the rhetoric of political actors of all stripes. Even when some of them are critical of the existing 'world order', they never fail to assert that 'another world is possible', usually with the implication that they would do a great job of producing it. And yet, it is precisely this poietic paradigm of politics that views it in terms of production, bringing into presence that in our view must be overcome. The heterogeneity between political praxis and poiesis as productive activity, be it in the realm of aesthetics or the socioeconomic domain more generally, has been asserted in different ways by such by political philosophers as Hannah Arendt (1998) and Giorgio Agamben (1999, 68-92; 2016, 3-24), both of whom emphasized the autonomy of political praxis from both labour in the narrow sense of the satisfaction of material needs and work more generally as the production of certain effects irreducible to the activity of work itself, from songs to stadiums to laws. As pure praxis, political action has its sole principle and its sole product in itself. It is precisely because it knows neither cause nor end that politics does not merely affirm freedom but actually and wholly consists in it. Yet, prior to introducing the figure that best embodies this freedom, let us briefly address the poietic paradigm and its relation to government and politics.

The Poietic Paradigm

What is art as a form of poiesis? Evidently, art produces works, be they novels, paintings, operas, plays, etc. Yet, more importantly, art produces worlds, understood as regulated orders of appearance. In his Logics of Worlds (2009) Alain Badiou defined a world as any set of objects, whose appearance is governed by a certain order that he termed the 'transcendental'. By this definition, a university, a protest march, a family all constitute worlds, distinguished from one another by the modes of appearance prescribed by its transcendental. Yet, so do Hamlet, War and Peace, and Parsifal. Every work of art sets up a world, in which its elements come to appearance, enter into relations and form new entities. Our experience of the work of art is conditioned by our entry into this world, without which the work in question remains literally impenetrable to us, simply because we have not in fact managed to penetrate the world it has set up – it remains there but 'not for us'. If we happen to be not particularly 'into' a certain work, style or genre of art, this is simply because we are not in the world it produces. What defines art is then its constitution of a world, irrespectively of whether this world is realistic or magical, abstract or even senseless. This world-forming aspect may be most easily traced in the 20th century (post-) avant-garde forms of art that have largely dispensed with the 'work' in the traditional sense of the word without thereby in any way abandoning the poietic paradigm. Readymade art, which, to its detractors, appears to do nothing but transfer any object whatsoever from its regular sphere of use to a museum, is definable as art

precisely by virtue of this operation of transfer, which constitutes a new world by moving everyday objects into it and suspending their everyday functions in it. The artwork is produced without any recognizable work of 'artisanry' by a sheer gesture of de- and re-contextualization that takes an object from one world to another. Yet, other forms of art do exactly the same thing, in more or less minimalist or maximalist ways: the world of Wagner's Ring, the world of Magritte, the world of the Game of Thrones all bring to presence new forms of appearance of beings governed by a certain transcendental order.

The notion of governing is important here, insofar as this productive or presencing function of art has a clear parallel with the world-making characteristic of governmental practices, which constitute worlds as ordered spaces of human coexistence: the world of global finance, the world of publishing, the world of slums, the 'Russian world', the fashion world, the world of IR, etc. Yet, while it is unproblematic to view these worlds as governed by a certain order, we usually hesitate to view artistic worlds along the same lines, choosing to romanticize them as somehow free or disordered. Yet, while many artists may well take exception to the sociopolitical worlds we inhabit, this does not make their own world-making activity any less rigorous and subject to ordering. There is no poiesis in chaos, only poiesis out of chaos, the presencing into a world. What we take for the anarchic character of art is rather the effect of the pluralism of its forms and genres: as Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us, there is no unity in art, there are always only arts, never Art in general (Nancy 2006, 10-21). For that reason, the ordering particular to a certain mode of art rarely feels oppressive – one does not have to do this particular or, for that matter, any kind of art: there is always another kind to switch to whenever one feels bored or oppressed. Nonetheless, despite this freedom, which, as every freedom, is only appreciable in its absence (e.g. when a particular style becomes politically authorized as the only one admissible), there is no poiesis without the institution of a certain order. This is why the poietic paradigm applies equally well to both art and government, without in any way reducing one to the other: there is certainly a difference between the world of Regieoper and the world of New Public Management, but the world-forming character of the practices involved is exactly the same. To speak of an art of government, as was the custom since the antiquity, is not to unite the incompatible but to state the obvious.

What about politics, then? In my Void Universalism (Prozorov 2013a, 2013b) I defined politics as the practice of the affirmation in any particular world of the axioms arising from the void of being that conditions its possibility. Following Badiou, I start out from the existence of an infinite number of infinite worlds defined by a particular positive order, whose condition of possibility is the void as 'the proper name of being', that in which and out of which all positive worlds emerge. The orders defining these worlds are contingent, relative and particular. However, if these worlds are reduced to their sheer being-in-the-void, we may derive axioms from this condition that would be necessary, absolute and universal. They define the very worldhood of any world and for this reason are valid in any world whatsoever, since they do not depend on any worldly trait. The three axioms of freedom, equality and community, which in my reading exhaust the content of politics, describe the being of any being of any world, when the specific attributes of this world are suspended. In the absence of any identitarian predicates defining what they are, we are left with the sheer fact that these beings are: equal (devoid of any hierarchy), free (from any determination) and in common (in the absence of any boundaries).

These axioms are not historically specific features of some particular worlds that are inaccessible in others, but rather properly universal axioms, valid in any world whatsoever since they are nothing but attributes of the world itself when it is subtracted from all particular content. The affirmation

of these axioms within worlds, which constitutes politics, is therefore not a formative activity, since it does not introduce or produce any positive content in the world in question. Instead, it is a trans-formative or even de-forming practice, which seeks to level hierarchies and thus affirm equality, overcome exclusions and thus affirm community, reject restrictions and thus affirm freedom. Since any world is constituted by a certain transcendental order, whose exclusions, hierarchies and restrictions inevitably limit community, equality and freedom, the political affirmation of these axioms does not seek to produce a new, different world, which by definition would also be characterized by exclusions, hierarchies and restrictions of its own. It may well be that such a new world might indeed emerge as a result of the adaptation of the present world to the political challenge, the routinization of political activity, a successful restoration of the previous order, etc. Yet, but politics as such does not seek to form a world but rather de-forms its transcendental order by the maximal affirmation of freedom, equality and community that levels the transcendental distinctions that constitute the very worldhood of the world.

What is the difference between world formation as a governmental practice and the politics of world transformation? World-making ipso facto departs from a certain idea/vision of what the world must be and then proceeds to construct it in such a manner. Its rationality is teleo-technological, characterized by the affirmation of the goal to be reached and the design of techniques for reaching it. While no positive form of the world ever really corresponds to the blueprint for its construction, the blueprint in question nonetheless provides the terms, in which the world becomes intelligible and may be justified or contested. In contrast, politics begins with an indeterminate axiom valid for any world whatsoever and then does whatever it deems necessary to realize this axiom in a world, remaining agnostic or even indifferent about what positive form the transformed worlds would eventually take.

From this perspective, it is important to understand the blackmail involved in the typical response of governmental rationalities to the challenges of radical politics. How many times have we been asked or even asked ourselves the question of how the world regulated by our ideas would look in practice, who would regulate traffic, pass laws, take care of the waste, etc. – in short, what would be the positive form of the world that we affirm in our political demands? The reason such questions are often impossible to answer is that they have nothing to do with the logic of politics and can therefore function only as diversions from properly political inquiries and practices. It is meaningless to ask a political subject what world s/he wants because the political subject does not want the world, a world, any world. What it wants is freedom, equality and community in the world, in this world here, and it does not concern itself with the myriad of governmental minutiae that may or may not be required to translate those demands into practice. The political subject proclaims the world as wrong without writing blueprints on how to set it right (Prozorov 2013b, 28-38).

The Critic as the Political Subject

Sounds familiar? This description of the political subject is evidently far from the image of the artist that painstakingly tries to produce a better work or a better world. Yet, it resonates strongly with another figure that every artist is aware and wary of – the critic. The political subject occupies the same position in relation to government as the critic in relation to the artist. The critic does not correct the artist's work or produce a better one – s/he judges it, praises it or finds it wanting, demolishes or ridicules it, all in the name of a few axioms s/he deems valid. It is not the task of the

critic to re-produce the work of the artist as it should have been produced, only to conclude that it has not been produced in this manner. This is why from the perspective of the poietic paradigm critics are immeasurably inferior to artists: rather than produce something of their own, they just trash the work of others. Artists and audiences alike might find this unfair, and of course it sometimes is, yet we continue reading and needing the critics, as we need political subjects, even though the latter may sometimes be even more annoying than art critics.

Isn't this view unnecessarily limited? Does not politics do more than criticize and is not the very distinction between politics and government artificial? While it is certainly possible for politics to be practiced in the field of government, the two notions do not necessarily coincide and may indeed drift far apart: just as government is a general concept that refers to ordering practices in any realm whatsoever (family, classroom, corporation, mafia gang, nation-state, etc.), so politics refers to the subversion and transformation of worldly orders in any type of domain, be it parties and parliaments or religion, economy, art, science, family, etc. The difference between politics and government may be described along three axes. Politics deals with what is universal, absolute and necessary, while government is preoccupied with the particular, relative and contingent. Just as arts produce an infinite variety of particular worlds, government is an inherently particularistic domain, ordering a multiplicity of worlds in accordance with their specific transcendentals that are radically contingent and have no foundation in being (Agamben 2011, 53-64). There is no reason why beings, which are ontologically disseminated in an inconsistent multiplicity, would have to be ordered in this or that positive way (Badiou 2009, 111-122). It is this radical contingency of worldly orders that enables their political contestation: the only ontological claim that could be advanced in relation to any particular world is that all of its beings are in their being free, equal and in common, hence any order that limits their freedom, equality and community has no ontological justification and may be transformed (Prozorov 2013a, 73-108). Political affirmation may in principle make the same 'critical' point about any world whatsoever, since, whatever their particular degrees of freedom, equality or community, no world could possibly affirm them fully and completely. In this manner, it relativizes all world orders without exception while itself remaining an absolute statement, valid for whatever world it happens to affirmed in.

Yet, what about a world structured in accordance with these absolute axioms themselves, the world that would thereby acquire an ontological foundation and be for the first time truly in line with being? The confusion of government and politics leads to the perpetual temptation of constructing a particular world in accordance with universal principles, an ontic order corresponding to the ontological foundation, a contingent and relative order that would attain the absolute and the necessary. Yet, this foundation is nothing but the void from which and in which all worlds come to exist (Badiou 2005, 52-68; Prozorov 2013a, 21-35). A world created in accordance with this void would be a world reduced to nothing, a non-world, or, in Nancy's expression, an un-world (2007, 34). While the universal is an indispensable instrument of criticism, it is an extremely dangerous instrument for government: we know only too well the violent character of all attempts to produce the universal amid the particular, which end up annihilating beings in the name of their interpretation of being. The same is true a fortiori with regard to absoluteness and necessity. Whereas criticism makes use of freedom, equality and community as attributes of pure being, in whose name particular worlds could be evaluated and found wanting, the deployment of the very same axioms as ontological foundations of rationalities of government may enable extreme governmental violence that would be justified as being somehow in accordance with being itself and hence absolute and necessary, absolutely necessary. The deployment of egalitarianism in Soviet

socialism or communitarianism in fascism and Nazism provides sufficient grounds to reject any use of ontology as a foundation of government rather than as inspiration for political criticism.

What makes political and critical activity so effective is not only dangerous but also extremely superfluous for both government and art. Imagine a work of art that would not merely strive towards but actually embody universality, necessity and the absolute, a work of art that could no longer be criticized because it would incorporate in itself all that the critics could possibly say about it in the manner of the post-historical Wiseman in Kojève's reading of Hegel (1969). What interest would such a work have for anyone? A work of art appeals to us precisely in its particularity (even as it strives for universality), relativity (even as it tries to express the absolute), contingency (even as it claims necessity), and a 'critic-proof' work would most probably be not only impossible to criticize but also not worth criticizing. Similarly, a hypothetical governmental order, in which the ontological axioms were all affirmed to the maximal degree, is not only difficult to imagine but even more difficult to endorse, as its very perfection creates a suffocating sense of closure that its apparent affirmation of freedom, equality and community would seem to deny. In short, just as the universal perspective of the critic does not easily lend itself to the particularistic poiesis of the artist, the universalism of the political subject does not yield a correlate form of governmental order.

For this reason, while politics and government remain intertwined, it is impossible to reduce one to the other or completely translate one into the terms of the other. Politics does not make worlds even as it unfolds within them. It unmakes worlds without destroying them, this unmaking pertaining to the transcendental order that regulates the world in question and not to the beings regulated by it. As pure praxis without product, politics brings to presence nothing but its own operation, which in turn does nothing but absent worldly beings from the contingent, relative and particular mode of presencing that their world has consigned them to. It is this 'absenteeist' orientation of politics that lends it its subversive and disruptive character, which should by no means be confused with any 'aestheticism' that radical politics is sometimes mistakenly accused of. As we have seen, the logic of aesthetic poiesis is in fact closer to the most depoliticized managerialism than to political action of any kind. Politics deals with worlds in the same way as the critic deals with artworks; it does not build anything but rather takes apart what has been built by others in order to enhance the freedom, equality and community of those dwelling in the worlds that have been built.

We now arrive at the key point in the argument: to oppose the poietic paradigm of politics is to reject the assumption of the build-ability or constructibility of existence into positive forms, whatever these might be: politics is not about building socialism or capitalism, democracy or tyranny, a bright future or a glorious past (see Prozorov 2016). It evidently does not mean renouncing poiesis in every or actually in any of its forms: it is nice to live in houses, wear clothes and even listen to a piece of music from time to time. Yet, these activities have nothing to do with politics in themselves, even though politics might erupt in their midst as the challenge to whatever particular order this productive activity is governed by. Failure to present a blueprint for a perfect society should therefore no longer serve as disqualification from 'proper politics' but rather as the first step towards a genuinely political disposition. While it is no doubt more gratifying for political subjects to think of themselves as artists, they should rather think of themselves as critics - that universally vilified occupation of those who cannot do anything else, which we still cannot do without.

The Immanent Politicization of the Discipline

The abandonment of the poietic paradigm also provides us with a different perspective on the work of the critic, particularly in the fields nominally associated with politics, such as political science and IR. There is an evident temptation for critical scholars in an academic discipline to view their academic work as somehow also 'political', yet it is not always easy to pinpoint what this political significance actually consists it. For example, is 'political philosophy' itself a political practice or does it merely take politics as its object without becoming politicized itself? After all, if philosophy of art does not express itself in paintings and operas, and if philosophy of science does not make scientific discoveries, why should we expect philosophy of politics to itself produce political effects? Just as we do not expect musicology to express itself in song, should not the effects of the science of politics be distinct from its object?

In our view, these comparisons are not entirely correct since, unlike the particular domains of science, art, medicine, etc, politics does not have its own specific realm of positivity and is rather an activity that is practicable across the variety of worlds: it is possible to affirm freedom, equality and community in any world whatsoever, be it a family, a hospital or a golf club. It is therefore indeed possible for a science to be political, but only because it is possible for any domain at all to become politicized. Any domain can give birth to its own critics. Nonetheless, it is important to rigorously distinguish the immanent politicization of the scientific domain from the subjection of this domain to external political evaluation: the political effects of critical IR are entirely internal and indeed coterminous with its own operation.

Critical IR does not politicize the discipline by smuggling in some 'politics' of its own into it, but by affirming political axioms in the disciplinary transcendental itself. This affirmation should be rigorously distinguished from the 'suture' of science to any ready-made politics, whereby a political doctrine becomes the foundation of disciplinary discourse. A good example of suture of philosophy to politics is Louis Althusser's infamous project of 'class struggle in theory', in which philosophy is reduced to a 'revolutionary weapon' (cf. Badiou 2008: 147-175). As the fate of philosophy and social sciences in nominally Marxist political regimes demonstrates, such 'politicization' can only reduce philosophy to useless drivel without really helping class or any other struggle. Subordinated to an external doctrine and instrumentalized as the weapon in its actualization, science or philosophy loses its autonomy and ultimately its very identity, making it impossible to occupy the position of the critic in its own field (cf. Prozorov 2013b, 95-99). Rather than venture to bring 'class struggle' or any other ideological doctrine into academic 'theory', one should politicize the realm of theory itself by focusing on what the affirmation of freedom, equality and community mean within the realm of theory itself.

Immanent politicization of the kind that critical IR undertook since the late 1980s does not (ab)use the authority of the discipline to assist the production of political effects elsewhere, but subjects its own immediate world to the evaluation in terms of the political axioms, finds it wanting and demands its transformation not in the name of some ideological doctrine but in the name of its own being. Freedom, equality and community are nothing but the attributes of the beings of any world whatsoever that become accessible when they are subtracted from every particular worldly identity. There is not first politics and then critique outlined in terms of the latter: critique is politics and politics is critique and it can only be practiced in an immanent way in whatever world it finds itself.

This approach to critical IR permits re-appreciating the effectiveness of its political interventions since the 1980s: of course, the manifold movements in critical IR (feminism, constructivism, post-

Marxism, post-structuralism, etc.) did not 'change the world' if by 'world' we mean a phantasmatic totality of everything in existence, which we routinely invoke despite its manifest inconsistency (Badiou 2009, 109-111; Prozorov 2013a, 8-14). Yet, it most certainly did change its world, which is in fact the only world it could change, since it was applied there and not e.g. in the worlds of ballet, Chinese food or DC Comics. To take just one example, the 1990 issue of International Studies Quarterly, edited by Ashley and Walker, featuring the contributions of Cynthia Weber, James Der Derian, Michael Shapiro and other authors, evidently did not make the 'outside' world a better place in any recognizable way. But what about the world of IR itself? As the first collection of broadly poststructuralist texts in a major IR journal, that special issue had enormous effects on the discipline by bringing to presence its 'inexistents' (Badiou 2009, 321-324; Prozorov 2013b, 1-18). The inexistent object of a world is ontologically there in the world in question but is proscribed from appearance by the transcendental of the world in question: it exists in the world as nothing. Yet, this reduction to inexistence has no ontological foundation, since all beings of all worlds are, in their being, free, equal and in common. Bringing the inexistent to existence is therefore the way the universal axioms of politics are affirmed in any given world. To affirm freedom, equality and community is to problematize the world in question in terms of the entities resigned to inexistence within it and to deactivate the hierarchies, exclusions and restrictions that make this inexistence possible.

In terms of the world of IR in the late 1980s, such inexistents included themes (identity, culture, language, gender), authors (feminist or literary theorists, French philosophers) and methods (discourse analysis, deconstruction) that were entirely heterogeneous to the IR mainstream (and even its margins) at the time. Starting from the editorial introduction with its page-long epigraphs from Kristeva and Foucault (Ashley and Walker 1990), the ISQ issue performed the quintessential political operation whose formula is familiar from the Internationale: what had not been IR now became IR. What was nothing must become, if not everything, then at least something – the ISQ publication certainly counted and still counts for quite a lot. Moreover, it is important to note that this intervention did not take place at the margins of the discipline but at the very heart of the mainstream: certainly, the authors affirmed 'speaking the language of exile' but they did so from the pages of a recognized IR journal (Ashley and Walker 1990). What made this intervention effective was that it was not practiced from a marginal or borderline position, but from within the disciplinary structures: the inexistent is always specific to a given world and it is there that it must be restored to existence. The strategy of cultivating marginal spaces that is sometimes affirmed in critical discourses is therefore politically meaningless, even if it might be ethically and existentially reassuring. It makes little sense to valorize and celebrate the inexistent where it actually exists. The point is rather to bring in to presence where its existence is not recognized as such. The ISQ special issue therefore marked the instance of non-IR becoming IR, of IR 'as it was' relativized and displaced by the addition of the formerly inexistent to its corpus. Today's student would certainly not be shocked by an epigraph from Foucault, which could only strike one as pretty trivial given his citation index in the humanities and social sciences, but this is precisely the change that politics as criticism and criticism as politics seek to achieve: demoting the abnormal by challenging and displacing the limits within which the normal is contained. This is what made this intervention a paradigmatic political move that today's critical IR must venture to repeat in a markedly different context.

Critique and Identity: Critical IR after the 'Great Debates'

The parallel between the critic and the political subject is not merely helpful for understanding the logic of the politicization of the discipline but also serves to keep critical IR wary of its own becoming disciplinary. As we have seen, the political subject is not an identity but a mode of praxis that subverts every identity in which it erupts (Prozorov 2013b, 13-18). Just as there is no properly political sphere, but only the possibility of ceaseless politicization, so there is no predicate in terms of which the political subject can be identified except for the paradoxical predicate of dissolving every possible predicate. The condition of possibility for the formation of the political subject is the disidentification of the individual or group in question from their positive identity or 'place in the world', which enables their contestation of the order of this world as a whole, as opposed to advocating its particular modifications. Similarly, then, the critical scholar is not defined by its identity within a certain disciplinary structure, but by its capacity to subvert every such structure through a disidentification with one's place it.

From this perspective, the current post-Great Debate situation in the discipline may be more problematic than it appears. At first glance, after the fervent yet fruitless debates of the late 1980s-early 1990s, in which the very legitimacy of critical IR was at stake, the present non-communicative entrenchment of 'camp IR' (Sylvester 2013), in which each orientation is more or less left free to 'do its thing' in its conference panels, journals or publishing houses, is at least a first step forward (cf. Dunne, Hansen and Wight 2013). Yes, but a step forward to what? It is undeniable that the discipline as a whole has made progress in its tolerance of critical approaches, from feminism and postcolonialism to post-Marxism and poststructuralism, and their integration into the overall disciplinary structure, yet has this progress been accompanied by any great success of the disruptive activity of the critic? It appears that the price for greater disciplinary acceptance has been the lesser attention or receptivity of the disciplinary mainstream to the disruptive ventures of critical IR. While brilliant studies in the critical vein were published in the last decade, they arguably did not have the impact of the first wave. While myriad articles and monographs of exceptional quality have been published in critical IR in the last ten years, we struggle to think of one making a similar impact as that 1990 ISQ issue. At first glance, this is the price of success: having politicized the discipline to such an extent that the formerly inexistent have risen to existence in it, sometimes quite prominently (e.g. Foucauldian poststructuralism), critical IR has run out of inexistents to affirm. And yet, this would be an overly optimistic diagnosis, not only because every world has inexistent objects by definition (Badiou 2009, 321-324) and the world of IR is only pluralistic and tolerant when compared to its recent past. Even more importantly, the scission of the discipline into non-communicating camps that regard each other with condescending toleration makes it more difficult to affirm inexistents, since they have been assigned a place where (and where alone) they may actually exist without bothering others with their obtrusive existence. Indeed, once a place in the overall order has been carved out for most critical discourse, critical IR may be kept in its place more effectively not by denying its belonging to the discipline, science or rationality in general, but rather by emphasizing its particular contributions while effacing its more general and universal ambition or function. In this manner, critical IR becomes hypostasized into an identity of a specific approach, school or 'paradigm' within the discipline. We may identify two strategies of this sedimentation of critical IR into an identity.

Theoretically, critical IR may be incorporated into the self-image of the discipline as a marginal representative, which deserves an obligatory chapter, section or subsection in a textbook, which would demonstrate the distance of this approach from the mainstream. Particularly given the contemporary fondness of the mainstream for 'analytical eclecticism' (Lake 2013), this distance ensures that critical IR would continue to be marginalized even in the climate of relative tolerance,

simply because only reasonably compatible orientations, i.e. those already in the mainstream, may enter into 'eclectic' combinations. Moreover, given the preference of analytical eclecticism for consensus over criticism, it is difficult to see how the disruptive agenda of critical IR might be incorporated into it. Of course, there is no reason it should be incorporated there at all: the task of the critic is to subvert any consensus, irrespectively of whether it was arrived at eclectically or otherwise. The task of the critical disposition today consists precisely in the investigation of the inexistents produced by the more pluralistic and eclectic mainstream of the present moment. It might find out that the current appearance of the fragmentation of the mainstream need not necessarily be a sign of its weakening but rather of a more effective consolidation.

Empirically, the sedimentation proceeds by the (self-)limitation of the focus of critical IR to particular themes and questions. Since their emergence in the 1980s the 'new' critical approaches have become concentrated in a number of issue areas, e.g. poststructuralism becoming prominent in migration and refugee studies, post-Marxism occupying important heights in IPE, postcolonialism focusing on culture and identity. While such concentration is understandable and almost self-evident in some cases, it has had the largely unintended effect of maintaining the hegemony of the mainstream in the guise of pluralism. It appears that the price for the incorporation of critical IR into the disciplinary structure has been the abandonment of the meta-theoretical objective of the deconstruction of the discipline for the empirical project of the deconstruction of policies and practices from within the discipline. Of course, it is not a matter of any or all of us abandoning the empirical sites of our interest for the vain attempt to subvert the totality of IR. Nonetheless, it is clear that the specialization of critical IR detracts from its production of general effects of critique. The good news is that the two activities actually do not exclude one another: specialization can be combined with critique precisely because critique is not itself a specialization. One cannot be specialized in critique since there is no particular place in any system that is reserved for its subversion. As we have seen, the critic attains its subjectivity by means of disidentification from its identity, which is not complemented by taking up some other identity within a given order.

Let us recall the famous description of the communist society in Marx and Engels's German Ideology: 'in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.' (Marx and Engels 1970, 53). Of course, in Marx's vision of communism, every human activity becomes generic and non-specializing. However, in our approach, which pertains to any society whatsoever, the role of the critic is different from that of other professions or specializations, precisely insofar as one can criticize but can never 'become a critic', if that entails assuming some positive identity, like that of the fisherman, the herdsman and the hunter. The critic is always already generic and the decision to specialize only leads to the weakening or exhaustion of critical impact. Of course, as long as we are not in a communist society, one must presumably specialize in something, hence one can only 'criticize after dinner', as a supplement to our day jobs. And yet, the very notion of the supplement makes it clear that we are not talking about some extra-curricular, after-work activity in addition to our principal practice in the discipline. The supplement in the Derridean sense both makes that principal practice complete and subverts it from within, bringing the after-dinner hour of criticism right into the working day (Derrida 1998, 144-151). The challenge is precisely this: criticizing 'all day' as 'after dinner', without ever retreating into a disciplinary identity of the critic.

Thus, critical IR should continue to speak the 'language of exile', while being fully aware that it is not a matter of any particular language, theory, method or style. As I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, what defines the critical disposition is not a particular theoretical orientation but the drive for the immanent politicization of the discipline, the overcoming of the exclusions, hierarchies and restrictions that sustain it. While particular 'critical' approaches, be they those of Foucault, Derrida or Zizek, might easily end up accepted and incorporated into the disciplinary identity as yet another minoritarian 'theory', what matters more is one's perseverance in the subject-position of disidentification from one's place in the existing disciplinary order.

Yet, the second conclusion is that this disidentification must always be practiced in the midst of the disciplinary domain: there is no home to return to or reclaim, no garden to tend to at the margins of the discipline. As soon as we disidentify with our prescribed place, there is only the exile that must never be appropriated as a home. What must be cultivated is therefore the ethos of estranged belonging to the discipline that enables us to navigate the field without becoming so invested in its reproduction that we lose sight of our task as critics. Critical IR scholars should neither be content with occupying their own marginal niche within the discipline nor aspire to take over the discipline in its entirety. Instead, they must traverse the entire disciplinary space in the mode of exile, overcoming its exclusions, hierarchies and restrictions whenever possible without ever claiming it as its sovereign domain.

REFERENCES

Agamben, G. 1998. Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G. 2011. The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G. 2016. The Use of Bodies. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Arendt, H. 1998. The Human Condition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Ashley, R. and Walker, R. 1990, 'Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies'. International Studies Quarterly 34 (3): 259-268.

Badiou, A. 2005. Being and Event. London: Continuum.

Badiou, A. 2006. Conditions. London: Continuum.

Badiou, A. 2009. Logics of Worlds. London: Continuum.

Derrida, J. 1998. Of Grammatology. The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dunne, T., Hansen, L. and Wight C. 2013. 'The End of International Relations Theory?' European Journal of International Relations 19 (3): 405-425.

Kojève, A. 1969. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Lake, A. 2013. 'Theory is Dead, Long Live Theory: The End of the Great Debates and the Rise of Eclecticism in International Relations'. European Journal of International Relations 19 (3): 567-587.

Marx, K. and Engels. F. 1970. The German Ideology, part I. New York: International Publishers.

Nancy, J-L. 2006. Multiple Arts: Muses II. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Nancy, J-L. 2007. Creation of the World, or Globalization. New York: SUNY Press.
Prozorov, S. 2013a. Ontology and World Politics: Void Universalism I. London: Routledge.
Prozorov, S. 2013b. Theory of the Political Subject: Void Universalism II. London: Routledge.
Prozorov, S. 2016. The Biopolitics of Stalinism: Ideas and Bodies in Soviet Socialism. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Sylvester, C. 2013. 'Experiencing the End and Afterlives of International Relations/Theory'. European Journal of International Relations 19 (3): 609-626.