

Situating Critical Realism Philosophically
Ruth Groff
Department of Political Science
St. Louis University

Critical realism isn't widely known to philosophers in the US. There are various reasons for this, I think. One is that in the humanities and the social sciences, bodies of literature sometimes end up being centered in different regions of the world. Critical realism enjoys a higher profile in the UK, where it began, than in the US -- although even on home terrain its proponents are not generally housed within philosophy departments. Another reason is that in the English-speaking world, at least, Marxist theory has been developed, to the extent that it has, mostly outside of the disciplinary boundaries of philosophy. The relationship between critical realism and Marxism is not a simple one by any means, but to the extent that critical realism can be fit into the Marxist philosophical tradition, it, like other scholarship of its kind, has been advanced primarily by theoretically minded social scientists and philosophically minded social theorists, rather than by philosophers. In the case of critical realism, this has had the dual effect of tending to focus research on empirical and methodological questions, and of making it less likely that critical realist scholarship will appear in philosophical venues even when authors' concerns are genuinely philosophical. A third reason may be that the relationship between Roy Bhaskar, upon whose work critical realism is founded, and critical realism as a school of thought was for many years closer than is often the case. This, I suspect, may

have lent to critical realism a whiff of being a cult of personality. Finally, until recently the ontological content of critical realism was very much at odds with the bedrock assumptions of Anglo-analytic philosophy, endorsed more or less reflexively by everyone from Ayer to Rorty. Moreover, after writing a controversial but fairly influential first book in 1975, Bhaskar chose not to battle it out within the discipline. The winds have begun to shift, however. Mainstream philosophers working in the areas of metaphysics and philosophy of science have begun to defend positions with which critical realism is entirely consistent, and to which it is an acknowledged precursor. This development, a happy one in my view, is the occasion for my paper today.

The topic of the paper is "Situating Critical Realism Philosophically." As a preliminary matter, let me say a word about the name. The critical realism in question is associated with the early work of Roy Bhaskar, a contemporary British philosopher who was originally a student of Rom Harre's. Critical realism is also the name of a school of thought that took hold in the United States in the early part of the 20th century, a key member of which was Roy Wood Sellars. While the critical realisms are in similar in interesting respects, Bhaskar maintains that the term critical realism as applied to his own work is an amalgamation, forged by readers, of "transcendental realism" - the name that he gave to the position that he defended in his first book, *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975), - and "critical naturalism," the name that he gave to the view of the

relationship between natural and social science that he defended in the second book, *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979). Over the years, Bhaskar has renamed his own evolving position several times: critical realism became first dialectical critical realism, then transcendental dialectical critical realism and, most recently, the philosophy of meta-reality. Critical realists differ in how much of Bhaskar's later thinking they endorse: in practice, the name critical realism refers both narrowly to Bhaskar's early views, and more broadly to the growing literature informed by his work at all stages. I am here concerned only with critical realism in the first sense of the term. I should like to situate Bhaskar's early views, and to do so specifically in relation to current debates within metaphysics and the philosophy of science.

I'll begin by setting out first the ontological and then the epistemological rudiments of critical realism, which I shall do with an eye to the larger objectives of the paper. As a caveat, I should say that there are aspects of critical realist epistemology - in particular, the notion of explanatory critique and the detailed diagnosis of positivism - which Bhaskar developed most fully in the two books published just after *The Possibility of Naturalism*, viz., *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* and *Reclaiming Reality*, that I shall not discuss here, though they are generally thought to be part of his early work. They are arguably the most overtly Marxist elements of critical realist epistemology, and ought not be overlooked in a comprehensive assessment of the position. For better or for

worse, however, my main concern at present is to connect critical realism not to the larger tradition of Marxist thought, or even to a range of questions within mainstream epistemology, but rather to the recent trajectory of Anglo-analytic metaphysics and philosophy of science.

The thesis of *A Realist Theory of Science* (hereafter *RTS*) was that the regularity theory of causal laws contradicts widely accepted assumptions about what experiments are, and what their role is in natural scientific inquiry. The argument for why this is so was a simple one. Bhaskar observed that a regularity theory of law cannot be made to square with the fact (a) that most scientifically interesting regularities are not naturally occurring; rather, they must be produced, artificially, in controlled experimental settings, in which they can also be disrupted, presumably without thereby disrupting the laws of nature; and (b) that we take laws to hold transfactly, in situations in which the regularities in question do not obtain. If experiments are what we think they are - or, at least, what the Humean and Kantian philosophers of science toward whom Bhaskar's immanent critique was directed thought they were - then, Bhaskar maintained, it must be the case that regularities are not themselves laws. Instead, he proposed, regularities are manifestations of real, underlying causal powers -- powers that are inherent in things. It is to powers, rather than to regularities, he concluded, that scientific laws refer.

As noted above, Bhaskar called his position transcendental realism. Transcendental realism had both ontological and epistemological content; I'll parse it both ways. To begin, however, the reference to Kant in the name is two-fold. First, accurately or not, Bhaskar took his own argument to be a transcendental deduction on the model set by Kant. Kant began with the fact of empirical experience, and claimed that the conditions of possibility for such experience are at odds with empiricism. Bhaskar began with the practice of experimentation, and claimed that its intelligibility is at odds with an empiricist account of laws. Second, Bhaskar's adoption of the name "transcendental realism" can only but be a deliberate contrast to Kant's use of the term. Kant meant it to refer to those who asserted what he, Kant, took to be an illicit, pre-critical materialism, one grounded in a concept of "experience" conceived along empiricist rather than transcendental idealist lines. While in my view Bhaskar's transcendental realism leaves open the possibility that there may be *a priori* forms of intuition and categories of understanding, which would have to figure in an adequate theory of cognition, it conflicts directly with the idea, accepted by Kant, that phenomenal objects lack inherent causal properties, and that modality is therefore imported into the world via the synthetic operation of reason.

The defense of powers and the realism about causality that it implies were at the then-radical ontological core of *RTS*. But Bhaskar advanced other metaphysical claims as well. Some he put forward

directly, others indirectly, via the various distinctions and terms that have since come to comprise the critical realist lexicon. Perhaps the most central of these is the claim that reality is "ontologically stratified," layered into logically nested domains which Bhaskar dubbed the real, the actual and the empirical.¹ The "real" is the largest category. It is made up of powers, be they expressed or not; the sequences of events to which powers give rise, be these experienced by a subject or not; and experiences of events. The "actual" contains events (experienced or not) and experiences (of sequences of events). The "empirical," finally, is the most limited category, consisting only of experiences. It is a rich metaphor, one frequently cited by critical realists -- encapsulating at a minimum: (a) the idea that powers need not be expressed (i.e., a rejection of actualism); (b) the idea that events need not be observed (i.e., a rejection of perceive-ability as the criterion for existence); and (c) the idea that, barring exceptional circumstances, it is only in artificial conditions created in laboratories that the category of empirical experience includes the events of the actual and/or the powers of the real -- and that empiricists are blind to this. This last is a point that Nancy Cartwright has made in her work as well.²

Transcendental realism also involved a commitment to natural kinds and to real rather than nominal essences, to use the Lockean language, as Bhaskar did. The claim was that what a thing can do and

¹ Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978), p. 56.

² E.g., Nancy Cartwright, "Where Do Laws of Nature Come From?" *Dialectica*, Volume 51, Number 1 (1997), pp. 65-78.

what it is cannot be pried apart. If either were to change, the other would too. Sometimes Bhaskar expressed this in a way that suggested that dispositional properties are a function of non-dispositional, or categorical ones (though not of these plus the external determination of laws). However, he also maintained that it was possible, if not likely, that the most basic elements of reality are purely dispositional. I will return to the question of how Bhaskar's position in *RTS* relates to current debates amongst dispositional realists over essentialism and the status of categorical properties within a powers-based ontology. For critical realists, however, the bottom line has been that there are different kinds of things, and that kinds of things behave as they do in virtue of being what they intrinsically are. [Add: Causal necessity. And/but vs. determinism. qz]

In *The Possibility of Naturalism*, Bhaskar went on to defend what he called "critical naturalism" -- which, as noted above, is where the "critical" part of critical realism is said to have originated. The argument of *PON* was that the model of natural science advanced in *RTS* - to which I shall turn momentarily - may, with qualification, be properly extended to the social sciences. Critical realists take on a number of more local ontological commitments via *PON*. These include a belief in the existence of structures, as well as societies as wholes, as distinct from individual persons or aggregates thereof; a belief in emergent properties; the view that reasons may be counted as causes; and the view that unlike purely physical objects, sociological

phenomena are constituted at least in part by the beliefs of subjects (Bhaskar described such objects as being "concept dependent"). In addition, though there is disagreement about what is meant by the idea, critical realists hold that social structures are themselves causal mechanisms.

But *RTS* was not just a work of metaphysics. It was also a philosophy of science. Bhaskar defended a number of different epistemological theses in the book. Of paramount importance, and following directly upon the core metaphysical claim, was the idea that regularities are neither sufficient nor necessary for laws. Laws, Bhaskar held, register the powers that things have to affect other things, given the nature of the related objects. Regularities - non-accidental ones, at least - are therefore explained by laws. Nonetheless, in principle the position supports singular causation, as you don't need to have a regularity in order to have a law; all you need is a power. Moreover, in keeping with his rejection of actualism, Bhaskar held that laws are statements about tendencies, rather than about manifest displays of powers.

From this perspective, scientific advance consists not in the formulation of statements of increasing generality, but rather in the identification of ever-deeper layers of causal mechanism. The model, it is easy to see, is the epistemic face of the concept of ontological stratification. "Scientists," Bhaskar wrote,

attempt to discover the way things act, a knowledge typically expressed in laws; and what things are, a knowledge ... typically expressed in real definitions. Statements of laws ... are statements about the

tendencies of things which may not be actualized, and may not be manifest to men; they are not statements about conjunctions of events, or experiences.³

On this model, once an underlying generative mechanism has been identified, scientists then take the discovered power or process as the new object of inquiry, asking again what the underlying generative mechanism is of which the observed phenomenon is the consequence.

Notice that from this perspective, statements about how things act, i.e., laws, rest epistemically on statements about what the things in question are, i.e., on real definitions. Bhaskar defined real definitions as "fallible attempts to capture in words the real essences of things which have already been identified (and are known under their nominal essence) at any one stratum of reality."⁴ Real essences, in turn (which ground statements of law ontologically), he conceived as "those structures or constitutions in virtue of which the thing or substance tends to behave the way it does, including manifest the properties that constitute its nominal essence."⁵ As previously noted, this way of talking might suggest that Bhaskar held that dispositional properties are a function of categorical ones. It does not seem that he intended to affirm categorical monism, however, as he also stipulated that "if there are ultimate entities ... they must be powers; that is, individuals characterized solely by what they can do."⁶

³ Bhaskar, *RTS*, p. 66.

⁴ *Ibid.* p., 211.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Finally, it follows from a conception of laws as statements of how things tend to act given what they are, that such statements, if true, are necessarily true. The epistemic conditional is as important as the claim of metaphysical necessity. Bhaskar was at pains to emphasize the fallibilistic nature of scientific knowledge. Even our most preferred theories may turn out to be false. Indeed, the history of science - which Bhaskar took to be progressive - is replete with such turns of epistemic fortune. So there is nothing about being statement of law that guarantees that a statement of law is true. But those that are true, are true necessarily, despite having been established *a posteriori*. This is so because if what things do is thought to be tied to what they are, then for something to behave contrary to the way in which things of its kind behave (thereby contravening a relevant, true law), it would have to be that it had become a different kind of thing. Thus there are no possible worlds, from a critical realist perspective, in which H₂O is not water, or does not behave as water does.

With the possible exception of Nancy Cartwright, from the mid-1970s to the 1990's Bhaskar and Rom Harre (who, with E. H. Madden, had published his own repudiation of the regularity theory of causality, called *Causal Powers: A Theory of Natural Necessity*) were the main proponents of a powers-based metaphysics and philosophy of science. Since the early to mid-1990's, however, what Brian Ellis calls "Humeanism" has been subject to increasing attack. There is no immediately obvious way to organize the contemporary discussion

conceptually, as the issues involved have both ontological and epistemological content, and the responses to different questions themselves intersect to form an array of combinations. The analytic structure that I shall here impose, therefore, while not arbitrary, is simply one amongst a range of possible ways of cutting into the literature. The objective, as I have said, is to provide a frame of reference for critical realism by showing where it falls in relation to recent debates. These I have grouped, loosely and provisionally, into the areas of realism; essentialism and kinds; laws; and causality -- which I shall consider in turn.

There are many different kinds of realism. For one, critical realism is a form of scientific realism. That is, critical realists take it that the objects of scientific theories are real, i.e., are not mere posits or heuristics with predictive value -- though in relation to social science, at least, "real" is not taken to be equivalent to "purely physical." As Bhaskar expressed it, echoing both Aristotle and Althusser, science itself is a form of labor, one that involves work upon two different kinds of material cause: (a) the natural world (in the case of the physical sciences), which Bhaskar saw as being worked upon in the context of experimentation, just as Bacon said, and (b) existing bodies of theory, which Bhaskar saw as being worked upon (in the sense of being developed and transformed) in the course of scientific advance. Bhaskar labeled (a) the "intransitive" object of science, (b) the "transitive" object of science. In context, then, Bhaskar's commitment to the real-ness of

the objects of scientific theory - the realism to which *A Realist Theory of Science* refers - was a commitment to the distinction between (a) what he called the "enduring mechanisms" of the physical world, which are investigated by scientists, and (b) those well-founded beliefs about the world that constitute natural science at any given moment.

But while scientific realists all believe that the objects of scientific theory are real, not all scientific realists believe in the existence of powers. More precisely, therefore, critical realism is a form not just of scientific realism but of dispositional realism. Belief in powers is now a respectable position within analytic metaphysics. Prominent endorsers include, among others, Brian Ellis and Caroline Lierse, Alexander Bird, Stephen Mumford, John Heil, Anjan Chakravartty, George Molnar (posthumously), and arguably David Armstrong. Contemporary dispositional realists disagree with each other about important issues, including whether or not all properties are dispositional; whether or not all dispositional properties are held essentially; whether one may talk of powers as "things" in their own right, or must talk instead of concrete entities that, in Harre and Madden's terms, are "powerful particulars"; and what kinds of things may be properly thought to be bearers of powers. I shall return to these debates momentarily. The more basic point, however, is that dispositional realists agree that at least some kinds of things have powers, and have them intrinsically. Since Hume, of course, the dominant view in Anglo-analytic philosophy has been that

this is not so, that the apparent modal force of dispositional properties is in fact nothing other than the laws of nature acting upon categorical properties. Dispositional statements, from this perspective, have been regarded as not really being ascriptions of dispositional properties, as they seem to be, but rather as being counter-factual, or subjunctive conditional claims. Such claims are then analyzed as simply being statements of regularity that presuppose logically possible worlds other than this one.

As noted above, contemporary dispositional realists are now involved in lively disagreements with one another about powers. With respect to the question of the relationship between dispositional properties and categorical properties, and whether or not all properties are in fact dispositional, it seems to me that if a critical realist were to enter into the mainstream discussion, she could reasonably defend any of the available positions without calling her critical realism into question. This said, as an interpretive matter I would argue that in *RTS* Bhaskar comes closest to expressing what Bird has called the "mixed view" regarding the existence of dispositional and categorical properties. The mixed view, in contrast to either dispositional monism (which Bird himself endorses) or categorical monism, is the view that there are some properties what are purely dispositional, others that are categorical; Brian Ellis takes this approach. A fourth position, held by both John Heil and Jonathan Jacobs, and perhaps by Nancy Cartwright, is that all properties are both. Bhaskar explicitly allowed for the possibility

of properties that are purely dispositional, but I see no textual evidence to suggest that he held that all properties are purely, or even fundamentally, dispositional rather than categorical. Thus I conclude that the dispositional realism of *RTS* would fall, as does Ellis', into the category of "mixed."

Another question is whether or not a thing's dispositional properties are necessarily essential, in the sense of fixing its membership in a given natural kind. The question is clearly related to the larger issue of essentialism and kinds, to which I shall next turn, but as posed above I take Bhaskar's answer in *RTS* to have been yes: things behave as they do in virtue of what they are, would not be what they are if they were to behave otherwise. This again lands Bhaskar in the company of Ellis, this time in disagreement (on the specific point) with Anjan Chakravartty.

The debate over the existence of purely dispositional properties (as against either categorical monism or the both-and view) is closely related to, but not, I think, identical to the question of whether it is permissible to speak of powers as fundamental entities. Harre and Madden - and, following them, Cartwright - argue that it is things that exist, not free-floating powers. Harre and Madden used the term "powerful particular," and Cartwright refers to "capacities" rather than powers or dispositions because, she says, it is harder to forget that capacities are always capacities of something.⁷ Bhaskar, by contrast, defended the view that the most basic things may not be

⁷ Cartwright, "Where Do the Laws of Nature Come From?"

things at all, but just powers tout court. My sense is that Bird and Mumford would agree with this - though again, the issue currently tends to be pursued in terms of whether or not there are such things as properties that are purely dispositional, rather than in terms of whether or not there are concrete objects that just are powers) - and that Ellis might not. Bhaskar has been charged with reification, in this regard.

Finally, there is the question of what kinds of things have powers, and in particular whether or not sociological entities do. This is not a topic that has garnered as much attention from core contemporary dispositional realist authors as one might like, but Ellis - who has weighed in - seems to think no, that things like markets (his example) do not display dispositional properties in their own right. Harre would seem to agree with this, holding that it is only individual persons who can be powerful particulars. Cartwright, meanwhile, would seem to disagree. She expresses her position as the view that institutions can be what she calls "nomological machines," defined as

a fixed (enough) arrangement of components, or factors, with stable (enough) capacities that in the right sort of stable (enough) environment will, with repeated operation, give rise to the kind of regular behavior that we describe in our scientific laws.⁸

Amongst critical realists, meanwhile, it's a topic of debate. Bhaskar himself argued in *The Possibility of Naturalism* that, on the one hand, social structures are the causal mechanisms of proper interest to

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

social scientists, on the other hand that it is only individuals who actually "do" things. Employing Aristotelian terminology, Bhaskar's suggestion was that individual agents are the efficient causes of social effects, structures the material cause - i.e., they are what individuals act upon, albeit in most cases unintentionally. I have argued elsewhere that structures should be seen also as the formal causes of action, and that they display powers in this more active sense as well.⁹ This is a view also held by Howard Engelskirchen. Other questions of interest to critical realists are whether or not collective subjects are powerful particulars, and whether or not absence "itself," if there is such a thing, is a power.

Some contemporary dispositional realists are essentialists, some aren't. Brian Ellis, at one extreme, proposes an ontology in which kinds play a fundamental role. In his view there are substance-kinds, process-kinds and property-kinds. Dispositional properties are one type of property-kind, and they constitute the essences of process-kinds. At the other extreme is John Heil, who reports that he is satisfied with Lockean nominal essences and nominal kinds. Stephen Mumford falls somewhere in the middle, maintaining that he is an agnostic about the "something extra" that essences seem to be thought to be, by those who affirm them, over and above the characteristic properties of kinds of things.¹⁰ Chakravartty is similarly positioned, although for different reasons. Bhaskar's stance in *RTS* was

⁹ Ruth Groff, *Critical Realism, Post-Positivism and the Possibility of Knowledge* (Routledge, 2004 zx), ch. 5.

¹⁰ *Ratio zx*

unabashedly essentialist, again aligning critical realism most closely with Ellis' "scientific essentialism." In this regard it is worth noting that Ellis describes himself as being in an important sense on Aristotelian terrain in repudiating what he calls "the dead world of mechanism."¹¹ Although Bhaskar explicitly referenced Locke and Leibniz more often than he did Aristotle, the Aristotelian tenor of *RTS* is unmistakable.

Dispositional realists are not in agreement about laws, either. Bhaskar is once again closest to Ellis, as both connect laws to the powers associated with natural kinds. Mumford, meanwhile, disavows laws altogether, arguing that they are superfluous given that it is powers, not laws, that explain why things happen -- this because it is powers, not laws, that cause things to occur. As with the endorsement of powers, however, the primary cleavage with respect to laws is between dispositional realists and those whom Ellis and Bird both call "Humeans." Dispositional realists, as we have seen, think that laws, if they exist, are or refer to regularities that follow from or rest upon dispositions, potencies, powers or capacities. Humeans, by contrast, hold that it is laws themselves that account for regular behavior. The Humean view is a widely accepted tenet of empiricist philosophy of science.

For those who think that laws come first, as Nancy Cartwright puts it, the question is not so much "What generates regularity?" as

¹¹ Ellis citations. Xz.

it is "Which regularities are the ones that are laws?"¹² Laws ground regular behavior, from this perspective, not in the sense that they cause one event to follow regularly upon another, but rather in the sense that it is in virtue of being an instance of a law of nature that a given regularity, if it is such an instance, is not a mere correlation. Following Hume, regularity theorists take it that such laws are metaphysically contingent - this, the argument goes, because we can logically imagine scenarios marked by entirely different patterns of event than those that hold in the actual world. Dispositional realists, by contrast, precisely because they view law-like patterns as being a function of what things are, imagine them to hold across all possible worlds in which the things in question exist. When viewed through the lens of this contrast, even David Armstrong's ostensibly non-Humean account of laws as metaphysically contingent relations between universals shows up as a kind of curious, second-order regularity theory.

Finally, along with other dispositional realists, critical realists are what I have elsewhere called "realists about causality."¹³ Although positions may begin to diverge as the literature develops, there is for now general agreement on the basic point: causality itself is a matter of the exercise or display of things' powers. Thus, as I put it earlier in summarizing critical realism, the radical claim advanced by all dispositional realists is that modality inheres

¹² Psillis. xz

¹³ Ruth Groff, ed., *Revitalizing Causality: Realism About Causality in Philosophy and Social Science* (Routledge, 2008).

in this, the actual world. We may therefore dispense entirely with talk of possible worlds, empiricist fictions designed to bear the displaced weight of metaphysical necessity. Similarly, we will want to say that dispositions don't reduce to subjunctive conditionals; they are, instead, the truth-makers of subjunctive conditionals.

My objective in this piece has been to show that and how critical realism fits into a recently emerging literature in analytic metaphysics and philosophy of science. It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that whatever else it may be, critical realism is an essentialist version of dispositional realism, similar in many respects to (and pre-dating) that advanced by Brian Ellis. The question that one might ask, it seems to me, is whether or not critical realism should continue to hold our interest, if the core insights of the position have been taken up and developed in far greater detail by Anglo-analytic metaphysicians that they were originally by Bhaskar or have been since in the critical realist literature. For a long time, critical realism was the only real anti-empiricist powers game in town. But it is no longer so. Does this mean that critical realism is now of antiquarian interest only?

I think that the answer is no. Critical realism remains relevant in two ways. One has to do with the breadth and depth of Bhaskar's analysis of empiricism and the ontology it sustains, the other with the general approach to social science taken by critical realists, many of whom are social theorists familiar with Marx's political economy. *RTS* was an enormously ambitious undertaking. It was

simultaneously an immanent critique of regularity theories of laws; a rendering explicit of the ontology presupposed by empiricism, and a sustained critique thereof; a diagnosis of the combined epistemological-ontological empiricist picture as a kind of false appearance, generated by the unique conditions of the closed, experimental context; and a positive theory of causality, laws, science, scientific rationality and fundamental ontology. My summary presentation in the first part of the paper does not begin to do it justice. Though Ellis' works come close, I will venture to assert that none of the current dispositional realists offer as comprehensive a treatment of the issues as one finds in *RTS*. Big pictures are often not as sharply resolved as those that are more narrowly focused. But they have other philosophical merits. In particular, by taking in a wider field, they show the ways that given ideas fit into larger conceptual frameworks, and how it is that in some cases one cannot challenge an isolated idea without taking down a whole theoretical structure. This gives one a sense of the stakes, but it also lends what Plato in the *Republic* calls dialectical force to the analysis, a force that precision alone cannot provide.

Meanwhile, where critical realists are in a position to bring something markedly different to the table substantively is in the discussion of sociological objects such as social structures and, potentially, collective subjects. The reason for this, in my view, is that critical realism bears the mark not just of Aristotle, but of Marx. Indeed, as a philosophy of social science, critical realism

most naturally yields a sophisticated, dialectical materialism with an Aristotelian inflection. What this means in practice is that dispositional realists informed by critical realism are likely to make a number of philosophical moves that may be counter-intuitive, at best, to those dispositional realists whose thinking about society remains tacitly shaped by empiricist assumptions. Such "moves" include: the rejection of ontological individualism; belief in emergent properties; belief in the existence of social kinds; belief in internal relations; the view that social structures are at least in some sense causally efficacious. As previously noted, there are a range of opinions amongst critical realists regarding the exact meaning of the last point, but there is a bottom-line agreement that the "causal mechanisms" that generate sociological regularities may be structures. An important benefit of affirming the powers of social structures as a philosophical matter is that critical realists are particularly able to think about structural power as a sociological and political matter. Similarly, in virtue of their commitment to holism and emergent powers vis-à-vis sociological phenomena, critical realists are well-positioned to adopt a non-reductive philosophy of mind, according to which human beings are the bearers of the open-ended and reflexive emergent power that is consciousness. This latter is a position also held by Brian Ellis, for example, who does not view social objects in a critical realist light, so it's not that one must be a critical realist in order to adopt certain positions in the philosophy of mind and/or of social science, only that certain

approaches in these areas will *prima facie* be more plausible to those whose anti-Humeanism has independent roots in their political-economic theory than to those for whom this is not so.

I shall leave it for others to spell out, but let me close by observing that, of course, if one were to appreciate more fully than I have here the philosophical significance of the Marxist epistemology that is built into critical realism, the unique contribution of critical realism to the emerging dispositional realist literature would be even more apparent.

Ruth Groff,
Department of Political Science
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