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Referee's Review of E.H. Carr: Approaches to Understanding Experience and Knowledge

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This paper is a significant improvement on the paper previously submitted to *Global Discourse*. The author has narrowed her focus to a consideration of the epistemology of Carr and further tied together two strands of his work, i.e., his contribution to IR theory and his contribution to historiography. The purpose of the article is much clearer.

The strengths of the article are numerous and impressive, particularly for a graduate student. The piece exhibits a wealth of research in terms of the number of sources consulted and the author has a clear understanding of Carr's works. The argument is clear, coherent and consistent in terms of articulation and development. The piece is also reasonably well structured, although the author should tie the two parts together more effectively, and the parts should be better sign-posted in the introduction.

The article's most important contribution is in terms of the identification of similarities in the projects of both Collingwood and Carr. The parallels between the two are significant and the author does a good job of teasing out the epistemological and methodological implications of the relationship in an interesting and manner.

The article's weaknesses are not too fatal. The author is still struggling with the integration of primary and secondary texts. There is a balance to be struck between the author's first submission, which largely ignored the previous attempts to deal with Carr's epistemology, and this submission, which tacks on a slightly clumsy, prefatory discussion of *inter alia*, Jones, Linklater, Wilson, and myself. While this is certainly preferable to not discussing the secondary commentators, it does suggest that the author is engaged in a box-ticking exercise. An alternative approach would be to mention the secondary commentators as and when the argument requires it, either in the text itself or in footnotes.

In terms of how the secondary texts are dealt with, I think the author need to be a little bit more careful in how she uses their arguments. After reading the first draft I encouraged both more, and more critical, engagement with the secondary commentators and I am encouraged to see that both missions have been accomplished – albeit with the proviso that the author should be more careful in her presentation of other people's work. I shall demonstrate this by reference to my work, which, unsurprisingly, I am more familiar with than with the other authors' work under discussion. An example of this carelessness is my supposed identification of Carr's 'use of the Marxist analytic (dialectics).' The author also claims that I consider Carr to be a materialist – I identify elements of Carr's work as materialist, but not Carr as a materialist, which is an important difference. In fact I stress the eclectic, tactical

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nature of Carr's work and the differences between his dialectics and those of Marx. In my reading, the influence of William James and Heraclitus is stressed on Carr's system of thought (which, to my knowledge, no other commentator has dealt with), and I emphasise that unlike Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, within Carr's system the synthesis is fluid and unresolved and unresolvable. I also call attention to Carr's rejection of Hegel and Marx's theories of historical progress, which he describes as 'eschatological.' The author also claims that my conclusions are essentially the same as those of Whittle Johnston and other earlier commentators on Carr, despite the fact that I outline the differences between Johnston's thesis, that there are two theories at play in Carr's work, and mine in which I stress the essential unity of Carr's dialectic of power and morality both in the *Twenty Years' Crisis* and in later works – if anything my work is closer to that of Graham Evans than Johnston in that we both stress the continuity of Carr's work, while accepting its differences. Furthermore, the author needs to bear in mind a phrase Carr himself wrote, 'two books cannot be written by the same historian.' In this passage, Carr is attempting to demonstrate that the influences on the author are not static, but rather that the 'author' is himself influenced by factors outside himself to such an extent that by the time an author sets about writing another book he is in effect a different author.² Thus although continuity is present in Carr's work, we should also expect difference at various points in his intellectual development, especially when viewed diachronically. The author suggests that I do not pay significant attention to the role of ideas in Carr's work, when in fact I do so in the second and third chapters, and the conclusion of *The Hidden History of Realism*.

The author of this article also seems a little confused about the relationship between empiricism and positivism. Carr's method is inductive, pragmatic and rooted in the empirical. This does not mean that he is a positivist or an objectivist or an empiricist in the narrow philosophy of science sense of the word that links it to positivism. Gilles Deleuze for example considered his work as 'radical empiricism' – and Carr's work may also be understood as a variety of non-standard empiricism. The author is indeed correct to point out Carr's opposition to the 'positivist, objectivist, and naturalist extremes,' in fact (despite the author's depiction of my work as representing Carr as a positivist-empiricist) I make pretty much the same claims in both 'Dialectics and Transformation' and *The Hidden History of Realism*, where I stress 'Carr's anti-positivist stance in the *Twenty Years' Crisis*,' and that Carr 'locates the failure of international theory in its being "strongly coloured by the mathematical and natural sciences."' A more discerning and judicious manner in dealing with previous work in the discipline is important – this is particularly the case in dealing with those of us who deal with Carr – unpacking Carr's work is a difficult task, made all the more difficult by his eclecticism and methodological pluralism. Carr is ultimately striving for balance in his work – between not only utopian and realist ontologies but also differing epistemologies. He is not an either/or thinker, but a both/and thinker in that he is both Utopian and Realist, materialist and idealist. Carr's work is typified by his walking a tightrope between two positions and yet not quite falling into contradiction. This makes Carr exceptionally difficult to write about, one has to dig very deep in order to establish (or at least attempt to establish) Carr's position behind the various positions that he uses in his work.

² E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 51-52.

Ultimately, the author does a good job of dealing with Carr himself, which is the most important task that she faces. An exploration of Carr's philosophy of history and its relevance to IR is long overdue (although again, the author is missing a serious engagement with literature concerning Carr's contribution to historiography, especially Jonathan Haslam's biography of Carr, Evans introduction to the 3rd Edition of *What is History?*, etc.). The real value lies in the correlation of Collingwood and Carr's projects, which should be fleshed out to be the core of the piece or perhaps a separate piece, as at present the author doesn't quite tie the two pieces together. For further development, I would recommend that the author structure the article more effectively and also find the balance between her exegesis of Carr and the existing work on Carr's theory. The article will certainly find a home at some stage and I would like to encourage the author to continue on this promising project.