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BOOK REVIEW

**Imagining global solidarity: critical theory and
complementarity**

Steve C Roach, *Critical Theory of International Politics
Complementarity, Justice and Governance*, New York: Routledge,
2010.

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In his book *Critical Theory of International Politics: Complementarity, Justice and Governance* Steven C. Roach argues that it is through tracing the connections between critical theory and the capacity of global institutions (in this case, the International Criminal Court) to enforce international law at a domestic level that we are presented with an opportunity to further develop the field of critical international relations theory. From the outset, Roach flags the paradoxical nature of this endeavour, acknowledging that the very basis of critical theory is rooted in 'a resistance to statism or hegemonic state power' (2010, p. vi). However, he argues, it is within the dynamism of critical theory that we are able to revitalize the theoretical relationship between state governance and international institutions. In order to negotiate such a vast topic Roach divides the book into two sections: the first contextualizing for the reader the core ideas that constitute the diverse field of critical theory. The second section develops the author's argument, exploring how it speaks to the relationship between the International Criminal Court and the state. Roach claims that it is within the International Criminal Court's framework of complementarity that we are able to identify a productive *reflexive* framework for global governance that speaks to a diverse community of actors. It is worth noting that he defines complementarity as 'the capacity of international institutions to complete or take over a task that a state cannot fulfil' (2010, p.11). In this sense, it becomes evident that Roach is also suggesting that in order for critical theory to remain relevant and dynamic within the field of international relations, it must too acknowledge and respond to this often taken-for-granted requirement of '(self)reflexivity' (2010, p. 3).

Part one surveys the key theoretical works that form the basis of critical theory, beginning with a brief summary of Kant's writing on ethics and politics and Hegel's consequential critique of the Kantian notion of immanence. Roach then considers the relationship between dialectics, cosmopolitanism and state power through a survey of contemporary interpretations of Marxism (such as the work of Gramsci, Fanon and Lukacs) demonstrating how the underlying tension between material dialectics and theorizations of immanence have led to the radical reinterpretation of Hegel's notion of immanence and logic by the Frankfurt School. Despite offering a rich survey of most theorists, the study does sometimes risk narrow presentations of some (this is particularly evident in the sections on Nietzsche, Freud and Benjamin, for example).

Part two articulates in greater detail Roach's argument that critical theory enables us to acknowledge the transformative capacity of social relationships found in the practice of global governance. Working within a novel framework of Bhaskarian critical realism and Wendt's application of Bohrian quantum physics to social systems, Roach identifies how the use of complementarity by the International Criminal Court to mitigate juridical procedures reveals the possibility for such transformative relations, which in turn, he argues, reveals complementarity's role in creating social ontology. This leads to Roach distinguishing between the notions of 'immanent crisis' and what he calls 'immanent complementarity'—as that which represents 'the possibilities of linking immanent critique with societal order and new forms of subjectivity' (2010, p. 124). Finally, drawing from the work of Adorno, Steger and Taylor among others, Roach proposes the notion of a 'global social imaginary' (2010, p. 125) which is premised on a 'transformative link between complementarity and global order' (2010, p. 125). Here, we are asked to imagine a mode of social responsibility and global order that not only offers an alternative to the often stagnant accountability exhibited by state and institutional actors, but importantly, enables actors to 'register the tension between multilevel models of governance and state power and the fragile solidarity at a global level' (2010, p. 134). To his credit, Roach prepares the stage for further critical reflection on the legitimizing practices that shape (and are shaped by) the ever-widening marketplaces of global governance.

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