
The book elaborates novel and rigorous frameworks for analyzing the theories of international relations drawing on insights from contemporary continental philosophy, yet without suggesting a new paradigmatic ‘ism’, a synthesis of sorts, or any type of grand theorizing. The book develops a thorough critique of many taken-for-granted presuppositions of the conceptions, formulations, and operationalization of leading contemporary IR theories, including pragmatism, critical/scientific realism, rationalism, neoliberal institutionalism and social-constructivism. The book specifically investigates the question of social sciences and faith, the politics of ontology, the agent-structure problem, the problem of trust, the conceptualization and role of international institutions, the logic of practice, and the question of identity.

For example, the book approaches the question on the role of international institutions in world politics by considering the key question of whether and, if yes, how and to what extent international institutions are binding on their constituent member actors. This is an issue that major trends of IR scholarship are still debating. As an entry point to these debates I anchor my discussion in G. John Ikenberry’s theory of constitutional order via binding institutions (as presented in his book *After Victory*). Through a meticulous analysis and thorough critique of his arguments, presuppositions and logic thereof as well as the rhetoric of his argumentation the book shows how the binding (in what Ikenberry terms binding institutions) is founded and conserved through an arbitrary exercise of power which takes the form of an originary performative violence; Ikenberry’s claims to the contrary notwithstanding. The binding institutions become more or less legitimate as a result of retroactively effacing the originary violence. The book also shows how the binding institutions are inherently autoimmune to their own logic and rules and that this condition makes the binding of constitutional order a binding that is marred with undecidability. More specifically: the liberty of exercising power for the dominant state and the giving of voice equality to the weaker states within the institutions simultaneously create two inseparable, yet mutually contradicting, possibilities which engenders a double bind: the possibility of reinforcing the binding-ness and the possibility of undermining it. Yet, the book argues that this double bind is neither an illusory antinomy to be done away with in the sense of Kant nor a dialectical opposition to be synthesized in the sense of Hegel. Rather, the two mutually contradicting possibilities are simultaneously constitutive of the binding institutions. The book argues that not only is such a double bind the condition for invention, change, and transformation of the binding institutions beyond mere adjustments and adaptations to new contexts. The double bind is also the possibility condition for an inescapable sense of responsibility for invention, change, and transformation within the binding institutions.

The puzzle that motivated the writing of this book is that in the efforts of IR theorists to ceaselessly seek to understand, explain, and transform the experienced reality of international politics, there is a persistent, yet unquestioned, quest to develop strategies that would eliminate or reduce the antinomies, contradictions, paradoxes, dilemmas, and inconsistencies emerging in IR theories. A serious critical assessment of the logic driving this unquestioned quest is however lacking. This is what his book does by questioning many taken-for-granted presuppositions of IR theories which, as the book shows, has far-reaching implications for IR theory and its relation with the experienced political reality. In sum, the approach offers new ways on how to strengthen and go beyond the valuable contributions of IR theory, thereby contributing to take it beyond paralyzing ‘wars of paradigms’. Whereas to many scholars of political science and IR
deconstruction stands for a methodology of critical literary criticism, the book deploys deconstruction as a methodology of rigorous analysis and concept evaluation and construction to develop novel ways of thinking about long-lasting difficult problems in IR theory. Deconstruction as a methodology is no more prone to misuse and misunderstanding than any other methodologies used in social sciences and social theory such as for example Weber’s methodology of ideal types or Wittgenstein’s approach of language games.