# \*\*\*A2: Root Cause\*\*\*

### Root Cause’s False

#### Root cause claims are false – Proximate causes o/w

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First, peace activists face a dilemma in thinking about causes of war and working for peace. Many peace scholars and activists support the approach, “if you want peace, work for justice”. Then if one believes that sexism contributes to war, one can work for gender justice specifically (perhaps among others) in order to pursue peace. This approach brings strategic allies to the peace movement (women, labor, minorities), but rests on the assumption that injustices cause war. The evidence in this book suggests that causality runs at least as strongly the other way. War is not a product of capitalism, imperialism, gender, innate aggression, or any other single cause , although all of these influences wars’ outbreaks and outcomes. Rather, war has in part fueled and sustained these and other injustices. So, “if you want peace, work for peace.” Indeed, if you want justice (gender and others), work for peace. Causality does not run just upward through the levels of analysis from types of individuals, societies, and governments up to war. It runs downward too. Enloe suggests that changes in attitudes toward war and the military may be the most important way to “reverse women’s oppression/” The dilemma is that peace work focused on justice brings to the peace movement energy, allies and moral grounding, yet, in light of this book’s evidence, the emphasis on injustice as the main cause of war seems to be empirically inadequate.

#### Reject systematic or all-encompassing ‘root cause’ explanations for human actions

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A conceptualization of human agency cannot be based on a parsimonious proposition, a one-sentence statement that captures something like an authentic nature of human agency. There is no essence to human agency, no core that can be brought down to a lowest common denominator, that will crystallize one day in a long sought after magic formula. A search for such an elusive centre would freeze a specific image of human agency to the detriment of all others. The dangers of such a totalizing position have been well rehearsed. Foucault (1982, 209), for instance, believes that a theory of power is unable to provide the basis for analytical work, for it assumes a prior objectification of the very power dynamics the theory is trying to assess. Bourdieu (1998, 25) speaks of the 'imperialism of the universal' and List (1993, 11) warns us of an approach that 'subsumes, or, rather, pretends to be able to subsume everything into one concept, one theory, one position.' Such a master discourse, she claims, inevitably oppresses everything that does not fit into its particular view of the world. What, then, is the alternative to anchoring an understanding of human agency in a foundationalist master narrative? How to ground critique, actions, norms and life itself if there are no universal values that can enable such a process of grounding? Various authors have advanced convincing suggestions. Consider the following three examples: de Certeau (1990, 51) attempts to avoid totalitarian thought by grounding his position not in a systematic theory, but in 'operational schemes.' A theory is a method of delineation. It freezes what should be understood in its fluidity. An understanding of operational schemes, by contrast, recognizes that events should be assessed in their changing dimensions. Rather than trying to determine what an event is, such an approach maps the contours within which events are incessantly constituted and reconstituted. Or, expressed in de Certeau's terminology, one must comprehend forms of action in the context of their regulatory environment. Butler (1992, 3-7) speaks of contingent foundations. Like de Certeau, she too believes that the Foucaultean recognition that power pervades all aspects of society, including the position of the critic, does not necessarily lead into a nihilistic abyss. It merely shows that political closure occurs through attempts to establish foundational norms that lie beyond power. Likewise, to reopen this political domain is not to do away with foundations as such, but to acknowledge their contingent character, to illuminate what they authorize, exclude and foreclose. One must come to terms with how the subject and its agency are constituted and framed by specific regimes of power. However, this is not the end of human agency. Quite to the contrary. Butler (1992, 12-14) argues persuasively that 'the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency.' To appreciate the practical relevance of this claim, one must investigate the possibilities for agency that arise out of existing webs of power and discourse. One must scrutinize how social change can be brought about by a reworking of the power regimes that constitute our subjectivity (Butler, 1992, 13). Deleuze and Guattari (1996, 3-25, 377) go a step further. Opting for the rhizome, they reject all forms of foundations, structures, roots or trees. The latter three, they say, has dominated much of the Western thought. A tree is a hierarchical system in which ones becomes two, in which everything can be traced back to the same origin. Roots and radicles may shatter the linear unity of knowledge, but they hold on to a contrived system of thought, to an image of the world in which the multiple always goes back to a centred and higher unity. The brain, by contrast, is not rooted, does not strive for a central point. It functions like a subterranean rhizome. It grows sideways, has multiple entryways and exits. It has no beginning or end, only a middle, from where it expands and overspills. Any point of the rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, is connected to any other. It is a multiplicity without hierarchies, units or fix points to anchor thought. There are only lines, magnitudes, dimensions, plateaus, and they are always in motion. To travel along these lines and dimensions is to engage in nomad thought, to travel along axis of difference, rather than identity. Nomad thought, says one of Deleuze's feminist interpreters, 'combines coherence with mobility,' it is 'a creative sort of becoming, a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and of knowledge' (Braidotti, 1994, 21). The extent to which this form of thinking constitutes a grounding process may be left open to question. Judging from Deleuze's own work it is clear, however, that the exploration of difference and multiplicities does not prevent him from taking positions for or against specific political issues. What he does forgo, however, is a central authorial voice -- to the benefit of a polyphonic array of whispers and shouts.

### Proximate Causes Better

#### War is not monocausal – default to proximate causes

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Richard Ned Lebow (2000–2001) has recently invoked what might be called a streetcar interpretation of systemic war and change. According to him, all our structural theories in world politics both over determine and underdetermine the explanation of the most important events such as World War I, World War II, or the end of the Cold War. Not only do structural theories tend to fixate on one cause or stream of causation, they are inherently incomplete because the influence of structural causes cannot be known without also identifying the necessary role of catalysts. As long as we ignore the precipitants that actually encourage actors to act, we cannot make accurate generalizations about the relationships between more remote causation and the outcomes that we are trying to explain. Nor can we test the accuracy of such generalizations without accompanying data on the presence or absence of catalysts. In the absence of an appropriate catalyst (or a ‘‘streetcar’’ that failed to arrive), wars might never have happened. Concrete information on their presence (‘‘streetcars’’ that did arrive) might alter our understanding of the explanatory significance of other variables. But since catalysts and contingencies are so difficult to handle theoretically and empirically, perhaps we should focus instead on probing the theoretical role of contingencies via the development of ‘‘what if ’’ scenarios.

#### Describing the world through “root cause” explanation creates a totalitarian regime

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VP Since it happened a long time before I started to write, there’s no way to determine how it affected my writing. However, the effect of this book was really fantastic. There’s an expression “out of this world.” This book was totally out of the Soviet world. The evil magic of any totalitarian regime is based on its presumed capability to embrace and explain all the phenomena, their entire totality, because explanation is control. Hence the term totalitarian. So if there’s a book that takes you out of this totality of things explained and understood, it liberates you because it breaks the continuity of explanation and thus dispels the charms. It allows you to look in a different direction for a moment, but this moment is enough to understand that everything you saw before was a hallucination (though what you see in this different direction might well be another hallucination). The Master and Margarita was exactly this kind of book and it is very hard to explain its subtle effect to anybody who didn’t live in the USSR. Solzhenitsyn’s books were very anti-Soviet, but they didn’t liberate you, they only made you more enslaved as they explained to which degree you were a slave. The Master and Margarita didn’t even bother to be anti-Soviet yet reading this book would make you free instantly. It didn’t liberate you from some particular old ideas, but rather from the hypnotism of the entire order of things.