

THE HUMAN WORLD

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Version 02252026a

1 INTRODUCTION

This short essay seeks to introduce a metatheoretical framework for analyzing social theories and approaches. The purpose is to support methodological pluralism. It does so by showing that different theoretical approaches actually are pluralist in nature with regard to the underlying philosophy of social science.

The essay will be short and exploratory. The purpose is not to engage in a detailed discussion of all the relevant issues, but to provide a short introduction to the subject.

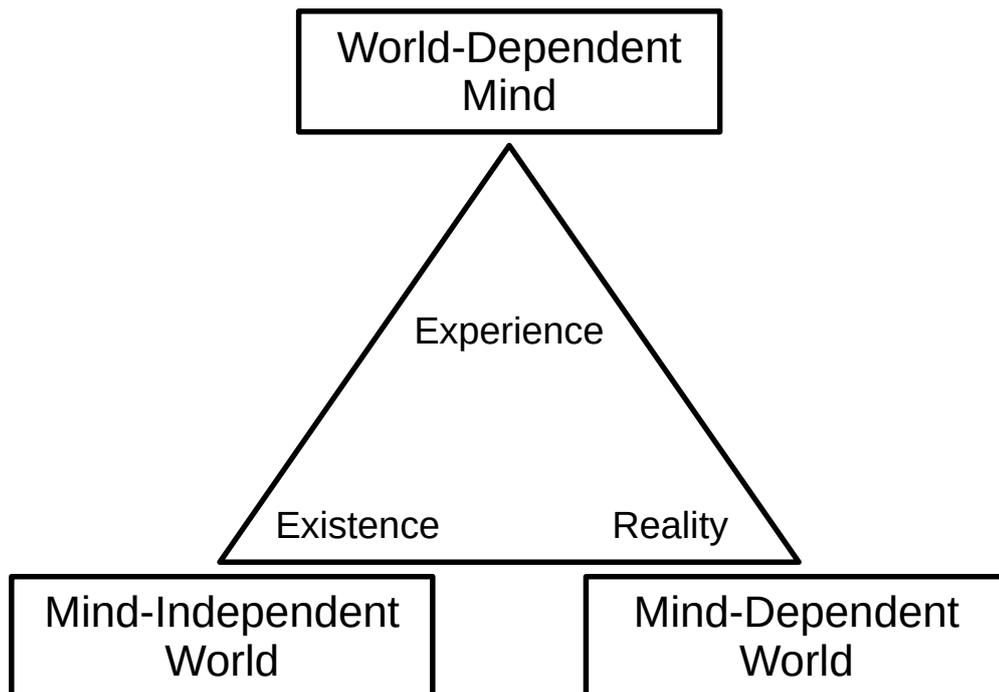


Figure 1. Mind and World.

Figure 1: A first cut

Figure 1 is the first rough cut into the logic of this approach. It depicts three ontological possibilities: a mind-independent world, a world-dependent mind, and a mind-dependent world. These points of view form the basic background of the approach.

First, it posits a mind-independent world which is defined as Existence. This is the physical world as it exists without a conscious observer. Think of Kantian noumena. The physical world is the ground of all other points of view.

Second, Figure 1 posits a world-dependent mind defined as Experience. The point is that the human mind develops via interaction with its physical, social, and cultural environment. There is no such thing as a world-independent mind.

Third, Figure 1 posits a mind-dependent world defined as Reality. The mind-independent world is usually defined as 'reality,' but in this framework, Reality refers to the reality that is mind-dependent. This is the phenomenal side of things in the Kantian framework.

Think of a hammer. It has a mind-independent physical existence, but to be able to talk about a hammer requires a thinking mind that interprets it as such. The hammer can also be interpreted as a tool or a weapon, so that its meaning is contextual.

So, Figure 1 is the first building block of our model of the Human World, or social reality.

The problem of knowledge

Figure 1 can also be approached from the point of view of the problem of knowledge that Descartes set. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (Jackson 2016, 44) defines the problem as: “how does a world-independent mind gain reliable knowledge of a mind-independent world?”

From the point of view of Figure 1, this is the wrong question, because there are no world-independent minds.

Tom Rockmore explains the problem via three positions: to know is to know the real (Existence), that knowing the real is not possible, and even if we cannot know the real, we know what we can construct (Rockmore 2021, 3-4).

The problem, it seems to be, is with the relation of the mind-independent world and the world-dependent mind. Classical views of knowledge claim that knowledge is about the mind-independent world.

But according to epistemic constructivism, we cannot know the mind-independent world; we can only know what we construct (Rockmore 2021, 1). In this case, the problem of knowledge is about the relation of the mind-dependent world and world-dependent mind in Figure 1, and how they can explain the mind-independent world.

Donald Hoffman makes the point that our senses do not give us an accurate picture of reality (Hoffman 2019, xv). Hoffman writes that “Instead, natural selection favors perceptions that hide the truth and guide useful action” (ibid.).

World vs Mind

Figure 1 is also based on the fundamental distinction between the world and the mind. The world is defined as EXTERNAL, and the mind is defined as INTERNAL. These two concepts are to be treated as two points of view on reality.

This framework supposes a basic dualism, but it is not a statement about the philosophy of mind. In the philosophy of mind, the debate about dualism is about the mind vs. the brain. There is also the dualist view between the mental and the physical.

This framework, as introduced in Figure 1, is not about the difference between two kinds of ‘stuff’, the mental and the physical. The only assumption

is that reality can be approached from two points of view, the EXTERNAL and the INTERNAL.

The INTERNAL view is about mental processes, or the mind. It includes beliefs, emotions, and cognitions, as well as perceptions. The EXTERNAL view includes both the physical world and the social and cultural world.

2 THE BASIC APPROACH

This section introduces the main framework of this essay in the form of a table. There are existing tables in the literature that differ from this table somewhat and have slightly different purposes.

The table by Jackson (Jackson 2016, 41) is based on two dimensions he calls wagers: mind-world dualism vs mind-world monism and phenomenism vs transfactualism. This allows him to position different methodologies in each of the four cells of the table.

The table by Alexander Wendt (Wendt 1999, 32) has the following two dimensions: holism vs individualism and materialism vs idealism. This allows Wendt to place specific theoretical traditions in each of the four cells.

There are also other typifications, such as Hollis & Smith's (Hollis & Smith 1991, 5; see also Hollis 2002, 19), and Nicholas Greenwood Onuf's typification (Onuf 2013, 57).

All these typifications produce a two-by-two table. They are similar in that each of them places different theories or approaches to a single cell in the table. The framework introduced in this essay differs from those typifications in the sense that it is pluralist, and different approaches are impossible to place in single cells.

Table 1: The Human World

Table 1 introduces the main framework of analysis used in this essay. It places the contents of Figure 1 introduced in the Introductory section in a table with two dimensions: EXTERNAL vs INTERNAL and Observable vs Unobservable. Both EXTERNAL cells include two options: Mind-Dependent World and Mind-Independent World. Both INTERNAL cells include the World-Dependent Mind option.

Table 1. The Human World.

The Human World.

	Observable	Unobservable
External	1 - Mind-Independent World - Mind-Dependent World	2 - Mind-Independent World - Mind-Dependent World
Internal	3 - World-Dependent Mind	4 - World-Dependent Mind

The difference between the INTERNAL cells is that Cell (4) is private while Cell (3) is public. Cell (4) is private in the sense that other persons don't have access to this subjective mind. Cell (3) is public in the sense that other persons have access to these features of someone's mind through the external behavior of the person. This distinction is introduced in Jaworski's text on the philosophy of mind (Jaworski 2011, 26-28).

Cell (4) can be approached from the point of view of cognitive psychology. A person's perceptions, emotions, and cognitions, along with his/her interpretative processes of the environment, belong to this cell. This is the private view of the processes of the mind that is not accessible to other persons, but it forms the basis of the worldview of the person, and thus the social construction of reality from the subjective point of view.

Cell (3) is INTERNAL and Observable in the sense that a person's internal mental states can be inferred from the observable behavior of the person in Cell (1). The most important inferred mental qualities refer to the preferences and intentions of the person. The preferences are important for the Rational Choice and Game theoretic approaches, and intentional analysis may help to clarify what an actor in a particular situation aims to achieve.

Cell (2) depicts the EXTERNAL and Unobservable option. It includes two suboptions: Mind-Dependent World and Mind-Independent World. The Mind-Independent World refers primarily to physical processes and objects such as atoms and electrons. The Mind-Dependent option refers primarily to social structural features and social mechanisms. This cell contains features of the external world that are not directly observable and must be inferred from the observable world.

Cell (1) depicts the EXTERNAL and Observable option with two suboptions: Mind-Dependent World and Mind-Independent World. The Mind-Independent option refers to physical objects and observable behavior. The Mind-Dependent option refers to the social world and especially to the identities of the objects of the world. This is the cell in which the observable interaction and behavior in the world happens, and it is the primary interest of the Social Sciences.

The Mind-Dependent and Mind-Independent features of the social and cultural objects are hard to separate in practice. So this essay introduces the

concept of ‘Ontological Superposition’ to define the option in which these aspects of the world are considered together.

Think of a police officer. The officer is a mind-independent material embodied entity, but his/her identity is revealed by the uniform he/she wears and the car he/she drives. When we see a police officer, we see the person in an ontological superposition in which the mind-independent and mind-dependent aspects of the person are inseparable in our consciousness.

But from a philosophy of social science point of view, it makes sense to separate these two points of view, and that is the subject matter of the next section.

Approaches to the Human World

Table 2 introduces the main ontological and epistemological approaches traditionally considered in the philosophy of social science. The main thing to notice is that none of these approaches fit easily into the four cells in the table, and none of the approaches can be used to evaluate the whole table. They are all partial views of the world at best and do not fit perfectly into the cells. It might be better to identify the main methodological options as follows: external-observable-mind-dependent. This is a clear statement of a position with regard to the metatheoretical assumptions.

But we will go through the options in Table 2. The main ontological point of view in the INTERNAL cells of the table is ‘idealism’. We might say that a person's mental states consist of sensory perceptions, emotions, and cognitions, such as thoughts, decisions, and thinking in general, with the use of language. And interpretivism in general is the epistemological view most suitable for this analysis. This typology does not exhaust the options, but gives an idea of the most probable ontological and epistemological views regarding the INTERNAL dimension.

Table 2. Approaches to the Human World.

The Human World: Approaches

	Observable	Unobservable
External	1 □ Mind-Independent World - Positivism (Ontology) - Empiricism (Epistemology) □ Mind-Dependent World - Idealism (Ontology) - Constructivism (Epistemology)	2 □ Mind-Independent World - Realism (Ontology) - Rationalism (Epistemology) □ Mind-Dependent World - Idealism (Ontology) - Constructivism (Epistemology)
Internal	3 □ World-Dependent Mind - Idealism (Ontology) - Interpretivism (Epistemology)	4 □ World-Dependent Mind - Idealism (Ontology) - Interpretivism (Epistemology)

Moving to Cell (2) in the EXTERNAL dimension, we have two main options. The realism-rationalism pair is most suitable for an analysis of the physical mind-independent world that is also unobservable. But realism is ill-suited for the analysis of the mind-dependent social world. For the social mind-dependent and unobservable world, the main approach is the Idealism-Constructivism pair. But this again is not a perfect fit. The form of idealism suitable for this option is weak idealism that does not rule out an external physical world. It just states that the social unobservable world can be approached via ideas about the world.

In Cell (1), we have the EXTERNAL Observable world. This is the main focus of interest in the social sciences because in this cell, the behavior and interaction of different social actors occur. For the mind-dependent world, the recommended main approach is again the Idealism-Constructivism pair. The identities of social objects are fully mind-dependent and socially constructed.

For the mind-independent EXTERNAL and Observable world, the main approach is defined by the Positivism-Empiricism pair. But when we conflate the mind-independent and mind-dependent views in this Cell (1) together into an Ontological Superposition, the Positivistic view becomes especially problematic. It might be better to describe the approach just as the EXTERNAL-Observable-Superpositional approach.

The reason for this is that, as the reader may have already seen, the different philosophical traditional ontological and epistemological approaches are not perfect fits to the individual cells of the table. So we need a new vocabulary, or we need to describe the philosophical approaches in terms of the determinants of the individual cells, as in the above example.

But Table 2 gives us a rough guide to the philosophical ontological and epistemological terrain. Next, we will use this table to analyze some examples, beginning with an analysis of what institutions are and what kind of institution the state is.

3 INSTITUTIONS

Institutions are of paramount importance to the analysis of the Human World. In Figure 2, institutions are defined by three dimensions. The Unobservable part of the Institution corresponds to Cell (2) of Table 1. The INTERNAL view into individuals corresponds to Cell (4). And the EXTERNAL view into Interaction corresponds to Cell (1).

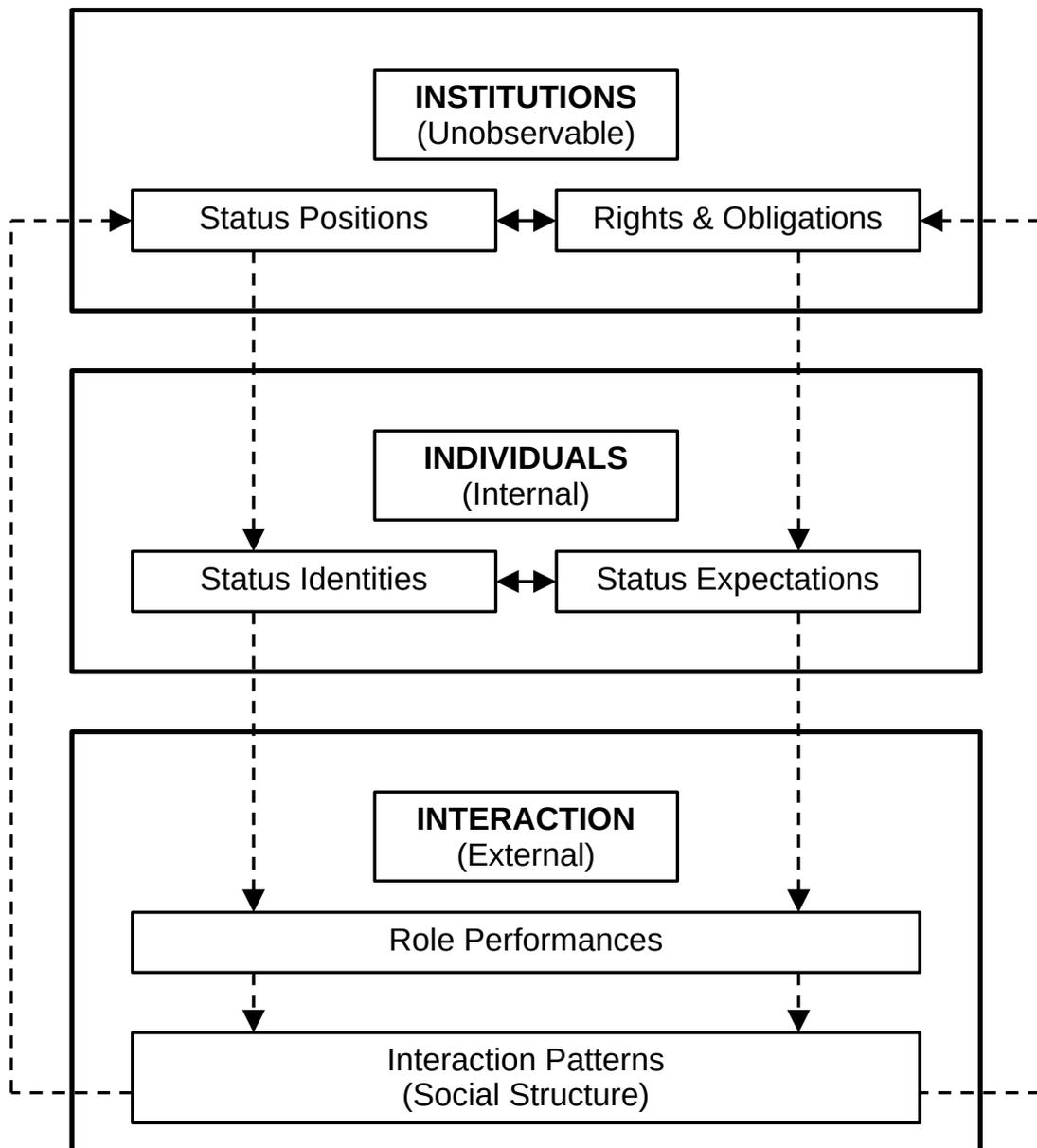


Figure 2. Institutions.

We will define institutions with the help of statuses as defined by Bredemeier & Stephenson (Bredemeier & Stephenson 1962, 28-31). A status is a position in the social system, such as a doctor, a police officer, or a teacher. Each

status is defined by rights and obligations. Rights are those things that a status occupant may expect from others, while obligations are those things that others may expect from a status occupant (ibid., 30). Those rights and obligations related to institutional status positions are referred to as 'deontic powers' (see, for example, Searle 2011).

So the unobservable part of the institution is located in Cell (2) of Table 1. This gives us a holistic view of the institution.

The next part of Figure 2, the INTERNAL view of Individuals, is related to Cell (4) of Table 1. Here, status positions are first translated into status identities. During socialization, when people internalize the status positions, individuals learn to assume various status identities associated with the positions. These identities enable the individual to enact those status positions in real life.

At this internal level, the various rights and obligations associated with the status identities are turned into status expectations. People don't just blindly internalize those rights and obligations, but form a sense of 'how to go on' in various situations and contexts. The basis of this sense is the expectations. When a person orders a meal in a fast food restaurant, the person expects to get the right meal that he/she paid for. The person does not view the situation in terms of rights and obligations, but in terms of expectations. The person expects that certain behaviors and speech acts result in certain outcomes and behaviors on the part of other interaction participants.

This leads us to the final part of Figure 2. That is the EXTERNAL interaction, and this relates to Cell (1) in Table 1. The internalized status identities and the associated expectations allow the person to interact in the real world via 'role performances'. Roles in this view are not behavioral straitjackets, but active, creative enactments of the relevant status identities in the situation. And action-reaction patterns of different role performances by the

different interaction participants form observable patterns of interaction. These patterns form the social structure that is different from the institutional structure described in Cell (2), which is unobservable.

So that is how institutions can be described with this framework and with the help of Table 1. We will describe the state as an example institution next.

4 THE STATE AS AN INSTITUTION

In this section, we will take a look at the state as an institution. The starting point of the discussion is Figure 2 and Table 3.

Table 3. The state as an institution.

The state as an institution

	Observable	Unobservable
External	1 □ People as embodied and socially positioned individuals - Citizens, officials, politicians - Physical actions (voting, legislating) - Role performances as observable behavior (president, ministers, judges) - Institutional outputs (laws, budgets)	2 □ Institutional statuses, rights and obligations - Legal norms, constitutional rules - Authority, legitimacy, sovereignty - Institutional rights and obligations - Institutional structures as existing beyond any one individual
Internal	3 □ World-dependent mental states expressed in action - Public beliefs and shared understandings - Observable expressions of political attitudes	4 □ Mental building blocks of the social construction of the state - Status identities and expectations - Unconscious political dispositions - Political beliefs in general

The main point is that the state as an institution is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is present in all four cells of Table 3, so that it can be viewed

from both internal and external points of view, and observable and unobservable points of view. In Cell (1), we have joined together the mind-independent and mind-dependent aspects of the state into ontological superposition.

In Cell (1), people are viewed as embodied and socially positioned individuals. It is here that we can find actual physical actions and role performances as observable behavior. These role performances form action and reaction patterns or observable social structure. This structure or the patterns are socially constructed by the deeds and speech acts of the persons involved.

In Cell (2), we find the description of the institutional structure. The unobservable structure consists of status positions and the associated status rights and obligations. This structure is a human construct, and it has no causal significance regarding the behavior of individuals as described in Cell (1).

In Cell (4), we find the mental building blocks of the social construction of the state. These building blocks consist of status identities and status expectations. The individuals performing role performances in Cell (1) use these identities and expectations as the mental means of producing those observable role performances.

Finally, in Cell (3), we find the internal mental states expressed in action. These mental states of politicians and civil servants are public and thus observable to other people.

Taken as a whole, the state is a multifaceted phenomenon, and it can be approached analytically from multiple points of view. No single theory or philosophical position is in itself adequate to describe the whole phenomenon. We thus need methodological pluralism to study the state as an institution.

5 RATIONAL CHOICE AND GAME THEORY

The starting point of this section is Table 4, which maps Rational Choice Theory and Game Theory as approaches to the study of human behavior.

In Cell (1), we find the external and observable world, or the world of observable behavior. In this cell, we find the choices, actions, and payoffs related to games. The focus is on actual moves in the game and observable payoffs. This is the visible part of the game.

In Cell (2), we find the unobservable game form and the institutional structure of the game. Payoff matrices and rules of the game belong to this cell. It describes the external but abstract structures that shape actor behavior.

Table 4. Rational Choice and Game Theory.

Rational Choice/Game Theory

	Observable	Unobservable
External	<p>1</p> <p>▣ Choice, actions and payoffs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actual moves in the game - Observable payoffs (gains and losses) <p>- The world of observable behavior</p>	<p>2</p> <p>▣ Game form and institutional structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Payoff matrices - Rules of the game <p>- External but abstract structures that shape actor behavior</p>
Internal	<p>3</p> <p>▣ Preferences as reflected in behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revealed preferences - Expressed beliefs <p>- Mental states as they appear in action</p> <p>- The “behavioral” side of internal cognition</p>	<p>4</p> <p>▣ Subjective utilities, beliefs and expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - True preferences - Risk attitudes - Cognitive models of the game <p>- The mental architecture of rational choice</p>

Cell (3) or internal and observable is an important cell from the point of view of rational choice in general, because this cell includes the observable and public mental states as they manifest in action. Revealed preferences and expressed beliefs belong to this cell.

Finally, Cell (4) includes the private subjective utilities, beliefs, and expectations regarding the game. These include risk attitudes and cognitive models of the game. This cell describes the mental architecture of rational choice.

Once again, we find that Rational Choice and Game Theory are impossible to describe using only a single cell of the table. Game Theory and Rational Choice is a multifaceted phenomenon, and to describe it fully requires multiple points of view. Rational choice as an approach especially depends on the interactions of external and internal factors. The actions and choices of individuals in Cell (1) fundamentally depend on their subjective preferences, which are revealed in Cell (3).

6 STRUCTURAL REALISM AND OFFENSIVE REALISM

The topic of this section is structural realism in general and offensive realism in particular. Structural realism is the invention of Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics* (Waltz 2010). John Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism is a variant of this thinking (Mearsheimer 2014). We will also map Mearsheimer's five assumptions (Mearsheimer 2014, 30-32) to Table 5 to see how this framework can make sense of IR theories.

In Cell (1) of Table 5, we see observable state behavior in the international system. Alliances, diplomacy, and war belong to this cell, as do observable power capabilities. In Cell (2), we see the structure of the international system expressed as the distribution of capabilities.

On the internal side, Cell (3) includes the decision-makers' public and observable preferences and reasoning. Cell (4) depicts the decision-makers' private beliefs and expectations.

Table 5. Structural realism and Offensive Realism.

Structural Realism/Offensive Realism

	Observable	Unobservable
External	1 ☐ State behavior in the international system - Military deployments and alliances - Diplomacy, sanctions and war - Observable power capabilities ☐ Offensive Realism: - Offensive military capabilities of states	2 ☐ International structure - Distribution of capabilities - Anarchy - Systemic constraints ☐ Offensive Realism: - Anarchy of the international system
Internal	3 ☐ Decision-maker's expressed preferences and reasoning - Public statements - Strategic doctrines ☐ Offensive Realism: - States are rational actors - Other states' intentions (as expressed in behavior)?	4 ☐ Decision-maker's beliefs and expectations - Perceived threats - Internalized logic of anarchy ☐ Offensive Realism: - Uncertainty about other states' intentions - Survival as the primary goal of the state

Once again, we see that to explain this theoretical approach fully includes all four cells.

Mearsheimer's offensive realism is interesting because he makes five assumptions and combines the structural realist logic with rational choice (Mearsheimer 2014, 30-32). Let's see how Mearsheimer's five assumptions map to Table 5.

In Cell (1), we see the material offensive military capabilities of states. The distribution of these capabilities is described as the system structure in Cell (2). Cell (3) includes the states as rational actors assumption. And Cell (4) includes two assumptions. The first of these is that survival is the primary goal of the

state. The second assumption is that states can never be sure about other states' future intentions.

Once again, we find that this theory and its assumptions have to be mapped to all four cells of the table. It is impossible to describe the theory by just focusing on Cell (1), or external and observable behavior. These results are extremely interesting from a metatheoretical point of view.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This short essay has introduced a metatheoretical framework for analyzing the Human World. The basis of the analysis was Table 1, and this table was used to evaluate institutions, the state, Game Theory, and Structural Realism. The main point that arises from this analysis is that we need a pluralist view of science to study this world. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson has promoted the idea of a pluralist science of IR (Jackson 2016, 209-210).

It is interesting to see how various theories and approaches map onto Table 1. With the help of Table 1, it is possible to dissect the theories and approaches to their ontological components, and show that these theories and approaches are pluralist in nature right from the start.

The main focus of the analysis in this essay was on ontological issues and mapping different theories and approaches ontologically to Table 1. But the essay is silent on methodology, which was the subject matter of Jackson's book (Jackson 2016).

In this book, Jackson holds the view that there is no such thing as a constructivist methodology (Jackson 2016, 226). This might be true, but the analysis in this essay points to a possible direction for the constructivist research project.

Berger & Luckmann's 1966 book *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann 1991) discusses two views on the social construction of

reality. The first view is 'society as objective reality,' and this refers to institutionalization. The second view is 'society as subjective reality,' and this refers to socialization.

In terms of Table 1, this subjective reality points to Cell (4), and the objective institutional reality to Cell (2).

I would add a third view to the way in which social relations are constructed, and this points to Cell (1) in Table 1. This third view holds that observable behavior and meaningful patterns of interaction are constructed from the physical deeds and speech acts of the interaction participants. And we need to use the method of ontological superposition once again.

So the constructivist project would be such that its mission is to show how a meaningful observable social world arises in Cell (1) from interaction with Cells (2) and (4). This is a totally different project from the structural realist and offensive realist project, which has its basis in the relationship of Cells (1) and (3) in Table 1.

And it is good to remember that observable behavior, which belongs to Cell (1) in Table 1, is the main focus of interest in the social sciences. But these different approaches explain this behavior with different strategies.

To sum up, this essay has shown that the framework of analysis introduced in Table 1 is quite useful for analyzing the Human World. And it points the way to a pluralist conception of social science. Also, some new combined methodologies for doing actual research might be needed to enable the use of the full potential of this approach.

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