Challenging Anarchy

Pragmatist Perspectives on the Agent-Structure problem in the theory of Alexander Wendt

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Summary

Not only does the sociological turn in IR theory attempt to provide a new "paradigm" of international relations, it also suggests a relatively new way of theorizing (at least in International Relations). The proposed constitutive logic – as opposed to "causal logic" – focuses on the internal relationships between different variables instead of isolating the causal significance of single ones.

Regarding the agent-structure problem constructivists, as I exemplify for the case of Wendt do, however, often confine constitutive effects to the structural level. Culture thus becomes a "self-fulfilling prophecy", interactions might trigger change within an anarchical state system, they cannot, however, change the "very fact" of anarchy itself. Ignoring the constitutive aspects of agency, Wendt eventually falls behind the claim in his earlier articles: to treat structure and agency as ontological equals. Drawing on the elements of a pragmatist social theory which is rooted in the work of George Herbert Mead and integrated by constructivist authors such as Wendt, it is, however, possible to describe how an anarchical structuration of the international system is socially constituted. Thereby, those phenomena become accessible, which gradually overcome the traditional Westphalian state system.

The contemporary era requires us to confront the question of how new forms of organization might emerge and whether different types of political organizations might fundamentally change the character of international conduct. The problem is that we not only lack answers to such questions, we do not even have appropriate means to think about these questions theoretically.

Hendrik Spruyt[1]

It seems to me, that the only promising attempt to fully conceptualize the meaning of social individuation can be found in G.H. Mead's social psychology.

Jürgen Habermas[2]

Introduction: Constructivism beyond anarchy

This is a theoretical paper which is motivated by an empirical interest in all those cases which challenge the anarchy proposition in international theory. By challenges to the anarchy proposition I refer to the emergence of new institutional forms and dynamics of social change which call into question that there is no overarching authority beyond nation-states in the international system. European integration, for instance, has achieved a level where supranational legislation without intergovernmental "emergency exits" becomes increasingly possible. Gradually, the European Union emerges as a political community which, at a regional level, abolishes anarchy among nation-states, as well as the historical formation of the nation-state has abolished anarchy between smaller princedoms and city-states in a historical process which culminated in the Peace of Westphalia. Other challenges show a much lower degree of institutionalization, yet they embrace not only nation-states in a specific region, but penetrate the state system as a whole. The emergence of international criminal law makes state leaders accountable for gross violations of the principle of popular sovereignty and the human rights implied by it, which gradually replaces the traditional Westphalian notion of state sovereignty.

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[1] Spruyt 1994: 4. For comments and helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this paper I am grateful to ...
[2] Habermas, quoted from Ritsert 2001: 118, my translation.

At a very different level state sovereignty is challenged, when in the course of what Mathias Albert has called 'world society formation' categories of actors become more diffuse, transnational communities emerge, cross-cutting the political communities of the nation-state and non-state actors gain importance (cf. Albert 2002: 92ff; Forschungsgruppe Weltgesellschaft 1996: 18). That territorial differentiation as the traditional principle of order is challenged by an increasing functional differentiation along the lines of issue-specific partial systems in (as opposed to Parsonian subsystems of) society is, for instance, revealed in the emergence of a new law merchant, a new *lex mercatoria* as a body of autonomous transnational private law that is institutionalized in private organizations such as the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris which self-consciously denies to be tied to nation-state legislation.

Anarchy is not only challenged by more co-operative scenarios. Similarly, lines of conflict tend to be decoupled from nation-state boundaries. Christopher Daase (1999) has emphasized the big impact of "small wars" such as the conflict in the Middle East and the Kurdish struggle for autonomy in Turkey, which undermine traditional notions of sovereignty and thus gradually change the international system.

There is rich empirical work on all these cases. But usually the question of how precisely it happens, that anarchy is overcome – or at least challenged – is not addressed, and if it is addressed usually the variety of findings from these diverse cases is not integrated. This might be due to the fact that despite several attempts IR has not yet established the conceptual tools to think beyond anarchy, that is to not only to envision that, but to clearly depict how the shift of, for instance, political loyalties, which has already been presupposed e.g. by neo-functionalist integration theory, does happen. By now it is increasingly acknowledged that the "idea that the anarchical nature of the international system imposes a rational choice problem on the actors in the system is essentially a description of a historically contingent situation." (Spruyt 1994: xi). There is much less consensus, however, on the question of how we could grasp the contingencies. Thinking beyond anarchy in International Relations seems to be not only a challenging, but also a rather delicate matter, for anarchy is not merely an analytic concept, but believing in it is a constitutive feature of IR as a distinct subject in itself. Anarchy is not only, as Brian Schmidt has argued, "what political scientists make of it", but political science, establishing IR as a distinct field of study, is also what anarchy makes of it. The wide recognition Alexander Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* has received, might indeed be due to the fact that Wendt offers both orthodoxy with respect to disciplinary boundaries and identity constructions and heterodoxy with respect to the theoretical questions

he recombines – creatively – in a new way. "Wendt is not a hunter out to shoot others but a gatherer, albeit not a passive one since he uses philosophy of science and social theory to connect loose ends within IR" (Guzzini/Leander 2001: 316). I am, however, not just referring to Wendt because a wide range of commentators agrees that his "book is virtually certain to become a classic work on international relations theory" (Keohane 2000: 125, cf. Smith 2000). My interest in this particular theory is first of all motivated by the fact that Wendt indeed represents a minority of constructivist scholars who focus explicitly on the systemic level and is thus an obvious starting point for a discussion of challenges to anarchy. Secondly, Wendt implicitly refers to several crucial aspects of pragmatist thought such as an abductive logic of inference, though in a scientific realist framework rather than in the context of its original formulation in Charles S. Peirce, and George Herbert Mead's social theory, which is available only in fragments, though in a symbolic interactionist rather than in its original pragmatist framework. Exemplifying the value-added of a pragmatist perspective by discussing works which are at least to a certain extent related to pragmatist thinking seems to be more appropriate and manageable than a general review of the diverse constructivisms introduced to IR in the last few years. The paradox is that a theory like Wendt's, presented without empirical foundation and to a large extent even empirical illustrations is legitimated by the fact that it offers new perspectives, ways of thinking and asking questions which then lead to a more appropriate understanding of the subject at hand – "constructing thinking space"[3], as Patrick Jackson has aptly called this function. Opening up new ways of thinking beyond the too well-established paths of approach-based research (Ansatz-Forschung) [4] and its fixation on specific variables is in fact a major merit of *Social Theory of International Politics.* Wendt proposes not to engage in largely self-referential "paradigm wars", but to emphasize the importance of constitutive analysis within the "sociological turn" (Hobson 2000: 520) in International Relations. Instead of focusing on the exclusive validity claims of single variables we should then focus on how these variables are mutually constituted. Having distinguished such a logic of constitution from the traditional point of orientation, a logic of causality, I reconstruct Wendt's solution of the agent-structure problem, the fundamental question of social theory to which "all social scientific theories embody an at least implicit solution ..., which situates agents and social relations to one another." (Wendt 1987: 337). In elaborating his "solution" to the agent-structure problem, I contend that, in opposition to the

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[3] Jackson 2000, cf. also Kratochwil's (2001) metaphor of scientific progress as a scrabble game where future possibilities are produced by precedent intersections. Wendt himself contends that "the utility of structuration theory as a meta-theoretical framework for international relations ultimately depends on its ability to enrich substantive theorizing and concrete empirical research" (Wendt 1987: 337).
[4] For a criticism of approach-based research in IR see Hellmann (1994: 76-81).

research agenda which is outlined in Wendt's earlier articles structure and agency are, though ontologically independent and intertwined in a complex way, not treated as ontological equals, for a generative concept of structure is posited vis-à-vis a non-generative concept of agency. However, the basic analytical categories which render the conceptualization of a generative concept of agency possible, especially the reception of the elements of a pragmatist theory of society in George Herbert Mead which emphasizes the creativity of social action, are already present in Wendt's early articles. The theoretical value-added of reconstructing and extending these pragmatist aspects, a generative concept of agency allows to conceive of structural change not only in terms of transitions between different cultures of anarchy, but also as change of the fact of anarchical structuration itself. Moreover, a pragmatist reading provides powerful arguments against at least three common criticisms of Wendt's constructivism – that he does not emphasize strongly enough constitutive effects as opposed to causal effects, that he reifies the state system by introducing an essentialist theory of the state and that he cannot adequately conceive of language – without being drawn into the pitfalls of purely meta-theoretical debates, which tend to lose the contact to questions of empirical research. In order to illustrate the value-added of a pragmatist perspective I suggest a very tentative functional alternative to Wendt's notion of an "essential state". The conclusion is primarily an outline of a rather sketchy agenda for empirical research which is motivated by these theoretical consideration.

Constitutive and causal logic: The value-added of the "sociological turn" in IR theory

The major merit of the sociological turn in IR seems to be that the question of how an at least rudimentary concept of the autonomy of action can be fused with the role of a concept of structure that transcends the level of aggregated individualites, fundamental in social theory, has now achieved the status of a fundamental question of IR theory as well. Neither does the sociological turn, however, I will argue in this section, propose a new "paradigm" or "grand theory" in the traditional sense, nor does it occur as a temporary fashion the pathos of innovation of which appears to outbalance the substantial changes. It is, to my mind, in fact a

sociological *turn* insofar as the structuration of theoretical controversies along a series of paradigmatist trench warfare is effectively vanquished.

These "paradigm wars" (Wendt 1998) against the background of which Wendt explicitly develops his agenda of constitutive analysis, were subject of several "small debates" which negotiated the self-understanding of the discipline in the light of its competing paradigmatic orientations. At a meta-theoretical level these debates are thus extremely instructive.[5] The fact that they essentially turn out to be a "labeling exercise" (Hellmann 2000: 170) where actually not the plausibility of validity claims but rather their competitive scope is subject to scrutiny suggests that merely variable-centered approaches tend to lead to something like a respective paradigmatist defense of the most favorite variable.[6]

Against the background of such a tendency Wendt's central concern is to disclose, by means of a reconceptualization of structure, the complex interweavement of those "variables" the exclusive validity claims of which traditional "Grand Theories" of IR vigorously defend. By no means should "power" or "interests" be subordinated to constructivist favorites such as norms or identities. If the social significance of power or interest, however, is not based on their sheer material force, but on their symbolic mediation, they cannot be understood apart from their ideational foundations. The main thrust is thus not only to reveal the determination of the *causal* impact of single variables, but also the mutual constitution of these variables themselves. While causal relations merely depict the impact of on factor x on another factor y, constitutive relations imply that one, or neither, of these factors would exist without the other one. Hence, speaking of variables, the central term in causal logic, tends to become obsolete – and so does the orientation towards the natural sciences as an academic ideal. Causal and constitutive logic, however, should not engage in a competition of replacement. They respond to different questions. Anyhow, Wendt regards the question of a constitutive logic as the more

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[5] Legro and Moravcsik (1999), for instance, in an unfriendly takeover of the competence of boundary definition propose a minimal realism which needs to cede large portions of their explanatory power to the paradigms of the boundary-drawing authors. Prominent realists like Van Evera, Walt or Schweller then in fact appear, as Taliaferro (2000: 182) points out in his rejoinder, "liberals with an identity crisis".

[6] This is epistemologically legitimated as an application of Lakatos' methodology of scientific research programs. Vasquez (1997), for instance, contends that realism is a degenerative research program, an amorphous construction which cannot meet the criteria of "sophisticated falsificationism" (cf. Lakatos 1974). Such a reference to Lakatos, however, seems to be problematic in various ways. First of all, Lakatos speaks about degenerative problem shifts. He is not interested in denouncing a whole research program (Kuhn's term paradigm is in fact inappropriate as well) as degenerative. Moreover, it is questionable whether the criteria for progressive and degenerative problem shifts, exemplified by Lakatos only for the natural sciences, can be applied in the social sciences. For the hard core, the negative heuristic of a research program, which is Lakatos' point of reference for progressive and degenerative problem shifts is hard to identify in the social sciences. Fixed basic axioms might be found in Newtonian mechanics, in IR realism, conversely, the core assumptions are essentially contested (balance of power vs. balance of threat) in debates which can be hardly interpreted as signs of degeneration.

general and theoretically basal – albeit not necessarily empirically more urgent – one. In a framework of constitutive logic the focus shifts to the conditions of the generation of identities and preferences, which are presupposed as exogenously given in causal approaches.

On the development of the agent-structure debate in Wendt

The background against which Wendt develops a concept of structure which is supposed to meet these challenges are the competing structural theories of international politics. In 1987 these were (already) Neorealism and (still) Wallerstein's world systems theory. While the individualistic characterization of the international system "in terms of the observable attributes of their member states" as a mechanism of selection and socialization, which restricts the possible range of action in Waltz' Neorealism and, on the other hand, Wallerstein's holistic conceptualization "in terms of the fundamental organizing principles of the capitalist world economy which underlie and constitute states" (Wendt 1987: 335) according to which agents are a product of these general structures appear to be diametrically opposed at the first glance their logical structure, Wendt argues, is surprisingly similar.

Both manage to circumvent the theoretical problem of how to conceptualize the relations between agents and structures, by presupposing one of the poles as exogenously given "primitive units" thus avoiding further theoretical elaboration (Wendt 1987: 337ff, 349). "They both presuppose *some* theory of what is being structured, human or organizational agents, and of their relationship to social structures" (ibid.: 336f). Neorealism as well as Neoliberalism pursue the same individualist-rationalist strategy, when they presuppose agents and their interests and identities as being "there", independent of social structuration, instead of reconstructing how these structures create interests and identities in the first place. Hence, the question of how these agents come into being, what are the logical and practical conditions of their creation, is systematically excluded instead of being addressed in a specific theory of the state, substantiating e.g. neorealist claims about the nature of the state system. If, conversely, as in Wallerstein's world systems theory, general structures are decoupled from the agents who allegedly produce them, these structures, in analogy, become a quasi-metaphysical, unreflected presupposition (ibid.: 341ff, 1992: 392f).

Endowing agents and structures with equal ontological status, Wendt seeks to avoid this kind of simplification. Following "structuration theory[7] he arranges social structure and individual agency in a relation of mutual constitution: "human agents and social structures are, in one way or another, theoretically interdependent or mutually implicating entities" (Wendt 1987: 338). The starting point of the agent-structure problem can then be characterized by two "truisms about social life" (ibid.: 337). On the one hand, individuals and their organizations are capable of acting in a purposeful and reflected manner, thus reproducing or transforming social structures. On the other, these structures in fact "structure" the social conduct among these purposeful agents. This constitutes a theoretical *problem* because the two claims, yet evidently true, appear to be mutually exclusive. We can either speak of the autonomy of action, or of its social structuration. The challenge any attempted "solution" of the agent-structure problem is facing is thus, paraphrasing Adorno, the mediation of the contradiction in itself: "As well as the mediation in society did not exist without the mediated, without the elements: Individual humans, individual institutions, individual situations, .just as well they did not exist without mediation. (Adorno 1996: 11, my translation)

In a first step, Wendt adopts a generative concept of structure as it can be found in Wallerstein.[8] We should not conceive of structure in the individualistic terms of "material" constraints of action. As structures of individuation the main purpose of generative structures is to render action possible in the first place; they are real, irreducible and unobservable.[9] In contrast to structural determinists, theorists of structuration emphasize, however, "the need for a theory of practical reason and consciousness that can account for human intentionality and motivation." (Bhaskar, quoted from Wendt 1987: 356). How exactly these temporally and spatially specific structures of individuation are supposed to be mediated in what Wendt (1987: 356) calls a "dialectical synthesis remains, yet, fairly unspecific.

It is obvious, however, that we have to conceptualize the state as an agent in a way that makes it empirically *understandable* how the causally significant characteristics of states come into being. "Ideally such a theory would define exhaustively the possible ways of acting of state agents, rather than generate determinate predictions about particular state behaviors"

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[7] Wendt (1987: 336, Fn.2) refers to Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, Roy Bhaskar and Derek Layder as main protagonists. Wendt himself refers primarily to Bhaskar. On the incommensurability of the concepts of structure in Giddens and Bhaskar see Wight (1999).

[8] To my mind a more consistently elaborated generative concept of structure can be found in Bourdieu (1993) and Oevermann (1991) whose positions are also characterized as genetic structuralism.

(Wendt 1987: 365f). Such a modified concept of structure is not supposed to explain why something happens, it is supposed to span a range of possibilities which *constitutes* and thus logically precedes any kind of (state) action. [10]

Although his reception of George Herbert Mead does not start until *Anarchy is what states make of it*, Wendt here implicitly refers to one of the cornerstones of a pragmatist social theory as it is outlined most specifically in Mead. Mead as well is interested in "alternative ways of acting under an indefinite number of different particular conditions.[11] These possibilities are generated by latent structures of meaning. The subject of inquiry is not the subjective, intended meaning of action in the sense of its motivation, but an "objective" meaning, "that which can be indicated to the other while it is by the same process indicated to the indicating individual"[12] The function of meaning is thus not causal, but constitutive. Meaning does not determine the outcome of a particular act, it renders action possible by rendering it intersubjectively understandable.

Such a concept of generative structures of meaning can be illustrated by means of an analogy with Chomsky's theory of competence in linguistics: We are generally capable of building an infinite number of sentences, and an interlocutor, speaking the same language, will be able to understand them. For practical reasons this very *competence* cannot be based on processes of simple imitation. Being able to understand sentences we have never heard before logically presupposes an abstract knowledge of the grammatical rules of that language. It is only on the basis of these grammatical rules that we are able to understand possible

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[9] On this cf. Zehentreiter 2001 and Wendt (1987: 355): "[...] that the capacities and even existence of human agents are in some way *necessarily* related to a social structural context – that they are *inseparable* from human sociality."

[10] The alternative "knowledge interest" corresponds to differing epistemological orientations. Wendt (1987:370) introduces a pragmatist logic of abductive inference as an alternative to empiricism in a scientific realist framework. Charles S. Peirce, the founding figure of pragmatism conceptualized abductive inference as inference to the best possible solution as a complement to the dominating modes of deductive and inductive inference (cf. Oevermann 2001). Wendt's (1999) combination of abductive inference and a positivist epistemology is only possible if positivism is here indeed used in its broadest possible meaning as commitment to some kind of methodologically controlled, intelligible research.

[11] Mead 1962 (1934): 90. To speak of Mead's pragmatist social theory is bold in several respects. First of all there is no systematic statement of such a social theory – his alleged opus magnum *Mind, self and society* was edited posthumously by his students Charles W. Morris on the basis of lecture notes. Morris was, however, much more sympathetic vis-à-vis behaviorism than Mead who is constantly rebuffing what he calls Watsonism and what we know as behaviorism. Mead used the term behaviorism before it was codified in a "Watsonist" way. Moreover, Mead regarded himself as a social philosopher and social psychologist, having fled to the latter discipline in order to avoid religiously motivated restrictions, but not as a sociologist. Anyhow, his work became classical in sociology and sociological tradition, symbolic interactionism, refers to Mead as a foundung figure. Rejecting a rationalist *homo economicus* as well as a normativist *homo sociologicus* by taking symbolically mediated interaction within a social group as a systematical starting point of analysis in order to reconstruct, then, how individuation and thus a purposive determination of aims, be it rationalistic or individualistic, becomes possible in the first place, Mead addresses precisely those fundamental questions of social theory the agent-structure problem aims at.

sentences, as long as they are "well-ordered" according to these rules. It is this capacity, rendering possible mutual understanding, which is called "competence" in Chomsky. [13] Although every native speaker needs to master the grammatical rules of his mother-tongue, only very few will be capable of explicating them exactly. Such a tacit knowledge is the basis of Chomsky's "competence".

"Performance", on the other hand, depicts the actual application of the linguistic competence in the form of well-ordered sentences. Hence, performance, in Chomsky, delivers the empirical data for the analysis of linguistic competence although it represents only a specific possible manifestation of the application of rules which can be reconstructed on its basis.

Transferring such a model to the realm of social action, demonstrated, for instance, by Pierre Bourdieu or Ulrich Oevermann, further illustrates the meaning of the category of objective meaning. Only constitutive rules, generating meaning, enable intersubjective understanding of social acts. They constitute the foundation of social action which is, in turn, subject to continuous modification by means of the *performance* of social praxis (Reckwitz 2000).

When the German foreign minister Hanns-Dietrich Genscher, for instance, introduced the notion of "politics of responsibility" there was a general consensus that this referred to a culture of military restraint in the historical awareness of German history. When Gerhard Schröder contends today that Germany needs to take on more responsibility in the world, then there is an equally general consensus that he refers to the exact opposite of what Genscher's politics of responsibility had meant. The space for action has changed, without any political deliberation, without even changing words.

In *Anarchy is what states make of it* Wendt directly addresses the question of how these processes of modification can be understood. He explicitly refers to Mead and symbolic interactionism. The properties of agents, transferred to the elusive realm of assumptions in rationalist theories, are now explained as the outcome of symbolically mediated processes of interaction. The starting point are "problematic situations" where an established definition of the situation as the foundation of well-rehearsed patterns of action is invalidated: "Sometimes situations are unprecedented in our experience, and in these cases we have to construct their

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[12] Ibid.: 89.
[13] It is quite obvious that sentences have a specific meaning which is constituted by linguistic rules, and that those who speak a language, who have to a certain extent internalized the system of rules which determines both

meaning, and thus our interests, by analogy or invent them de novo" (Wendt 1992: 398). As an illustration, Wendt constructs a first contact between mankind and an alien civilization.[14] The thought experiment starts with a stimulus, requiring a reaction – the aliens! The definition of the situation by the unexpectedly visited humans is based on their previous interactions. Wendt presupposes these previous experiences as given in the specific situation. Without generally neglecting their process of construction they can thus be bracketed. Mankind's initial reaction is now interpreted by the obscure visitors. Their definition of the situation will, at least in part, be influenced by this initial reaction. The aliens thus do not merely rely on those interests and identities which they had acquired in the exposure to their extraterrestrial conspecifics. They can already incorporate some incipient experiences based on the human behavior. In the course of action the participants thus build those "intersubjective understandings and expectations" (Wendt 1992: 406), which are not only tied to them, but constitute them in the first place. The following definitions of situations are then based on routinized intersubjectivity. In this regard, Wendt speaks of the "co-determination of institutions and processes. These abstract considerations do have practical implications. Power politics is not an inherent quality of the state system, but a historically contingent manifestation. Presupposing the logic of the security dilemma without considering the previous interactions between states would then be a category mistake:

> "These claims presuppose a history of interaction in which actors have acquired 'selfish' identities and interests; before interaction [...] they would have no experience upon which to base such definitions of self and other [...] Self-help is an institution, not a constitutive feature of anarchy" (ibid.: 402).

Definitions of the situation are thus always mediated by intersubjectively produced identities, which are themselves the product of social acts within a certain group. Wendt here introduces Mead's crucial differentiation between the "me" as the part of the self "defined in terms of others" and the "I" as the part of the self which is not reducible to Others, and which

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the phonetic structure of the sentence as well as its semantic content have developed what we want to denote as *competence* (Chomsky 1977: 483, emphasis in the original, my translation –check original).

[14] In *Social Theory of International Politics* Wendt uses Montezuma's Aztecs and the Spanish conquerors as a more plausible example. The logic of the first encounter, however, remains the same (Wendt 1999: 56, 208).

is "responsible" for the selection of one possibility of the intersubjectively spanned space of realizable alternatives[15].

Having added such an interactionist perspective to the original research program, the central parts of a constructivist meta-theory of international relations are introduced. It is a meta-theory, insofar as any specification in terms of content is left aside. There is, as Wendt repeatedly emphasizes, no such thing as a constructivist theory of international relations. Claiming that institutions are based on shared interpretations of symbolic configurations, are "socially constructed" or merely based on intersubjective ascriptions does not imply any statement on the subject Wendt is actually interested in: "the ontology of international life." [16] A *substantial* theory of international politics is unfolded only in the second part of Wendt's book (*International Politics*). Beforehand, however, Wendt, introduces a series of internal differentiations – between micro-structures and macro-structures, common knowledge and collective knowledge and again between causal and constitutive effects, partly complementing, but, as I will argue, also partly narrowing the explanatory scope of his previous works.

Micro-structures refer to the world "from agents' point of view" (Wendt 1999: 147). For this purpose it is, however, insufficient to consider only the "properties" of individual actors. "What matters is how they interact, the outcome of which is emergent from rather than reducible to the unit-level" (ibid.: 148). Hence, micro-structures are supposed to explain the interactions, which unfold between agents who are either – as exemplified with the aliens – incapable of assessing, let alone manipulating, the intentions of their counterparts, or at least, as in bargaining situations, dependent on the choice of other parties. Macro-structures, on the other hand, aim at the explanation of those "broad tendencies in the system as a whole", which Waltz, the omnipresent antagonist, focuses on as well. Waltz' "balance of power" and his fabrication of states as "like units" is considered to be part of a macro-structure, as it starts at the international system as an explanatory level without even raising a claim to be able to explain the behavior of individual actors. A defining characteristic of macro-structures is thus that they are over-determined. Here, the competence model I have discussed above is reproduced. Macro-structures can only exist because of micro-structures, as well as the

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[15] Such an interpretation of Mead's "I" as a kind of center for the control of conscious selections seems to be inappropriate. Cf. my criticism in the fourth section.

[16] Wendt 1999. For a criticism of such an understanding of meta-theory see Wight (1999), who points out that concepts such as structure and agency can only make sense if they are immediately related to empirical outlook, and can thus vary from case to case.

grammar of a language only exists because it is spoken, or at least handed down to following generations. There are, however, manifold interactions at the micro-level that could potentially realize a single macro-structure – a relation Wendt denotes as "supervenience". Macro-structures are not influenced by processes of interaction, they are nothing but processes of interaction. "Yet because the supervenience relation is non-reductive, with multiple micro-states realizing the same macro-state, the door is open to relatively autonomous macro-level explanations" (ibid.: 156). In contrast to Waltz, however, Wendt regards micro-foundations as a central element of any systemic theory[17]: Macro-structures generate micro-level interactions, being themselves constituted by them.

Having exemplified the value-added of the perspective of a logic of constitution in a discussion of the ideational foundations of apparently material factors ("Ideas all the way down?), Wendt now states more precisely what is meant by the seemingly subjectivist category of ideas:

"From the impossibly broad category of "ideas" we can therefore narrow our focus at least somewhat to "knowledge", using this term in the sociological sense of any belief an actor *takes* to be true [...] The ideational aspect of social structure might now be seen as a distribution of knowledge" (ibid.: 140).

Wendt summarizes cognition of the specific rationality, the strategies, preferences and convictions of opponents or partners, in the game-theoretic category of common knowledge. Common knowledge can be reduced to its agents and explain action on the basis of an intentionalist theory of action. Wendt does accept that "that the game-theoretic concept of common knowledge provides a useful model of how culture is structured at the micro-level." (ibid.: 159). Only with a constructivist approach, however, constitutive effects become visible. They are manifested in those intersubjective understandings which are continuously reproduced or transformed in the course of interaction. Collective knowledge, therefore, refers to structures of knowledge "held by groups which generate macro-level patterns in individual behavior" (ibid.: 161). "Capitalism" or the "Westphalian state system" can serve as examples of these structures. In analogy with the distinction between macro-structures and micro-structures the relation between collective knowledge and the agents holding it can be

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[17] This is surprising, for Waltz explicitly refers to microeconomics as a theoretical role-model, which in economic debates implies a constant demand for micro-foundations.

characterized as supervenience, while common knowledge can be reduced to those who hold it. It seems to me, that these distinctions are particularly important, because specifying the (only causal!) function of interactions in terms of specific properties – strategies, preferences and beliefs – already implies an understanding of social change that appears to be rather reductionist. Conceiving of change not in terms of the selection between alternative "cultures of anarchy" within the framework of a given macro-structure, but in terms of a transformation of the macro-structure itself, becomes impossible if the collective knowledge of macro-structures is not at all affected by interactions, i.e. praxis. [18]

The crucial difference between a position of methodological individualism, as it can be ascribed to the "mainstream" and a position of methodological holism is, according to Wendt, that individualist strategies confine themselves to causal effects, while a holistic perspective take into account the constitutive dimension as well. Causal relations can only exist between agents which exist independently of each other; otherwise the relation would be constitutive. At this level, however, only the cultural (structural) impact on the behavior of agents can be conceptualized. Processes of adaptation as they are conditioned by culture, that is processes of socialization in a reductionist understanding, are confined to the adaptation of behavior (simple learning) without being able to take into consideration how at the same time identities and interests are transformed (complex learning). The crucial point in Wendt's "solution" of the agent-structure problem, understanding structuration, and thus culture, as the condition of the possibility of individuation by introducing a generative concept of structure, requires a constitutive perspective. Since Wendt had confined the perspective of a logic of constitution beforehand to the level of cultural mediation of identities and interests through macro-structures, culture now occurs to be a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Wendt 1999: 184ff):

"Actors need to define the situation before they can choose a course of action. These definitions will be based on at least two considerations: their own identities and interests which reflect beliefs about who they are in such situations; and what they think others will do, which reflect beliefs about their identities and interests."

Usually our "prophecies" are fulfilled in terms of a functioning logic of appropriateness, "which will reinforce our cultural beliefs." (187). If, however, culture, the totality of structures, can itself evoke movements of cultural adaptation it is hard to meet the

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[18] Cf. Drulák (2001) and the critique in section 4 of this paper.

theoretical claim that structure and agency are treated as ontological equals. They can be ontologically independent of each other and intertwined in a complex way, but they are not ontological equals.

Nevertheless, Wendt insists, there is no such thing as *the* logic of anarchy. The very term an-archy refers to the fact that there is not something: "Anarchy is a nothing, and nothings cannot be structures." Anarchy is merely an "empty vessel" (ibid.: 309), which can be filled with very different cultures of anarchy. Wendt discusses three ideal-typical cultures of anarchy: A Hobbesian culture, where states confront each other as enemies, a Lockean culture of rivalry and finally a Kantian culture of friendship. [19] These cultures can manifest themselves with varying "degrees of cultural internalization". Wendt distinguishes the degrees of internalization according to their media of enforcement: force, price and legitimacy which are closer to Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian anarchy respectively without being subsumed under these ideal types. Wendt's conceptualization of the constitution of identities and interests of states through macro-structures, i.e. cultures of anarchy, becomes particularly clear in his interpretation of the internalization of a Lockean culture in the Westphalian state system on account of "Foucault Effect – the social constitution of ‚possessive individuals" (Wendt 1999: 286). The access to the international system becomes possible because of the mutual recognition of statehood. With regard to democratic governments and capitalist economies this tends to result in increasing demands in terms of civilizing standards at the level of the nation-state. These internal structures are, at the first glance, "intrinsic features of material actors ..., but [their] social meanings and consequences are *en*dogenous" (ibid.: 293), that is, they are functions of the international system. A by-product of this development, states tend to build collective identities. States are only "individuated" in and by the international system. As such an individuation, however, implies at the same time a demarcation line between civilized and "uncivilized" states, "they will have a stake or interest in the group which they would not have if its norms were less fully internalized (ibid.). Such a collective identity, according to Wendt, tends to manifest itself only vis-à-vis an external threat – rogue

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[19] It is legitimate, as Wendt does, not to relate these denotations to claims for an authentic reconstruction of their patrons. It is, however, somewhat misleading to identify the contrast between enmity and friendship with Hobbes and Kant. Kant's image of the human being does not at all differ from Hobbes', the description of the state of nature in Kant is less epical, but equally uncomfortable. The difference is located in their contractualist construction of the abandonment from the state of nature. In contrast to Hobbes' Leviathan Kant suggests a model of ideal juridification on the basis of popular sovereignty. As long as this ideal is not at least more or less approached – and according to Kant's criteria for popular sovereignty it is far from that today – we can neither speak of friendship nor of an eternal peace. Cf.. the Kantian criticisms of democratic peace theory: MacMillan (1995), Cavallar (2001) and Franceschet (2001).

states, for instance.[20] Without such an external reason states will tend to act out there rivalries according to their self-image as possessive individuals within their in-groups as well. The most interesting aspect in this rather convention depiction is the connection Wendt points out between egoism and mutual recognition.

"Self-interest is thereby constituted as the appropriate relationship of Self to Other, which in effect *creates* the collective action problem, but to do so it must forget the Self's dependence on the Other's recognition of its rights and identities."[21]

Identities and interests are, hence, culturally mediated dispositions for action which are not consciously held by individual agents (states).

The transition from one culture of anarchy to another is then possible as emergent effect of interstate interactions at the micro-level. Wendt refers to the interaction model already outlined in *Anarchy is what states make of it*. It is not only the behavior, but also the properties of the participants which is at disposal. Wendt discusses four "master variables", which are supposed to explain these processes of transition: interdependence, common fate and the homogeneity of liberal-democratic regimes can, for instance, trigger tendencies which transfer a Lockean into a Kantian culture of anarchy as long as states sufficiently engage in self-restraint instead of egoistically following their particular interests (Wendt 1999: 343ff.). As, however, Wendt has confined constitutive effects to the constitution of identities and interests through macro-structures beforehand, he can only conceive of social change in terms of a selection between different cultures of anarchy, but not in the more constitutive, generative sense of changing the shape of the empty vessel of anarchy itself. The more elaborated dynamics of structuration in international politics here narrow the explanatory scope in comparison to earlier articles. Referring to pragmatist social theory, I will thus proceed to outline a possible way to counterbalance a generative concept of structure with a generative concept of social action which appears to be better suited to explain processes of change at the macro-structural level.[22]

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[20] That despite the strong expressions of solidarity in the Western world ad-hoc alliances led the military actions in Iraq creates a rather hard case for more optimistic constructivist notions of collective identity formation.
[21] Ibid.: 294. In a similar vein Bourdieu (1993) speak of habitus formations as "forgotten history".
[22] Cf.. Joas 1992 a; 1992 b; Oevermann 1991, Zehentreiter 2001 and for IR Baumann/Hellmann/Wagner 2001.and Hellmann 2002.

Social action and the logic of constitution: A pragmatist extension of the argument

It seems to me that Wendt, restricting social action to the realm of causal effects, significantly deviates from his original research agenda. While in his original statement of the agent-structure problem he intended "to avoid what I shall argue are the negative consequences of individualism and structuralism by giving agents and structures equal ontological status" (Wendt 1987: 339), the motto now almost seems to be "culture all the way down" (Hobson 2000: 521). Despite opposite assertions, in *Social Theory of International Politics* structure and agency do not have an equal ontological status. Wendt now conceives of their relation, in analogy to the distinction between macro-structures and micro-structures, as "supervenience" (Wendt 1999: 156). Hence, the relation of structures to agents can be depicted in terms of rule-like generation, while, conversely, agents trivially *constitute* a necessary micro-foundation of structures without, however, generating them, that is: constituting them in a more demanding sense. In terms of a logic of causality social action can thus change the condition of anarchy, triggering, for instance, the transition from Lockean to Kantian anarchy, but there is no truly constitutive dimension of social action, of praxis. The kind of change conceptualized here refers to socially acceptable kinds of behavior under a specific culture of anarchy, leaving anarchy as a macro-structure itself intangible. "Constitutive analysis is inherently static. It tells us what structures are made of and how they can have certain effects, but not about the processes by which they move through time, in short, about *history*" (ibid.: 185f). Even if anarchy is an "empty vessel" it would, however, be possible that the vessel itself is transformed, changes its shape. Regarding constitutive analysis as static, there is no sensorium for this kind of change in *Social Theory of International Politics*. While macro-structures are generative, opening up a range of possible actions, social action has merely the function of a structure of closure selecting among these previously generated possibilities.

Counterbalancing a generative concept of structure with an equivalently generative concept of agency it is, however, possible to develop a dynamic account of constitutive analysis which then might allow us to better grasp the empirical challenges to anarchy I have

mentioned above. The analytical foundations necessary to grasp a constitutive dimension of agency are, withal, already rooted in Wendt's theory – more specifically: in his reception of Mead.

To begin with Wendt's reading of Mead seems to be particularly promising, since, as a by-product, by means of a reconstruction of this "hidden pragmatist basis" the post-positivist criticism that his theory could not adequately conceive of language can be effectively rejected. My pragmatist criticism of Wendt is thus to a large extent a "pragmatist extension".

There are two main contexts where Wendt refers to Mead. First, he illustrates interaction processes, always stylized as first encounters. Moreover, Mead's distinction between "I" and "me" serves to systematically evaluate the status of agency in the agent-structure problem.

Wendt interprets Mead as a scholar in the tradition of symbolic interactionism. He thus refers to a line of interpretation which not only largely ignores the pragmatist roots of Mead, who developed his concept of symbolically mediated interaction in close co-operation with the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, but – focusing exclusively on the extensive reconstruction of specific processes of interaction - also loses sight of the potential for a general social theory which can be reconstructed from Mead's scattered writings (cf. Joas 1992a, 1992b). Stylizing processes of interaction as first encounters between Ego and Alter – mankind and aliens or Montezuma's Aztecs and the Spanish colonizers – as Wendt does it, is certainly suitable as a heuristic instrument in order to demonstrate how complex learning – the transformation of not only the behavior but also the dispositions of actors can occur in the course of interaction. It is, however, nothing but a heuristic instrument, used by Mead especially in the first substantial part on mind in his *Mind, self and society,* in order to illustrate how a fundamental co-ordination of action can work. Significantly Mead does not choose a first contact between humans and aliens as an example, but an encounter between dogs. A "conversation of gestures" can be observed already in animal psychology. At this level the criticism that there is no adequate conceptualization of the role of language would certainly be appropriate. Mead, however, goes far beyond that. In the second volume of his *Theory of communicative action*, dealing with the "critique of functionalist reason", Jürgen Habermas thus emphasizes the importance of Mead in his illustration of the transition from strategic to communicative rationality. Although Joas (1992b:179) and Oevermann (1991) correctly emphasize that the co-ordination of action at a conceptual level does not necessarily imply a Habermasian orientation towards mutual understanding, it is surprising against that

background that the possibility of an adequate concept of language in Wendt's theory is denied. Habermas, in any case, points out with regard to Mead and symbolic interactionism: "Wenn wir die revolutionäre Kraft der verhaltenstheoretischen Grundbegriffe, das paradigmensprengende Potential dieses Ansatzes freilegen wollen, müssen wir auf G.H. Meads Sozialpsychologie *zurück*gehen" (Habermas 1981: II, 12).[23]

While meaning in symbolic interactionism is "negotiated" (Herbert Blumer), Mead as a pragmatist provides a theory of how meaning is *generated*. The generative concept of agency I have been missing in Wendt can in fact be found only in the pragmatist tradition. Thus Emirbayer (1998: 969) holds that "pragmatist thinkers provide the first steps towards developing an adequate conception of the constitutive creativity of action, conceived of as" – quoting Joas – "the permanent reorganization and reconstitution of habits and institutions."

Already at the level of a conversation of gestures, however, Mead develops his notion of the social act. Unlike in a Weberian framework where social action is merely a subtype of action in general which is characterized by the fact that it takes into account the expectations of others, the social act in Mead refers to the conduct in a social group. It is at this level that we can address questions of how language can develop out of social practice, and how individuation becomes possible. A specificity of human conduct is the enormous variety of vocal gestures human beings can produce. In contrast to 'conventional' gestures these vocal gestures can be perceived by the individual itself. In a complex process, which cannot be unpacked here then the capacity evolves to use significant symbols, that is symbols which evoke the same reaction in the indicating individual as in they explicitly evoke in other individuals. The shared interpretation of symbolic configurations is basal for the construction of meaning. "Meaning is thus a development of something objectively there as a relation between certain phases of the social act; it is not a physical addition to that act and it is not and 'idea' as traditionally conceived" (Mead 1962(1934): 76). Withal the gesture is an early phase of action also insofar as the creation of a range of hypothetical possibilities is directly linked to the acquisition of language. Hence, from a Meadian perspective Wendt's model of a relation of supervenience between structure and agency, which is characterized by a "multiple realizability" precisely within such a range of possibilities, already presupposes the constitutive function of language.[24] For the existence of these various possibilities implies that ideas do not simply refer to what we do, but primarily to what we don't do, but reject to do.

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[23] "If we want to disclose the revolutionary power of the basic concepts of behavioral theory, the paradigm-bursting potential of this approach, we have to go *back* to G.H. Mead's social psychology". My translation (check translation).
[24] On the importance of the development of language in Mead see Wagner (2001: 27).

The creation of these hypothetical possibilities and the reconstruction of the act in the light of this range of possibilities is "the sort of analysis [which] is essential to what we call human intelligence, and it is made possible by language." (Mead 1962 (1934): 95). For only language allows us to distance ourselves from the immediate act, to reflect on it in terms of alternative possibilities and differing expectations of participants.

This clearly goes beyond the logic of first encounters. Mead refers to a mutual dependence "of the *ego* and the *socius*, of the self and the other. It is still truer to say the self and the *others*, the *ego* and the *socii*" (Mead 1964: 102). The starting point of social individuation is thus always the social group. It is not significant Others in specific interactions who build "ego's" identity, it is the "organized community or social group which gives the individual his unity of self" (Mead 1962 (1934): 154). – i.e., the generalized Other. An ambiguity in the German translation whether or not the "generalized Other" should be translated as a neutrum (*der* or *das* generalisierte Andere) reflects that here the step from a heuristic model of symbolically mediated interaction to the basic elements of a social theory is already completed. A face-to-face interaction with the generalized Other is hardly possible.

Mead now distinguishes between two constitutive dimensions of the self. Daily conduct necessarily presupposes routines. These routines reflect the expectations of others by turning the 'I' into an object: the 'me'. The 'me' is the 'I' observing itself as an object through the eyes of the others, where the attitudes of the generalized Other affect identity formation. Within these routines there is a certain range of possibilities which in fact has a self-fulfilling tendency in the sense of a logic of appropriateness. However, routines only became routinized because they helped to better cope with problematic situations in the past. That implies that they can always be challenged. This is where the "I" comes in as a merely subjective instance of creativity and spontaneity, which is not socially mediated. If in situations of crisis, or in Dewey's formulation: problematic situations, these routinized patterns of action are called into question the "I" creatively and spontaneously *generates* possible new solutions to that problem. Only if the newly generated solution, however, stands the test of practice, if it helps to better cope with a problematic situation in a pragmatic sense, it becomes *routinized* and *habitualized* as a pragmatically successful solution to the crisis. Withal, established routinized patterns of action, however, remain present in the background as experience. If the spontaneous and creative solution of the problem stands the test of practice and in fact becomes routinized it can enter into that background of experience and thus form the social

character. Established routinized action is thus always a habitualized, formerly subjective solution of a problematic situations: "There would not be an 'I' in the sense in which we use that term if there were not a 'me'; there would not be a 'me' without a response in the form of the 'I'"[25]

In this context problematic situations or crises are not at all congruent with what we colloquially call political crises. During the Second Gulf War in 1991, for instance the theoretically more critical operation *Provide Comfort* which was supposed to guarantee protected areas for the Kurdish population in northern Iraq, got far less public attention then the bigger operation *Desert Storm. Provide Comfort* was supported by the United Nations, but enforced by the allied forces without a specific mandate. It explicitly called into question a crucial pattern of routine action, the principle of sovereignty, while *Desert Storm* presumably protected the concrete sovereignty of Kuwait. While the protection of the existence of Kuwait as a state, despite all presumable economic motivations, was entirely consistent with an established body of international law, *Provide Comfort* could not be based on a pre-given routine pattern (cf. Daase 1999: 17). Characteristic of a problematic situation is thus not the extent of the shock agents are exposed to, but the question of whether previously established and stable routines are called into question and are replaced by creative new solutions. The creative solution of problematic situations is thus generated by the emergence of the New. Withal problematic situations do not have to occur as exogenous shocks (brute facts, in Peirce's terminology). They can also be created as decision problems or, as in the case of aesthetic experience, by mere reflections, as "crisis due to leisure" (Oevermann 1991).

Any of these types of problematic situations can lead to the abandonment of old routines. Moreover, all of them can generate solutions of problematic situations which – if they stand the test of practice – can themselves be routinized as established patterns of action which are based on a type of creative action which is in itself not structured, because the structures (routines) were invalidated, for they did not stand the test of practice anymore. Such a failure of established definitions of the situation is coterminous with problematic situations in the theoretical sense. Structures, conceived of as routines of action were themselves generated as solutions to problematic situations. "As given, it (the self, B.H.) is a 'me', but it is a 'me' which was the 'I' at the earlier time" (Mead 1962 (1934) 174).

While in the realm of praxis the routine needs to be the normal case, and crises can only occur as marginal cases, from a theoretical perspective, conversely, the crisis must be the

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[25] Mead 1962 (1934): 182, cf. also Oevermann 2001 and Wagner 2001.

normal case and the routines the marginal case, for routines and thus structures are nothing but sedimented solutions of problematic situations. Potentially, every moment in the conduct of action can become a crisis and thus a source of new routines: "We have seen that the ground for this lies in the fact that social conduct must be continually readjusted after it has already commenced, because the individuals to whose conduct our own answers, are themselves constantly varying their conduct as our responses become evident." (Mead 1964: 131).

These emergent effects of social action constitute structures in the first place. In the empirically normal case of a routinized and habitualized conduct of action the creativity potential remains latent. In this case, the self-fulfilling tendency of cultural dispositions as it is depicted by Wendt is appropriate. Whenever the routinized conduct is interrupted, however, the relation is inverted. In spontaneous and creative solutions to problematic situations agents now generate, so to say, the future structures. Structural change then does not only refer to cultural changes with respect to different types of anarchy. The anarchical structuration itself can become subject of processes of transformation. Social change is no longer restricted to the content of the empty vessel of anarchy, but might affect the form of the vessel itself.

Such a possibility of change must not be confined with the possibility of its purposive control. In Wendt's reception of Mead there is a category mistake, when he invokes Meads instance of creativity and spontaneity, the "I", as "a distinct locus of thought, choice, and activity." (Wendt 1999: 182, 1992: 419) in order to establish a basis for a conscious composition of the political environment, the social construction of a co-operative alternative to the realist notion of Hobbesian anarchy. Self-consciousness refers to the self as such, not to the "I" as a kind of command center. A rational choice is impossible in problematic situations because established routines have failed and thus the bases of a rational calculation (including probabilities) is eroded.[26] Moreover, successful and conscious political planning as well as the questioning of normatively unacceptable conditions always imply a deliberation about possibly conflicting norms, which are located in the realm of the "me", i.e. the social character. Solutions to problematic situations are only tangible after they have been acted out. As soon as we actually understand them, we also understand whether they have failed and are to be repudiated, or whether they have in fact helped to better cope with the situation and thus are almost "incipient routines". "The 'I' lies beyond the range of immediate experience. In terms of social conduct this is tantamount to saying that we can perceive our responses only

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[26] In this respect, "rational choice" is self-contradictory, for if there are rational criteria we simply have problem of maximization, not of actual choice in the sense of a decision.

as they appear as images from past experience, merging with the sensuous stimulation. We cannot present the response while we are responding. We cannot use our responses to others as the materials for construction of the self – this imagery goes to make up other selves ... The 'I' therefore never can exist as an object in consciousness, but the very conversational character of our inner experience, the very process of replying to one's own talk, implies an 'I' behind the scenes who answers to the gestures, the symbols, that arise in consciousness." (Mead 1964:::: 140f).

Consequently, integrating the constitutive effects of social action does not imply a weaker concept of structure than in Wendt. Quite the opposite. In fact, we would have to say: *anarchy is what states have made of it.* For in the immediate situation of the social act the outcome of the social act itself is unpredictable. Reflective intelligence thus presupposes a delay of action. Only in the reconstruction of the act we can understand the implications of what we did. That anarchy is what states have made of it, therefore, does not imply a Waltzian determinism, but conversely, allows to reconstruct it and to call it into question in the future.[27]

Adequately conceiving of language in pragmatist sense, then is different from the linguistic constructionism which is suggested by post-structuralists. Language is crucial for the emergence of meaning, but ideas have to stand a test of practice, not a test of formulation. Social practice is not constituted by linguistic concepts as such, but only if these concepts are "acted out". And in doing so, concepts might prove or fail and reconceptualizations become possible.

Implications of the 'pragmatist turn': Social vs. essentialist theories of the state and its system

Speaking of an agent-structure problem in international relations theory presupposes that it makes sense to conceive of collective actors, who can cast as actors, take on the role of the individuals social theory usually refers to. Wendt thus characterizes his agenda as "states systemic project". Despite the increasing significance of non-state actors, Wendt still regards states as "the primary medium through which the effects of other actors on violence are channeled into the world system" and "system change ultimately happens *through* states." The perspective of a theory of international politics (not of international relations), understood as

relations between states, is thus still crucial "and as such it makes no more sense to criticize a theory of international politics as ‚state-centric' than it does to criticize a theory of forests for being ‚tree-centric'."(Wendt 1999: 7-22, here: 9). Such a state-centrism, often related to the question of how to conceive of language, has been one of the major criticisms of Wendt's theory. Christoph Weller, for instance, asks: "Where can ideas, norms, values, culture, knowledge and argumentation be empirically identified if not in linguistic expressions? And who has ever seen a state speaking or writing?" [28] This is, however, a surprisingly empiricist criterion. For why does state action need to be immediately observable in order to justify the notion of the state as an actor? It is certainly not convincing that Wendt justifies his state-centric approach by pointing out that "it may actually be easier to assess the intentions and therefore predict the behavior of states than it is of individuals." (Wendt 1999: 222) Especially in theoretical works methodological advantages cannot replace conceptual arguments. With this in mind Wendt himself contends that "systemic IR theorists cannot avoid having a theory of the state anymore than sociologists can of people." (ibid. 195). A response to the demand for a "social theory of the state" raised by Wendt (1987: 343) in his original statement of the agent-structure problem is, however, not systematically accomplished in *Social Theory of International Politics* as well. On the one hand, Wendt, in analogy to Waltz, self-consciously abstains from the project of a theory of foreign policy: "I am concerned with the structures of the states *system,* not of states." (Wendt 1999: 145). This is a somewhat irritating move, insofar as – if anarchy is what states make of it – what states make of it, that is foreign policy, should be the focus of attention. On the other hand and contrary to his interest in systemic theorizing and rather consistent with the usually criticized individualist perspective, Wendt constructs an "essential state" which is completely independent of macro-level influences. As "organizational actors" these rump states inherently develop certain objective interests. Physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being and collective self-esteem here do not presuppose a structurating influence. Wendt considers this to be a necessary step in order to be able to speak of an agent-structure problem in International Relations in the first place: "it is necessary to treat states as, at some level, *given* for purposes of systemic IR theory." (ibid.: 244). As well sociology presuppose an essential base, the human body, IR theory presupposes the "essential state". Apart from such a problematic analogy – in fact both Mead and later Bourdieu have emphasized the corporeal dimension of social action, denying the notion of an essential body – it seems to be

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[27] This again would be an open process. Mead allows for free will, but not for free action.
[28] Weller (2001: 10). Cf. Kratochwil (2000); Zehfuß (1998).

questionable whether humans or states that are constructed in thought experiments without any social environment can have any theoretically or empirically relevant properties. [29]

It seems to me that it is not necessary to justify in methodological artifices why states can be both agents (in international politics) and structures (of domestic politics). Wendt here gets into the troubles of an epistemological realism which is much more naive than the version he presents in the chapter on *Scientific realism and social kinds* (Wendt 1000: 47-91). I will proceed to outline an argument which agrees with Wendt's emphasis on states as, depending on the question, at least most important actors in world politics without embracing his notion of an essential state.

Discussing common and collective knowledge Wendt points out that it is not crucial whether knowledge is "really" true, but only whether it is held to be true. Despite the emphasis on ontological problems as opposed to epistemological debates, here some basal epistemological considerations are necessary. If everybody believes that states do exist and acts accordingly they do have a certain kind of reality merely on account of these beliefs which is manifested in the fact that there are certain intersubjectively produced structures which only refer to the level of the state. (Still it seems to be an institutionalist reductionism to conceive of states themselves as structures instead of merely depicting structures which refer to the nation-state level). Legislative acts, for instance, are usually only accepted within the boundaries of the nation-state, a political community, which – in analogy to Durkheim's non-contractual elements of contractual action – creates legitimacy.

In order to be able to better understand the empirical validity of contracts, Emile Durkheim already contended that contracts, if we want to avoid an infinite regress or a bad circularity, presuppose a source of shared solidarity which is external to these contracts. [30] The concept of political community formation depicts a functional equivalent to these non-contractual elements of contractual action in the realm of politics. The rationalist alternative of a validity of law on account of a (contractually) precedent validity of law needs to implicitly presuppose that a citizen who obeys legal norms in a nation-state will only do this on the basis of an exact knowledge of these legal norms. As a matter of fact, however, the validity of law does not require a – practically unmanageable – precise information of each

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[29] Wight (1999: 128) thus criticizes that "Wendt's location of agency in the state is inconsistent with his approach to the agent-structure problem. Wendt advocates a structurationist solution [...] at the level of the state and the states system, and a structuralist solution at the level of the individual and state. Wendt's theory of the state rests on the classic error of methodological structuralism – the attribution of agential powers and attributes of human agents to a collective social form."
[30] On the value-added of such a concept for question of international relations see Parsons (1969: 310f).

citizen about his or her specific rights and duties. We seem to "naturally" abide by the rules we do not even know and even consider them as legitimate even though they might have been supported by parties we have not voted for. Such an extra-legal base of the validity of law is the core of the concept of a political community (cf. Joas 1992c). It is only against the background of such a category that we can understand how legal norms acquire empirical validity, why citizens whose preferences did not prevail in elections do not only renounce to precipitantly emigrate, as in fact Rousseau explicitly presupposed in his *Contrat Social*, but – without even questioning it – accept the legislation of political opponents as normative criterion for their own behavior.

Paradoxically, it is constitutive for such a notion of a political community that it is apolitical. The criticism to be tacitly conservative, often directed against political theories that emphasize a strong notion of community does not apply because the concept itself follows the criteria of constitutive analysis. Mathias Albert (2002: 95ff) has in this context distinguished between two traditions of the concept of "political community". While Ferdinand Tönnies, who introduced the conceptual distinction between *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, community and society, contrasts community as a normatively appreciated alternative to a gradually dominating society differentiated in terms of the division of labor, Durkheim's non-contractual elements refer to a necessary basis for the validity of law without functional differentiation in terms of the division of labor cannot be explained in the first place. They guarantee the acceptance of legislative acts in general without, however, prejudicing their specific political content.

As political communities states are thus capable of autonomy, insofar as they can produce collectively binding decisions. [31] As subjects of international politicsthey can , by virtue of this capacity, build a collective identity vis-à-vis other states. In Mead's formulation: "There must be other selves if one's own is to exist." (Mead 1964: 103). Only by means of the recognition through other states it can make sense to speak of states as actors in international politics and thus take the agent-structure problem as a starting point of theoretical considerations. The construction of an essential state is not necessary.

Moreover, essentialism conflicts with a central feature of the intellectual tradition of pragmatism which rejects the inherent statism of categories which are treated as substances as opposed to a functional, processual conceptualization thus anticipating contemporary calls for

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[31] Such a notion of the autonomy of the political implies that normative criticism can only aim at the specific manifestation of politics within a particular political community, but not at the fundamental constitutive categories themselves.

relational approaches (Emirbayer 1997). Dewey's and Mead's notion of creative intelligence, for instance, denies the existence of intelligence as a substance which could presumably be located somewhere in mind and brain. Intelligence is rather functionally evoked in problematic situations, manifesting itself in their creative solution. Similarly, a naive ontological interpretation of the "I" and the "me" as two different substantial properties would reify what is meant to be a conceptual differentiation of distinct functional characteristics of the self.

If the construction of an essential state is not necessary, but a "social theory of the state" (Wendt 1987) highly desirable, what are the implications of such a relational approach for the previously discussed question of how a political community legitimates legislative acts. First of all, we should conceive of a political community not as a substance, but as a functional prerequisite for the creation of legitimacy. Terminologically this is reflected in Georg Simmel's use of the terms society formation and community formation, which has later been adopted by Max Weber.[32] Community formation then plays a crucial role in the *creation* legitimacy without implying the reified notion of a *Volksgemeinschaft* (popular/national community) which has been rightfully criticized for its conservative bias. The constitution of a *demos* requires a convincing source of charismatization. National founding myths, the symbolic importance of which is manifested in their ritual celebrations, have often been cited in this context. Such an explanation of the origin of legitimacy on the basis of charisma would, as Joas (1992a: 69-76) has argued, be consistent with a pragmatist conceptual framework.[33] As a matter of fact, conquering the *Bastille* created a decisive charismatic push for the constitution of a French *demos*, even though the actual impact of the endeavor, in fact a bunch of criminals was freed after the political prisoners had been removed, was rather questionable. What is particularly interesting about the French case is that here for the first time the *demos* constituted itself not by means of distinction vis-à-vis competing political bodies, potential enemies, but, by means of a kind of temporal differentiation, vis-à-vis the traditional aristocratic order by abolishing it. Ole Waever with respect to European integration and Wendt in his recent piece on the emergence of a world-state have emphasized the importance of such a temporal differentiation as a mode of collective identity formation which is more compatible with ideas of discursive rationality than a friend-foe

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[32] In fact Charles Tilly points out that Simmel, among the founding figures of sociology, most explicitly develops a relational approach.

[33] I refer to legitimacy as a sociological concept that is supposed to explain the empirical validity of law. The literature on legitimacy in IR (cf. Hurd 1999) unfortunately tends to confound such a concept with normative concepts of democratic legitimation.

schematization.[34] It is these processes of collective identity formation where, first and foremost, the genuine creativity of action in the realm of politics is revealed. If people can creatively overcome given institutional orders and reconfigure the defining boundaries of world politics, as it happened in the formation of nation-states and as it might happen in Europe, and if this is generally consistent with a pragmatist understanding of creativity, we then have to focus on the *routinization* of legitimacy. Clearly, the conditions of the founding myth will remain present in the political discourse. Castles and Miller(1998:), for instance, relate the question of whether nations can be perceived as immigration countries to their founding myths. The admirably modern citizenship law in the United States could then be interpreted not only as a consequence of the foundation of the "melting pot", but also of the vested interest in getting American citizens as opposed to British citizens.

Beyond the reflection of how the formation of a political community affects its further political conduct, the more difficult question arises how the concept of a political community itself is transformed in the course of routinization if it is supposed to account for legitimacy and defy, at the same time, the conservative Schmittian notion of a homogenous *Volksgemeinschaft.* Legitimacy might be simply routinized. Then it would be flawed to expect a positive answer to the question of why legislative acts are accepted, because nobody called their acceptance into question in the first place. After all traditional authority is one of the ideal types of legitimacy Max Weber discusses in his *Herrschaftssoziologie* (Sociology of power/authority) and routinized legitimacy in the sense of a permissive consensus has been discussed in neo-functionalist theories of integration. Routinization in the sense of legitimacy based on tradition might in fact play a significant role; Weber himself, however, emphasized that none of the ideal types can exist in its pure form, but only a specific combination of tradition, charisma, and legal-rational legitimacy could account for the acceptance of authority and thus law. Law cannot be accepted merely on the basis of tradition for it implies, as Habermas has pointed out, an inherent claim for justice. That does not mean that legislative acts actually need to be just according to a specific standard. However, they necessarily refer

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[34] Ironically, although Habermas develops his notion of discursive rationality in his interpretation of Peirce and Mead, Mead himself, writing in the context of vastly exaggerated nationalist emotions in the time of the First World War draws a rather conventional image of the hostile Other as a necessary condition for identity formation. Germany, by the way, is a special case in a very different way. Having failed apparently to achieve a reasonable revolution against the aristocratic order, a discourse emerged in Germany, which sought to establish notion of a cultural nation (Kulturnation) on the basis of outstanding traditions in literature and philosophy. In contrast to the French example, however, this is not a reflexive self-referential constitution of national identity, for it presupposes the superiority of that tradition. Here the foil of identity formation is not the Other as a potentially equal enemy, but the Other as someone inherently inferior. Far from providing a necessary or sufficient condition for the catastrophes in German history, this constitutes at least the background for particularly pathological kinds of nationalism.

to some concept of justice.[35] If we assume that legitimacy which is strongly based on charismatic leadership tends to conflict with democratic principles and thus will be contested, the focus needs to be on legal-rational legitimacy. In a routinized version of legal-rational legitimacy a political community could basically manifest itself in the mutual recognition of citizens as legal subjects. Mutual recognition as legal subjects, however, rather seems to be linked to a purposive (value-)rationality than to the more affectual ties expressed by the notion of community. In fact, recognizing somebody as legal subject, especially in private law, is the ultimate expression of overcoming the traditional inclusion/exclusion dynamic of communities by introducing a category of strangers, or foreigners which are neither friend nor foe, but just somebody who is recognized as a possible and acceptable partner for different kinds of purposive interactions who is endowed with similar rights. The category of a foreigner is thus a clear expression of societal as opposed to "communal" relations, rendering possible a rational division of labor beyond the boundaries of local communities. I have, however, rejected such a reading of the community/society distinction as related to processes of (unidirectional) modernization by arguing that in terms of constitutive analysis every society presupposes a community, for only a community can provide the social group in which individuation, the constitution of purposive individuals engaging in societal relations, becomes possible. Following Durkheim rather than Tönnies, Talcott Parsons has, along these lines, proposed a category of societal community. In a societal community citizens as members of a demos could accept legislative acts as legitimate by mutually recognizing their equal legal status. As it is hardly possible for a citizen to recognize every single fellow countryman as a legal subject, the recognition must be abstract as a general recognition referring to the institutional process by which the individual foreigner becomes a legal subject, i.e. is endowed with his or her legal status. This might tentatively account for the routinization of legitimacy the origin of which, in the Weberian sense, could not itself be produced at the legal-rational level, but rather in a spontaneous and creative act of charismatization.

A highly speculative and tentative model for a "social theory of the state" could then begin with such an act of charismatization which emphatically creates a fundamental "we-feeling" which is then routinized and rationalized in a "societal community formation" by virtue of which such a socially constituted state could still produce collectively binding decisions and thus justify the existence of an agent-structure problem at the level of

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[35] Even nazi ideology had to exclude its victims from mankind on the basis of a racial ideology. This could not be further from any reasonable concept of justice, but it was instrumentalized as a justification.

international politics. Moreover such a tentative social theory of the state can provide a historically grounded argument for the resistance of anarchical structures as an expression of political communities which routinely have been restricted to the nation-state levels. At the same time, providing a generative concept of agency at the level of collective identity formation, a social theory of the state implies the possibility of political communities transcending the historically contingent level of the nation-state, establishing the sources of legitimacy at a higher level.

Conclusion: Thinking space as value-added?

I have attempted to demonstrate that expanding on the hidden pragmatist elements in Wendt helps to construct additional thinking space by allowing us to think beyond anarchy. By 'thinking beyond' anarchy I do not just mean that we should be able to envision a kind of world politics without anarchical structuration, but that we should focus on the specific mechanism which allow for the transition from anarchy to some kind of legitimate authority beyond the nation-state level. Hence, Wendt's recent argument that a world state is inevitable does not affect my argument, as, still, a generative concept of structure faces a non-generative concept of agency. Discussing multiple realizability in the context of the capacity of boundary conditions to "monitor and intervene in their own functioning to sustain themselves", Wendt contends that this "process cannot operate without an efficient *causal* mechanism and *as such* it depends on interactions at the micro-level" (Wendt 2003: 14, emphasis added). In order to develop a conceptual framework which helps us to better understand what I have called challenges to anarchy, agents must be able to change the very kind of structure by which they are constituted. In opposition to "both rational choice and norm-oriented approaches", Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998: 968) have argued, it is the work of George Herbert Mead that offers the most compelling tools for overcoming the[se] inadequate conceptions of anarchy". Withal, the question of whether the theoretical framework can account for change at the most general level of macro-structures is independent of the level of analysis we are talking about.[36] That *Social Theory of International Politics* draws a rather orthodox picture of world politics might be largely due to the question at hand: Wendt is clearly interested in rejecting Waltz' *Theory of International Politics* and thus shares as many

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[36] See Hollis/Smith, Wendt in RIST

of his assumptions as possible, merely in order to demonstrate more effectively the benefit of a different interpretation. By now, however, we can gratefully acknowledge this achievement and move beyond anarchy. Neither *Social Theory* nor the piece on the emergence of a world state, however, provide a theoretical framework for this kind of change.

At least since Checkel's review article on constructivism there has been a debate about the problem of an undertheorized concept of agency. Apart maybe from Colin Wight, however, the constitutive quality of agency has not been at the center of this debate. While Wight distinguishes three levels of agency, where the capacity to act in the sense of a capacity to *change* things and the second meaning of agent in the sense of an agent *of* a group are mediated at a third level where the agent as actor is located at a specific place because of his role as an agent of a group while, conversely, there is an independently existing influence of the agent as an actor on the agent as role-taker within his group. The logical relations in Wight are concisely co-constitutive and non-reductionist and thus closest to what I am proposing. Roxanne Doty, on the other hand, in a post-structuralist critique rejects the agent-structure problem as an expression of a modernist, metaphysical decisionism. As Wight points out, Doty herself, however, ends up in a crude determinism with a crude determinism of action through practices the origin of which remains unclear in lack of a specific theory of constitution. At the end of the day action is simply determined by a structural (discoursive) configuration.

Similarly, in the scholarship which is more directly related to the underlying empirical interest of this paper, constitutive aspects of agency are hardly discussed either. Hendrik Spruyt, for example, is a self-conscious methodological individualist who implicitly rejects the project of constitutive analysis as a whole. Asking how states came into being, he "embeds these choices" – how can states make choices before they came into being? – "in the constraints of the existing political structure." (Spruyt 1994: 14). Spruyt's non-linear view of evolutionary change then refers to Fernand Braudel's structures of *longue durée* and Stephen Jay Gould's punctuated equilibrium model. Apart from the question of how Braudel can be reconciled with a position of methodological individualism Braudel's brilliant empirical studies should not belie that his concept of structure is inherently static. Somewhat consequently, the punctuated equilibrium model then introduces an explanation of change on account of exogenous shocks (punctuation). History according to this image, as Peter Katzenstein (1989: 296, cf. Spruyt 1994: 262) has pointed out, occurs as a "sequence of big bangs." Change occurs, it is not explained. Charles Tilly's critical comments on the concept of community as it is used in Adler/Barnett's volume on security communities comes much

closer to my tentative ideas on the state as a collective actor, especially when he questions their elite-centered notion of community and hints at the relational basis for a more adequate concept of community on the basis of network configurations. When it comes to the question of structural change, however, Tilly (1998: 404) as well does not offer a concise theoretical explanation: "I think of these network configurations as social inventions: perhaps developed incrementally by trail and error, no doubt reinvented independently many times, but when recognized more or less deliberately installed as means of coordinating social life."

These brief comments on some commonly discussed concepts in the theoretical and empirical field I am referring to are meant to illustrate that my claim that a pragmatist reading of the agent-structure problem can in fact create additional thinking space by introducing a generative concept of agency is not entirely unsubstantiated.

A pragmatist reading of the agent-structure debate might in fact bring up some new questions. Whether there can also be new answers basically depends on the empirical research on the challenges of anarchy which is yet to be done. A specific focus in empirical analyses would then have to be the possible source of charismatization which can allow for the reconfiguration. In a study on international commercial arbitration, for instance, Yves Dezalay and Bryant Garth (1996) have emphasized the importance of the charismatic authority of senior legal experts whose competence generated legitimacy in a thinly institutionalized emerging transnational field of private law. Identifying charismatic individuals in such a strict Weberian sense will be hardly possible in other, more institutionalized realms. Charismatic authority can, however, also emerge from creative processes of institutionalization (Joas 1992b). Still, we have individuals acting, but the driving force does not have to be their personal ingeniousness, it can also be embedded in as an enabling condition in an institutional framework. Michael E. Smith (1998), for instance, describes how at a bureaucratic level in the realm of European foreign policy administrative officials who continually kept exchanging information through a telex network (COREU, correspondance européenne, which by now runs on e-mail) and thus, being directly able to "take the role of the other", could more easily develop supranational identities.

Studies such as these suggest that a further conceptual specification of how exactly it happens that the anarchy proposition at different levels ceases to work as a self-evident routine, to stand the test of practice, can only follow from empirical inquiry.

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