

Does Theory Matter ??

What is and why do we study international theory ?

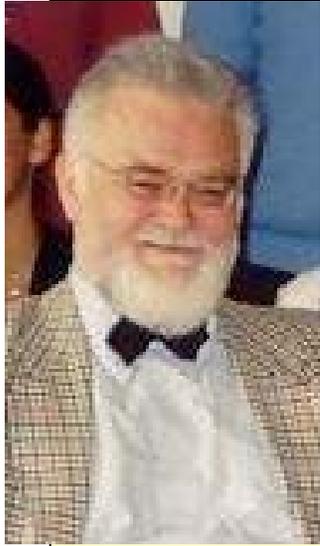
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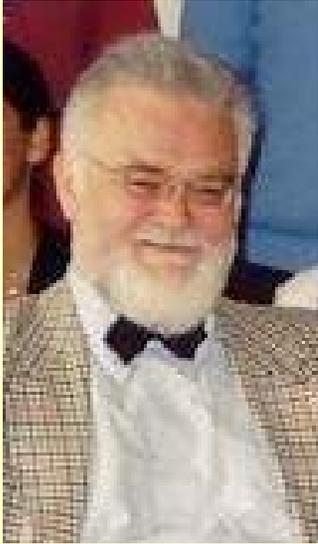
- There you can also find further material to accompany our seminars on International Theory and International Politics
- Lost in the maze ??? Send email to meyersr@uni-muenster.de



Lebenslauf – Kurzfassung

Reinhard Meyers, Jahrgang 1947, studierte Politikwissenschaft, Anglistik, und Geschichte an der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität 1966 – 1970 mit dem Abschluß Magister Artium. Forschungsstipendiat der Wiener Library, London, an der Graduate School of Contemporary European Studies, University of Reading 1970 – 1972 mit dem Abschluß Master of Philosophy.

Wissenschaftlicher Assistent bei Hans-Adolf Jacobsen und Karl-Dietrich Bracher am Seminar für Politikwissenschaft der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität 1972 – 1984. Promotion zum Dr.phil. 1974; Habilitation im Fach Politikwissenschaft 1986; seit 1987 Professor für Internationale Politik und Außenpolitik an der Westfälischen Wilhelms - Universität.



Die Forschungsinteressen galten ursprünglich der Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen und der Sicherheitspolitik im 20. Jahrhundert; daneben trat aber schon vor der Habilitation die Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Lehre von den Internationalen Beziehungen sowie deren Epistemologie, Methodologie und Theorie. Seit den achtziger Jahren wird dieser Schwerpunkt ergänzt durch Arbeiten zur Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, seit den neunziger Jahren auch zur Europapolitik.

Seit 1991 mehrfach Prodekan und Dekan des Fachbereichs Sozialwissenschaften der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität, seit Oktober 1997 Ehrendoktor der Fakultät für Europastudien der Babes-Bolyai Universität Klausenburg. Mitgründer und seit 1993 Mitherausgeber der *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen*. Programmbeauftragter für die internationalen Doppeldiplomstudiengänge mit dem IEP Lille, der BBU Klausenburg (RO) und der Universität Twente (NL)

Hobbies: Industriearchäologie des Transportwesens, italienische Küche



Recommended Literature

Classical Authors of International Relations

1. Adda B. Bozeman : Politics and Culture in International History. From the Ancient Near East to the Opening of the Modern Age. 2. Aufl. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers 1994
2. Hedley Bull: The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics. 3. Aufl. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2002
3. Edward Hallett Carr: The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919 – 1939. An Introduction to the Study of International Relations. 2. Aufl. London: Macmillan 1974
4. Barry Buzan/Richard Little: International Systems in World History. Remaking the Study of International Relations. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000
5. Ernst-Otto Czempiel : Kluge Macht. Außenpolitik für das 21. Jahrhundert. München: C.H. Beck 1999
6. F.H. Hinsley: Power and the Pursuit of Peace. Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P. 1967
7. Karl Kaiser/Hans-Peter Schwarz (Hrsg.): Weltpolitik im neuen Jahrhundert. Baden-Baden: Nomos 2000
8. Werner Link: Die Neuordnung der Weltpolitik. Grundprobleme globaler Politik an der Schwelle zum 21. Jahrhundert. München: C.H. Beck 1998
9. Hans J. Morgenthau: Politics Among Nations. New York: Alfred A. Knopf 1960
10. Edward L. Morse: Modernization and the Transformation of International Relations. New York: Free Press 1976
11. Kenneth N. Waltz: Man, the state and war. A theoretical analysis. New York: Columbia UP 1959
12. Adam Watson: The Evolution of International Society. A comparative historical analysis. London: Routledge 1992
13. Martin Wight: International Theory. The three traditions, ed. Gabriele Wight & Brian Porter. Leicester: Leicester U.P. 1991



Recommended Literature

Biographical Extras:

Kenneth W. Thompson (ed.): Masters of International Thought. Major Twentieth-Century Theorists and the World Crisis. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP 1980

Iver B. Neumann/Ole Wæver (eds.): The Future of International Relations. Masters in the Making ? London: Routledge 1997



Introductions, Overviews and Critiques of IR Theory

- **Dario Battistella: Théories des Relations Internationales. Paris : Presses de Sciences Po 2003**
- **Scott Burchill/Andrew Linklater (eds.): Theories of International Relations. Basingstoke: 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan 2005**
- **James E.Dougherty/Robert L.Pfaltzgraff, Jr.: Contending Theories of International Relations. A comprehensive survey. 5th ed. New York: Longman 2001**
- **Jim George: Discourses of Global Politics: A critical (re)introduction to International Relations. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publ. 1994**
- **Martin Hollis/Steve Smith: Explaining and Understanding International Relations. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990**
- **Charles W.Kegley, Jr. (ed.): Controversies in International Relations Theory. Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge. New York: St. Martin's Press 1996**
- **Gert Krell: Weltbilder und Weltordnung. Einführung in die Theorie der internationalen Beziehungen. 2.Aufl. Baden-Baden: Nomos 2003**
- **Siegfried Schieder/Manuela Spindler (eds.): Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen. Opladen: Leske & Budrich 2003**
- **Steve Smith/Ken Booth/Marysia Zalewski (eds.): International theory: Positivism and beyond. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P. 1996**
- **Cynthia Weber: International Relations Theory. A critical Introduction. London: Routledge 2001**
- **Ngaire Woods (ed.): Explaining International Relations Since 1945. Oxford: Oxford U.P. 1996**

Science

A system of general statements about reality, which are systematically ordered and subject to intersubjective corroboration

On the basis of these statements, science aims at

- ✓ **the prediction of future phenomena and processes**
- ✓ **the choice of concrete options for action from a larger set of possible options**
- ✓ **the legitimation of the actions necessary to put the chosen option into practice**

Basic Concepts I

- **Hypothesis and Explanation**

- **Hypothesis:** conjectural statement about the relationship between two or more variables acting as starting point in an investigation; ideally a tight predictive statement derived deductively from models or other abstract statements and tested empirically against data to see if the event or state predicted actually occurs; of only provisional validity; must be testable by observation or experiment
- **Explanation:** subsumption of an individual case or phenomenon under a general law or a hypothesis; also explanation of a particular event by reference to preceding events

structurally identical with hypotheses. As a general rule, empirically tested hypotheses – or a set of empirically tested hypotheses – are called **laws**.

Example: In his famous dog experiment, Pawlow formulated the hypothesis that under certain experimental conditions one impulse (provision of dog food) can be exchanged for another one (bell tone). After this hypothesis has been positively tested time and again over the years, it has gained the status of a law.

In the social sciences, however, there exists not a single genuine law, because all law-like social scientific statements are limited by **boundary conditions; they only formulate statements of varying degrees of probability**

Basic Concepts III

Theories

are **systems of relative general scientific statements** (or statements of laws connected to each other), which aim at the objection-free explanation of reality. In view of the requirement of generality it is at least doubtful, whether genuine theories exist in social science at all, due to the lack of genuine laws (cf. II above). At present, social research is dominated by **middle-range theories**, which only refer to particular social phenomena in particular societies at particular points in time.

Basic Concepts IV

Axioms

are constitutive elements of each and every theory: basic assumptions, which, as it were, form the foundations of a theory, are regarded as "**evident**" (directly accessible to the human mind) and are no longer questioned by scientists. Axioms are hardly ever made explicit in social science theories. An axiom would e.g. be the assumption of decision-making approaches that human beings behave rationally or that they all have certain interests, which they follow openly or subcutaneously in their political behaviour.

Again: What is a Theory ?

- Theory is "the net which we throw out in order to catch the world - to rationalize, explain, and dominate it."

Karl Popper. Logik der Forschung, 1935: p.26

(The Logic of Scientific Discovery, London: Hutchinson, 1959)

* * *

A good theory should fulfil the following functions:

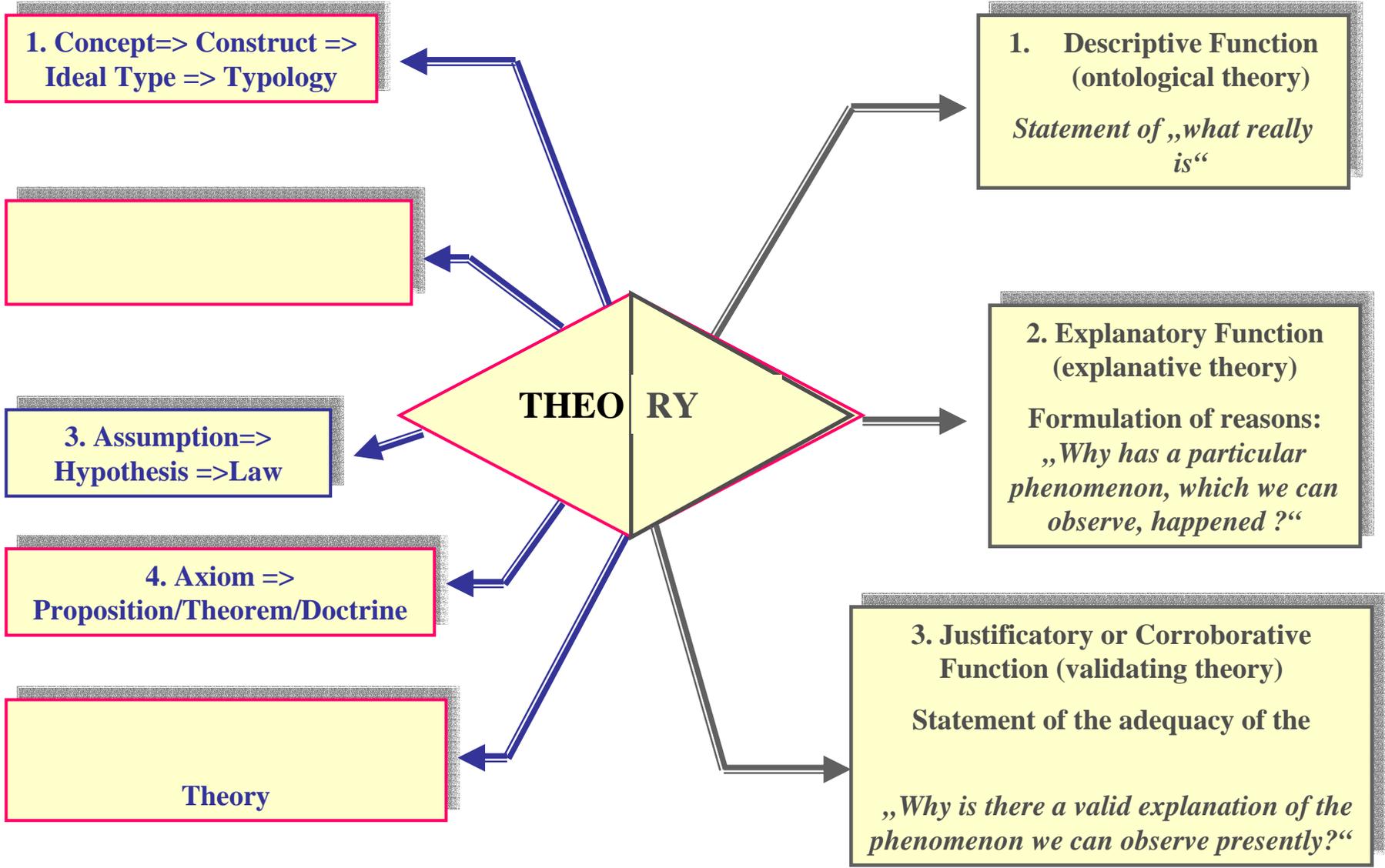
- describe, explain and predict– positive idea of theorizing
- verify and falsify (Popper) - by confronting accumulated knowledge with reality

“No matter how many instances of white swans we may have observed, this does not justify the conclusion that *all* swans are white”.

Karl Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, op. cit.

- enable us to explore, explain, evaluate and extrapolate (Wessels) – four ‘e’ approach
- be internally consistent and coherent

Elements and functions of theory



Functions of Theory

1. Descriptive Function (ontological theory)

Statement of „what really is“

2. Explanatory Function (explanative theory)

Formulation of reasons: „Why has a particular phenomenon, which we can observe, happened?“

3. Justificatory or Corroborative Function (validating theory)

*Statement of the adequacy of the explanation:
„Why is there a valid explanation of the phenomenon we can observe presently?“*

Premiss

social, political – and also academic or scientific – behavior cannot be understood as an immediate reflex reaction to the actual situation to which this behavior refers. Rather, it is formed by the *perception* of a real situation and by the interpretation, i.e. the image, we have of a particular situation – independent of whether the actual situation is in reality formed in the same way as we see and interpret it (Thomas Theorem)

Cognitive Schemata

The image or conception of political, social, or academic „reality“ is not formed or caused by information and experience stemming directly from political phenomena, crises, and conflicts. Rather, these are filtered or transported by political and social interests, experience, and tradition to which the individual perceiving a particular reality is subjected during his political (or social or academic) socialisation process.

Cognitive Schemata II

- **In this process there are formed/formulated notions, images, statements of belief, patterns of behavior, judgments, dispositions, and prejudices – i.e. cognitive schemata – which direct the choice of actual information and define their interpretation and assessment. The importance of these schemata may not the least be seen in the fact that man is, every day, subjected to such a welter and mass of information from his environment, that he would be blocked by information overload if he were not able, by recourse to cognitive schemata, to delimit the potentially endless mass of information, to choose particular items from it, and to order the items so chosen according to specifiable relation patterns.**

Differences of (scientific) world views

Such patterns and schemata are of particular importance in such areas of life which are, like International Relations, not immediately subject to man's everyday practical knowledge. Man's images and conceptions of the political aims and behaviour patterns of his own as well as of all other states form themselves according to perception and interpretation patterns, which are not the same for all mankind, but differ according to the quality, quantity, and intensity of an individual's political socialisation experiences.

Differences of world views II

- **The difference of cognitive schemata and of the perception and information processing processes also implies a difference of individual world views.**
- **In order to afford orientation for action in a society, these differences can be bridged over and/or even overcome by consensus formation: the agreement of a number of individuals to interpret and assess phenomena according to the same criteria, resulting in a common view of the world.**
- **In principle, this process is also the base of scientific knowledge and theory formation: though of course this proceeds in a more abstracting and categorizing, formal-logic manner bound by the criterion of intersubjective control (verification or falsification) of all scientific statements**

Grand Theories of International Relations

In its effort to find answers to extra-scientific political and societal crises and problems, the science of International Relations, over time, has produced a number of different Grand Theories of international politics, which try to grasp its phenomena on the basis of

- different interests of perception/interpretation**
- different sets of questions**
- different anthropological**
- different normative and ethical**
- and different methodological predispositions and presuppositions**

Grand Theories of I.R. II

- **Grand Theories differ in view of their ontological assumptions, i.e. those assumptions referring to the nature of their research objects.**
- **Grand Theories formulate different premisses and assumptions regarding**
 - **the international milieu, i.e. the characteristic outlook, quality, and structure of the environment in which international actors act**
 - **the quality, character, and substance of international actors themselves**
 - **actors' aims and interests and the means which actors, as a rule, use in the fulfillment of their aims and interests.**

Coexistence of Theories, no Revolution

Ever since Thomas S. Kuhn, in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, formulated the assumption that scientific theories and/or paradigms which no longer properly do the job they were invented for will be replaced by an *Ersatz* theory, Social Scientists tried to apply Kuhn's topos of the scientific revolution also to I.R. theory development – particularly so to explain theory development and theory change in I.R. as an inner-scientific process.

Against this, it is my contention that I.R. is not characterised by theoretical revolutions, but rather by theoretical coexistence: theories once formulated in order to explain and help resolve extrascientific crises in society or politics may be relegated to science's theoretical toolbox once they are no longer helpful in a particular situation – but: they are not discarded, they are not replaced by an *Ersatz* theory, but they remain part and parcel of the armoury science keeps ready for problem-solving – and this in the end explains why there are so many I.R. theories about.

Grand Theories and World Views

- **Each and every Grand Theory formulates a characteristic world view of International Relations: Grand Theories and their world views compete with each other without offering science a possibility to decide which of the Grand Theories is the (only) correct representation of international reality.**
- **If it would want to decide this question, science would need an Archimedean point over and beyond the competition of the Grand Theories, which would enable it to establish firm criterias for deciding on the truth or falseness of those premisses on which Grand Theories base their ontological edifice.**
- **This Archimedean point is nowhere in sight !!**

Grand Theories of International Relations

Grand Theory	Actor	Milieu	Structural Principle
Realism	Nation State	World of states as an-archic state of nature	Vertical segmentation, unlimited zero-sum game for power, influence, resources
English School or Rationalism		World of states as legally constituted society	Vertical Segmentation, zero-sum game regulated by norm and agreement
Idealism	Individual	World society as society of individuals and their associations	Universalistic constitution

Grand Theories of International Relations II

Grand Theory	Actor	Milieu	Structural Principle
Interdependency-oriented Globalism	Individual or societal actors	Transnational society	Functional border-crossing networks
Theories of Imperialism	Individual or societal actors representing class interests	International class society	Border-crossing horizontal layering
Dependency oriented Globalism: Dependency Theories and Theories of the Capitalist world system	Societal and national actors representing class interests	World system of Capitalism as layering of metropolises and peripheries	Horizontal layering of national actors in the world system; structural dependence of peripheries on metropolises; structural heterogeneity of peripheries

Perspective Consequences of Different I.R.Theories

	Realism	Pluralism	Structuralism
Main Actors	States	States and non-state societal actors	Societal and national actors representing class interests
Main Problems	International Anarchy Security Dilemma Quest for Power	Transnationalism and Interdependence; no clear hierarchy between issue areas	Exploitation; development of underdevelopment in centre-periphery-relationships
Main Processes	Quest for military and/or economic security; Balance of Power	Bargaining; Management of Problem complexes; change of value hierarchies	Quest for economic dominance
Main Results	War or negative peace	Successful management of complex interdependence	Centre-periphery division of world society; continued exploitation of poor periphery by rich centre

15 mins. Coffee Break !!

