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# Introduction

## Human being(s) in international relations

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*Daniel Jacobi and Annette Freyberg-Inan*

“If they say, Why, why, tell ’em that it’s human nature”<sup>1</sup>  
“The word human is no human.”<sup>2</sup>

### ***Homo absconditus*: in search of the human in world politics**

When John Ruggie formulated his famous question, “What makes the world of international relations hang together?”<sup>3</sup> he responded to a development in International Relations (IR)<sup>4</sup> theory that had started in the 1980s. It saw an unprecedentedly pluralistic string of disputes over the foundations of the discipline which, until then, had been mostly taken for granted. Scholars increasingly challenged persistent core assumptions, for example about the meaning of sovereignty, the teleology of anarchy, or the role of the state.<sup>5</sup> However, up until today, there is one core concept that, while frequently addressed in various guises, has never been explicitly and systematically engaged with at the level of disciplinary debates: the human.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lyrics to the song “Human Nature” performed by Michael Jackson, written by Steve Porcaro and John Bettis.

<sup>2</sup> Niklas Luhmann, “Wie ist Bewußtsein an Kommunikation beteiligt?” in Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung 6: Die Soziologie und der Mensch*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2005), pp. 38–54.

<sup>3</sup> Paraphrasing John Ruggie, “What Makes the World Hang Together?” *International Organization* 52/4 (1998), 855–85.

<sup>4</sup> In the following, “IR” stands for International Relations as an academic discipline, while lowercase “international relations” indicates the empirical domain of study. “IR/ir” is used when reference is made to both domains simultaneously.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46/2 (1992), 391–425; Richard Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique,” *Millennium* 17/2 (1987), 227–62.

<sup>6</sup> Here “the human” is understood as a placeholder for humanity and its (social) scientific conceptualization.

Such neglect of the human in IR theory is odd. After all, it seems that since its inception there has been an unspoken consensus in IR that Ruggie's question might as well read "How do humans make the world of international relations hang together?" That we live in a world made up of and by people seems difficult to refute indeed. Likewise, it is indisputable that world politics could not proceed without humanity. What is more, when we study our disciplinary history, we can quite clearly see how ancestors to classical and contemporary IR theories have passed on notions of the human to their intellectual heirs. Therefore, most IR scholars will readily agree that, beneath whatever else may make IR/ir hang together, there is an undeniable link between humanity and world politics. While some hold that world politics is an entirely human enterprise, others concede that a human element is at least always implied and does "have a hand" in shaping international politics.<sup>7</sup>

However, even in the face of such evidence for humanity's significance to IR/ir, crucial questions remain unanswered. Connected to a range of other issues for disciplinary debate is the concern over what impact the diverse conceptualizations of the human, on which our observations build, have on the study of world politics and, more specifically, what they allow us to say about the politics of humanity, or "human" politics. It is such concerns that motivate the overarching question of the present volume: "*How, why and with which consequences do IR theories (not) deal with the human in the study of world politics?*"

The significance of this question becomes clearer once we further unpack the concern with how and what IR can tell us about humanity in relation to world politics, and vice versa. The question indicates and emphasizes the role of theory. Indeed, our views on humanity and world politics are organized by theory.<sup>8</sup> On a very basic level, our theories are our interpretative matrixes that let us see the world in specific ways. It is through them that we (sub)consciously develop and, moreover, discipline our view(s) on world politics, the human, and the politics of humanity. Hence, the insight that preconceived notions of the human, be they implicit or explicit, will function as axiomatic building blocks in theorizing and critically predetermine theoretical perspectives and, by extension, political dispositions should already compel the discipline's attention.

<sup>7</sup> The "human *element*" neither implies a reference to the natural sciences nor a form of embodiment or essentialism. Rather, it signals that "something about" humanity always finds its way into IR theories.

<sup>8</sup> For a still insightful introduction on the role of theory as an organizing principle in science and everyday life, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 47–128.

Yet, pushing the issue even further, IR must also ask itself whether it actually does humanity a favor by reverting to (concepts of) the human in theorizing world politics – even if it is to be *humane*. This volume, therefore, enquires into our practices of theorizing to examine the human in IR and how it functions in diverse ways as a key part of our disciplinary discourse on world politics.

The human remains a mystery in the scattered disciplinary literatures that theorize it. We have previously opened up the topic in a forum in *International Studies Review*.<sup>9</sup> The present volume is the first attempt to engage with the wide variety of concepts of the human and their role in IR theory in a *general* and *systematic* manner. Previously, there have been quite a few works on various aspects of “man in politics,” usually under the label of human nature. Many of these publications take a broader philosophical view and make no strong connections to IR theory.<sup>10</sup> Closest to the present enterprise is Pami Aalto’s aspiring essay that points out interdisciplinary connections for considering “the human subject in International Studies.”<sup>11</sup> However, already implicit in his particular terminology of the “human (as) subject” is that he observes IR/ir from within a human-centered framework, following what we will call the *anthropological*, as opposed to the *post-anthropological* option of linking humanity and IR/ir.<sup>12</sup> His attempt to “humanize IR” thus takes only one of two basic epistemological possibilities into account. His challenge to existing disciplinary boundaries is posed to buttress existing concepts of the human.

From an opposite perspective, a New Materialism is emerging in IR theory pushing for a *Posthuman International Relations*.<sup>13</sup> In a recent edition of *Millennium*, which summarizes the results of the 2012 *Millennium* conference, this trend is defined by William E. Connolly as

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Jacobi and Annette Freyberg-Inan (eds.), “Forum: Hidden Essentialisms: How Human Nature Assumptions Surreptitiously Shape IR Theory,” *International Studies Review* 14/4 (2012), pp. 645–65.

<sup>10</sup> To be sure, they may present very elaborate conceptualizations of the human. Yet, they mostly fail to point out their merit for and effect on the actual study of world politics.

<sup>11</sup> Pami Aalto, “The Human Subject in International Studies: An Outline for Interdisciplinary Programmes,” in Vilho Harle and Sami Moisio (eds.), *International Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 178–203. The essay is recommended reading, as in his literature review Aalto pays particular attention to those (new) IR literatures that sit on the margins of a (trans)disciplinary discourse. He thus fills in many of the gaps left in our upcoming history of the human in IR which, here, has to be painted in broad strokes.

<sup>12</sup> The heuristic distinction between anthropological and post-anthropological approaches will be further elaborated at the end of this section.

<sup>13</sup> Following the title of the book by Erika Cudworth and Stephen Hobden, *Posthuman International Relations* (London: Zed Books, 2011). On the difficulty of labeling these approaches, see William E. Connolly, “The ‘New Materialism’ and the Fragility of Things,” *Millennium* 41/3 (2013), 402.

a series of movements in several fields that criticise anthropocentrism, rethink subjectivity by playing up the role of inhuman forces within the human, emphasize the self-organizing powers of several nonhuman processes, explore dissonant relations between those processes and cultural practice, rethink the sources of ethics, and commend the need to fold a planetary dimension more actively and regularly into studies of global, interstate and state politics.<sup>14</sup>

However, with regard to a systematic discussion of the human in IR/ir, these perspectives exclusively operate from within a framework that de-centers the human, following what we will call the *post-anthropological*, as opposed to the *anthropological* option of linking humanity and IR/ir. Consequently, these approaches also limit themselves to only one of two basic epistemological possibilities of theorizing the human.

Close to our own work, albeit adopting a broader political science perspective, is a forward-looking volume edited by Ian Forbes and Steve Smith, which has inspired the way in which we have set up our own IR-focused investigation. Especially noteworthy here is the attempt to show how a specific concept of the human “may be used to hide untestable and highly controversial assumptions, which then, by intervention of a concept of human nature, critically affect conclusions and prescriptions.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in a more general methodological contribution, Donald Moon reveals much about the role of “models of man” in the *Logic of Political Inquiry*.<sup>16</sup> Finally, from a historical perspective and in an attempt to reconcile IR and political theory, David Boucher has studied the role of human nature assumptions in classical *Political Theories of International Relations*.<sup>17</sup>

Other works examine concepts of the human only for specific IR schools of thought, most often realism.<sup>18</sup> The remaining titles typically

<sup>14</sup> Connolly, “The ‘New Materialism,’” 399.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Forbes and Steve Smith (eds.), *Politics and Human Nature* (London: Frances Pinter, 1983), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Donald Moon, “The Logic of Political Inquiry: A Synthesis of Opposed Perspectives,” in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), vol. I, pp. 131–228.

<sup>17</sup> David Boucher, *Political Theories of International Relations* (London: Oxford, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> For example, Annette Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man: The Realist Theory of International Relations and Its Judgment of Human Nature* (New York: SUNY Press, 2004); Jim George, “Realist Ethics, International Relations, and Postmodernism: Thinking beyond the Egoism-Anarchy Thematic,” *Millennium* 24/2 (1995), 195–223; Michael Loriaux, “The Realists and Saint Augustine: Skepticism, Psychology, and Moral Action in International Relations Thought,” *International Studies Quarterly* 36/4 (1992), 401–20. Other works touch on human nature assumptions as part of a more general assessment of realism. See, e.g., Stefano Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1998). Yet other works focus on the human nature arguments of specific theorists or streams in the realist tradition [most commonly on Hobbes, e.g. Cornelia Navari, “Hobbes and the ‘Hobbesian Tradition’ in International Thought,” *Millennium* 11/3 (1982), 203–22].

exhibit a narrow focus on the human, usually in connection with a specific aspect of its species being or issue area such as gender,<sup>19</sup> foreign policy,<sup>20</sup> or war.<sup>21</sup> In between there have been a few articulate but nevertheless scattered calls for a more thorough investigation of our concepts of the human.<sup>22</sup> It is quite telling that the most recent such calls appeared within the framework of a tribute to the work of Kenneth Waltz.<sup>23</sup> Appeals to (re)connect with the human element tend to follow like pendulum swings upon assertions of structuralism. Around the same time, the *Journal of International Relations and Development* devoted a symposium to ideas on human nature, their place in the history of the discipline in general as well as in realism and liberalism in particular, and the role granted to emotions.<sup>24</sup> Since then we can observe a growing interest in the theorization of select aspects of (social) psychology, usually under the heading of emotions and the relevance of quests for respect, recognition, or status.<sup>25</sup> The human seems to be coming increasingly back into IR, but as of yet systematic and broad treatments of the diversity of ways in which this can and does occur are lacking. Here is where the current volume makes its contribution.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Francis Fukuyama, "Women and the Evolution of World Politics," *Foreign Affairs* 77/5 (1998), 24–40.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Michael Young and Mark Schafer, "Is There Method in Our Madness? Ways of Assessing Cognition in International Relations," *Mershon International Studies Review* 42/1 (1998), 63–96; Valerie M. Hudson, "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1/1 (2005), 1–30.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Stephen Peter Rosen, *War and Human Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Ken Booth, "75 Years On: Rewriting the Subject's Past – Reinventing Its Future," in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 338.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Brown, "Structural Realism, Classical Realism and Human Nature," *International Relations* 23/2 (2009), 257–70; Neta C. Crawford, "Human Nature and World Politics: Rethinking 'Man,'" *International Relations* 23/2 (2009), 271–88.

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, "Lamarckian with a Vengeance: Human Nature and American International Relations Theory," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9/3 (2006), 227–46; Annette Freyberg-Inan, "Rational Paranoia and Enlightened Machismo: The Strange Psychological Foundations of Realism," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9/3 (2006), 247–68; Rodney Bruce Hall, "Human Nature as Behaviour and Action in Economics and International Relations Theory," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9/3 (2006), 269–87; Jon Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs," *International Organization* 64/4 (2010), 1–31. On the motivation for the symposium, see Stefano Guzzini, "Note by the Editors. Symposium: The Return of Human Nature in IR Theory?" *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9/3 (2006), 225.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., the 2013 ECPR Joint Sessions Workshop "Status Claims, Recognition, and Emotions in IR" as well as the growing number of conference submissions on these themes.

We begin from the observation that, in theorizing humanity and world politics, two basic epistemological options emerge.<sup>26</sup> Both may account for a human element in IR/ir, yet they do so from very different angles. One proceeds by theoretically translating humanity into models of human being(s), seeking to infuse IR theory with accounts of what human beings are like, and what this might mean for how world politics unfold. Such accounts can be inductively or deductively derived, but the basic impulse is empiricist and essentializing. They also tend to be universalist and determinist, inasmuch as IR theory is rarely made contingent on different human types or contexts.

The second basic option is to attempt to capture the mutual implication of humanity and world politics with concepts that forego reference to human being(s). The impulse behind such, typically recent, approaches is anti-essentializing and anti-determinist. If at all, humans here do not figure as “whole beings” but rather as agents, actors, or other conceptual entities alongside other, nonhuman members of the same or related categories. Particularly agency and intentionality are dispersed and decoupled from essential aspects of the human, while they may remain related to essential aspects of *humanity* in the form of collective phenomena. Such theorizing still addresses humanity and human being(s) in IR/ir, but it does so in ways which, (meta)theoretically and typically also epistemologically, are fundamentally different from the more traditional first option. To emphasize the contrast through labeling, we might say that IR either studies world politics through an *anthropological* lens that places the human at the center of its observation or through a *post-anthropological* one that chooses to de-center the human to different extents.

This categorical reduction calls for three essential caveats. One, this distinction is used as a heuristic device only. It does not invoke classical dialectics in the sense of a binary to be synthesized into a “superior” unity. To the contrary, as a symmetric distinction it constitutes a difference under which neither side can be reduced to the other while both assume shape only against the other.<sup>27</sup> We find this distinction to be a productive starting point as it draws attention to what is in- and excluded when theorizing world politics from either side and, in doing so, enables the

<sup>26</sup> That is unless we choose to exclude humanity from our studies, i.e. we literally ignore our existence. One may very well forego notions of the human from an *analytical* perspective. However, a negation of its (co-)implication in the empirical phenomena composing world politics seems absurd.

<sup>27</sup> Claiming a post-anthropological perspective without the alternative of a (non)anthropological one makes no sense. Yet, while working “within” either one perspective, scholars tend to block out the respective alternative. Within the overall framework of the volume, the heuristic thus acts as a failsafe against such blind spots.

volume to say more about the productivity and effects of possible theoretical relations of the human and world politics than either of the two perspectives can standing alone.<sup>28</sup> Two, this distinction, then, does not imply that world politics only occurs either with or without humanity. Rather, it directs attention toward the *analytical angles* scholars use to study either one or both. Three, semantically, the term “anthropology” does not refer to the scholarly fields of Political Anthropology or Ethnology. Instead, its intended meaning is found in its etymological roots in Greek, a combination of the terms *ánthropos* (man) and *lógos* (study). Hence, “anthropology” means the study of world politics via a human-centered framework whereas “post-anthropology” implies a reaction to anthropological approaches that draws away from such frameworks.

From both sides of this fault line, the contributors to this volume are united in the quest to understand how, why, and to which ends the human has been or must (not) be built into IR theories, how we hence come to see world politics, and how such theoretical moves impact on the position and significance assigned to humanity in world politics. We therefore further reflexively tweak the preceding reformulation of Ruggie’s question, to read: “How do notions of ‘the human’ make the world of IR/ir hang together?” The contributors to this volume set out to reveal conceptions of humanity and human being(s) across the spectrum of IR theory, their promotion and dismissal, and in this way bring to light the discipline’s *homo absconditus*, the mystery of the human in IR/ir.<sup>29</sup> They do so by exposing attempts to discipline and reify views of the human in IR, breaking them open, comparing them to possible alternatives, and discussing their theoretical and practical consequences.

To prepare us for such an enquiry, this introduction proceeds as follows: first, we further explicate the relevance of a systematic reflection on the role of the human in IR. We then take a closer look at how the human has been implicitly or explicitly addressed in IR theorizing to date. From this discussion we extract some of the core challenges for theorizing the human in/and world politics from here on, based on which, in turn, we develop the rationale for the organization of the volume and provide an overview of its contributions.

<sup>28</sup> Note that in Chapter 6, Ned Lebow sets out to circumvent this distinction while Jan Passoth and Nick Rowland in Chapter 14 want to “test its outer limits.” Yet, this only goes to show the productivity of this heuristic: by reflexively flagging its boundaries, it also marks the entry points for alternative routes of debate.

<sup>29</sup> We are borrowing from Plessner only the term, not his theoretical inclinations; see Helmuth Plessner, “Homo absconditus,” in Günter Dux et al. (eds.), *Helmuth Plessner, Gesammelte Schriften VIII: Conditio humana* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983), pp. 356–66.



## The relevance of studying the human in IR

Self-reflection not only is a trait commonly attributed to humans, it also makes up for a major part of disciplinary proceedings. In IR, there has been at least a co-equal amount of commentary on how such self-reflection serves the attainment and consolidation of scientific prestige and distracts scholars from so-called real-world challenges and the achievement of knowledge. While this accusation may not be entirely unfounded, exposing and debating our analytical tools with regard to concepts of the human does not imply yet another autistic intradisciplinary debate.

IR and ir are joined at the hip, and a thorough discussion of our concepts of the human must not only account for their field-specific logics but also for their inextricable linkages and mutual influences: IR reflects (on) ir and ir in turn imports these reflections. The following section therefore merely *starts* from an intradisciplinary perspective by further developing and justifying the previous section's thesis that IR needs to examine its theoretical accounts of the human. The view will then expand to further substantiate the relevance of a study of the human by including perspectives on the human in the domains of world politics and science and acknowledging how they affect IR theorizing. The last part will then look at the broader public debate on the human and the role of IR within it.

### *Concepts of the human in IR theory*

As already indicated in the first section of this introduction, concepts of the human are clearly pivotal for much of IR theorizing. There is a broad, historically grown consensus that the world is a human world and that world politics is thus a human domain. Hence, to most scholars it does seem impossible to explain world politics without making at least implicit assumptions about the human. After all, without such assumptions it seems difficult to explain why our bodies move at all, let alone to account for their direction or resistance to societal pressures.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, in IR, the human appears in manifold terminological shapes and forms: as actor, agent, subject, individual, person, body/being, self, mind, psyche, and so forth.

Probably the most prominent but also most notorious placeholder to account for the human in world politics, however, must be "human nature." The concept itself and its history impress on us the need to

<sup>30</sup> Paraphrasing Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 131.

scrutinize our concepts of the human. Like many of the previously listed concepts, human nature describes particular qualities of the human (as) being which are believed to be relevant to the attempted study of world politics. There is not one but many underlying concepts of human nature under foot in IR, and “different conceptions of human nature lead to different views about what we ought to do and how we can do it, because they amount to world views that claim not just intellectual assent but practical action.”<sup>31</sup> However, scholars often use these conceptions *implicitly* and do not substantiate them through empirical evidence or philosophical argument. Due to their typical implicitness, they are not only a “conceptual bedrock for socio-political discourse,” but also an “untestable bedrock of many theories of politics.”<sup>32</sup> As a result, quite frequently, such conceptions survive while representing only a highly “selective observation of human behaviour, which is then amplified into a selective description of the world and how to study it.”<sup>33</sup>

Notably, while the explicit use of a human nature concept typically indicates an anthropological (as opposed to post-anthropological) take on the human and/in IR, (implicit) concepts of human nature or the human are manifest in both foundationalist and post-foundationalist IR scholarship. Although the concept of human nature employed in realism has received the most scrutiny in the past years,<sup>34</sup> concepts of the human are not only engrained in realist theories but lurk “behind the curtains of all other IR theoretical perspectives.”<sup>35</sup>

As much as the human seems pivotal to IR theorizing, it is interesting to note that there seems to be no agreement as to what empirical unit(y) exactly the human as a concept may denote. The myriad of available concepts shows that even among those who put the human at the center, not much conceptual cohesion exists. The human as a concept thus has become problematic unto itself. Meanwhile, inasmuch as humanity, in the broadest sense, is still postulated to be at the heart of political

<sup>31</sup> Sterling-Folker, “Lamarckian with a Vengeance,” 230.

<sup>32</sup> Steve Smith, “Introduction,” in Forbes and Smith (eds.), *Politics and Human Nature*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Sterling-Folker, “Lamarckian with a Vengeance,” 229. Donald Moon already argued more broadly in the 1970s that “[u]nfortunately, it cannot be said that most theories in political science are based on clear, well-articulated images of man. On the contrary, the fundamental conceptions of human rationality, purposes, sociality, etc., tend to be left vague and inarticulate, and all too often they are shifted as one moves from one context to another” (*The Logic of Political Inquiry*, p. 194).

<sup>34</sup> For example, Freyberg-Inan, *What Moves Man*; Brown, “Structural Realism, Classical Realism and Human Nature”; Robert Schuett, *Political Realism, Freud, and Human Nature in International Relations: The Resurrection of the Realist Man* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Sterling-Folker, “Lamarckian with a Vengeance,” 230.

processes,<sup>36</sup> underlying ideas of the human remain powerful conceptual aspects in the (re)construction of theories of world politics.

The first reason for the relevance of scrutinizing our concepts of the human in this volume is, then, that we have so far lacked any structured debates which could expose IR's underlying ideas of the human and their consequences. The still dominant mainstream view that most concepts of the human are either analytically insignificant or dangerously reifying, and thus need to be sidestepped,<sup>37</sup> represents part of the problem rather than a solution. The still mostly unreflective use of these clearly vital concepts dangerously promotes theories that contain unspoken (political) implications and prevent accountable analyses of world politics.

### *Concepts of the human in world politics and science*

The relevance of the study of concepts of the human becomes even more obvious once we leave the narrow confines of IR theory behind and broaden our view to world politics. Here, the above-mentioned notion that the human obviously holds a focal point but at the same time seems to be open to contention clearly resonates. The concept of human security and, by extension, the responsibility to protect stand out as particularly evocative examples of a contemporary focus on the human and its highly contested consequences.<sup>38</sup> After all, the concept of human security features no less than a rereading of security through the human as a referent object, rather than through the state or its capabilities. What is more, this perspective comes with a specific understanding of what being human entails and what humans are – embodied individuals and moreover persons. Without a doubt, the invoked notions of individuality and personhood come with a long history in Western (political) thought. It is therefore not surprising that, for example, the dispute over the enforcement of human rights through intervention is led most intensely with regard to those regions with arguably different concepts of the human, of individuality, of what constitutes personhood and of what is hence in need of protection.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For a recent appropriation, see Mary Ann Tétreault and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Global Politics As If People Mattered* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), p. 183: “[I]t is the social individual who is at the heart of global politics and, indeed, is both its architect and building block.”

<sup>37</sup> Sterling-Folker, “Lamarckian with a Vengeance,” 230.

<sup>38</sup> The concept was introduced via the United Nations Human Development Report 1994, see: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/chapters/> [last accessed November 7, 2013].

<sup>39</sup> Stephan Stetter and Jochen Walter, “Let’s Play the Game of Human Rights: The Constitution of Global Political Order and the Rise of Individual Actorhood in World Society,” unpublished manuscript (2013).

On a similar note, the contemporary scientific discourse about the “future of human nature”<sup>40</sup> seems to imply closure when it actually promotes a further blurring of concepts of the human and their implications. It does so on two levels. For one, the debate is expressing an overabundance of ideas on how the human may be (re)shaped in impossibly quick succession, making it difficult to oversee what these ideas may actually mean for the future of being human in general and a politics of humanity in particular. More importantly for IR, however, the debate is dominated by the life sciences and their vocabulary, which are increasingly seeping into our discipline as well. In reaction, the contributions of Chris Brown, Duncan Bell and Ned Lebow in this volume (Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively) all critically tackle different implications of the way in which the emergence of the life sciences as lead sciences impact on IR.

The political debate on the rapidly progressing research on genetics as well as the neuro-scientific quest for evolutionary and psycho-biological correlates of social conditions has begun to exert influence on the (re)interpretation of IR’s core concepts. For many scholars, it already seems to easily mix with our own approaches.<sup>41</sup> Yet, even though it may indeed provide “productive analogies,”<sup>42</sup> such an optimistic embrace should be met with caution. For one, the life sciences do not represent a unified field and themselves have yet to fully reflect upon their own basic categories and vocabularies.<sup>43</sup> IR scholars usually know little about the controversies within those fields. This renders the choice of material to be imported into IR rather problematic.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, as impressive as the findings of the life sciences may seem, we must not forget that they are still always to a large extent socially “co-constructed” and transported via language and communication, which is shot through with sociality rather than “scientific objectivity.”<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Crawford, “Human Nature and World Politics.” For recent illustrations of the quick rise of biological approaches in the study of political behavior see, e.g., Peter K. Hatemi and Rose McDermott, “A Neurobiological Approach to Foreign Policy Analysis: Identifying Individual Differences in Political Violence,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 8 (2012), 111–29, or the special issue on “The Political Psychology of Biology, Genetics and Behavior,” *Political Psychology* 33/3 (2012).

<sup>42</sup> Steven Bernstein et al., “God Gave Physics the Easy Problems: Adapting Social Science to an Unpredictable World,” *European Journal of International Relations* 6/1 (2000), 43.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Janich, *Kein neues Menschenbild: Zur Sprache der Hirnforschung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., John G. Gunnell, “Are We Losing Our Minds? Cognitive Science and the Study of Politics,” *Political Theory* 25/6 (2007), 704–31.

<sup>45</sup> Karin Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Secondly, for IR theorizing there lies real danger in the unreflective import of the foreign vocabulary as such. A cursory look at some of the problems that were historically created for the social sciences by an unreflective use of concepts such as “race” and “gender” suggests the potential consequences. What is at stake here is ultimately the sustainability of our insight into the social quality of political reality, and with it the extent to which humanity may indeed be the maker of its own fate – an insight which IR has spent considerable effort developing over the past two decades. Unreflective conceptual imports from the life sciences hold the danger of yet another form of blunt materialism, this time not based on military, economic, or other such capabilities but on bio-physical foundations. The somatization of, for example, knowledge, inter-subjectivity and decision-making processes challenges, among other key disciplinary findings, our concepts of freedom and agency and thus (political) accountability as well as responsibility. While these concepts themselves are of course far from undisputed, reducing them to neuro-physiological correlates seems a drastic reduction and capitulation, given the complex and advanced level of debate on these concepts and their implications in IR as well as broader political scientific and philosophical discourse.

The second reason why we need to study our concepts of the human is, then, that we must grapple with the fact that the human has also come under scrutiny to different degrees in world politics and science. As IR's reflective theory, IR must critically observe the debordering of concepts of the human and with it the proliferation of its politics, rather than merely mirroring this reality, for example via the import of suggestive yet inappropriate vocabularies.

#### *IR and the political discourse on the human*

Turning tables one last time, we need to keep reminding ourselves of the even broader political discourse in which IR is embedded. It includes a nonacademic audience that is, nevertheless, always to a certain extent informed by academic knowledge production.

While different and contestable concepts of the human have impact on our everyday lives, it seems safe to say that most people have largely subconscious ideas about *what man is* or *how the world is*. It is usually only in more abstract debates connected to, for example, theology, philosophy, or science that concepts of the human are being consciously formulated, negotiated, and pushed for. It is such debates, and in modernity particularly the field of science in a broader sense, to which world

view entrepreneurs refer for support when they try to promote, justify, and fortify their positions.<sup>46</sup>

Given the fact that “[the] social power of a theory has never depended on a detailed or correct understanding by its interpreters” and that “some ideas are more susceptible to hijacking and abuse than others,”<sup>47</sup> there always exists a very real danger that IR knowledge may be used to legitimize the implementation of questionable political agendas.<sup>48</sup> IR scholars then cannot evade interdisciplinary and public discourses on the human in ir. After all, our area of expertise – the international – is the arena in which a plethora of heterogeneous agencies negotiate the possibilities to alter our social and political environments as well as the physical and psychological make-up of humanity. The third reason why we must study our concepts of the human is, then, that as a public science, IR must hold itself to high standards of accountability and responsibility. It needs reflexive concepts of the human to be able to speak substantiated truth to power (rather than only catering legitimation and communication resources to it). Again, this also implies that even if scholars want to promote a *humane* politics, they must examine whether this also necessitates an anthropocentric framework.

As a conclusion to this section of the introduction, we can summarize that if assumptions about humans and their properties are ultimately normative judgments about why and how the world works as it does,<sup>49</sup> and those assumptions are not spelled out, they will inevitably obscure and undermine the study of world politics. Consequently, we can neither ignore the questions raised by contemporary international debates on the human nor can we enter them without prior reflection on the vocabulary and concepts we use to speak of humanity and/in world politics. If concepts of the human are indeed deeply embedded in our everyday world views as well as scientific theories, and if facts and values cannot be neatly distinguished, it seems all the more crucial to promote theoretical and conceptual reflexivity as a necessary antidote against the mere stock-taking exercises and tendency to analyze particular cases and types which too much of IR has been content with for too long.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See Günter Dux, “Die Natur des Menschen und die Weltanschauung unserer Zeit,” in Walter Kasper (ed.), *Unser Wissen vom Menschen* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1979), pp. 52–80.

<sup>47</sup> Duncan Bell, “Beware of False Prophets: Biology, Human Nature and the Future of International Relations Theory,” *International Affairs* 82/3 (2006), 506.

<sup>48</sup> Harking back to the previous subsection, this is all the more problematic if the appeal of that knowledge is merely based on legitimacy borrowed from other sciences.

<sup>49</sup> Paraphrasing Bell, “Beware of False Prophets,” 239.

<sup>50</sup> For example, debating *homo oeconomicus* or *sociologicus* or pitting them against each other.

### **(Un)covering the human in International Relations theory**

The previous sections have established that IR does not sufficiently reflect on its concepts of the human and their consequences, even though they hold a key position in theorizing humanity and world politics. This section will thus delve deeper into how different IR theories have built a human element into their architectures. The focus will be on the question which placeholders are chosen to address the human element and, given the aforementioned divide between anthropological and post-anthropological perspectives, on explicating the extent to which essentialized notions of the human take center stage. We aim here in the introduction to provide first a historical overview that will then be complemented and enlarged upon by the individual chapters in this volume, which go on to provide in-depth analysis of the different concepts of the human and their implications in different bodies of theory.

Conceptualizations of the human in our field are as old as IR theorizing itself.<sup>51</sup> Commonly referred to as the founding constellation of IR as a discipline, the experience of World War I impelled a group of practitioners and scholars, including Woodrow Wilson and Norman Angell,<sup>52</sup> to present their vision of international politics, which was based on a particular concept of the human. Firmly embedded in the tradition of a liberal anthropology, as discussed by Steven Rosow as well as Jennifer Sterling-Folker and Jason Charrette in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively, they conceptualized humans as individual beings striving for happiness with ideally as little interference from others as possible. Equipped with reason, these humans were conceived to be at least potentially able to tame any dark side of their character and to pursue freedom, liberty, and equality as citizens. While stressing the importance of international institutions to accomplish shared goals, liberals particularly emphasized the foundational role of the individual in bringing these social forms about.<sup>53</sup> The constitutional state and international law were among the most notable political notions that received renewed impetus based on this particular conceptualization of the human.

<sup>51</sup> On the pros and cons of different histories and historiographies of IR, see Brian C. Schmidt, "On the History and Historiography of International Relations," in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 3–22.

<sup>52</sup> Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009 [1910]).

<sup>53</sup> For a well-known contemporary example, see Andrew Moravcsik, "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics," *International Organization* 51/4 (1997), 513–53.

However, the experience of a second world war within less than a quarter century promoted the views of a different group of scholars. They stood opposed to those of the former and brought a different concept of the human to the fore. While Edward Hallett Carr set the tone when he molded their formative historical experience into his now famous book title,<sup>54</sup> it was arguably the work of Hans Morgenthau that most prominently reformulated ideas of how the human should be studied in world politics. Influenced by other contemporaries and a long-standing tradition of pessimism about human malleability, Morgenthau preserved an anthropological lens and explicitly conceptualized the human in terms of human nature.<sup>55</sup> Understood as one site of its manifestation, politics could consequently be defined as “governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.”<sup>56</sup>

While still tied to society, politics could be conceived of as an autonomous sphere distinguished by uncertainty and unpredictability which, in turn, called for a particular understanding of (the tragedy of) statecraft in terms of the tension between ethics and *raison d'état*. While the implicit contingencies of political decision making partially de-centered the human, Morgenthau nevertheless based his theory on the dark side of political man as self-centered and power hungry. The concept of *animus domandi* allowed for the heuristic move to elect power as the entry point for an analysis of world politics. For Morgenthau, it was clear that those human drives which could not be fully lived out in society, the drives for prestige and self-validation, had to be projected onto the (implicitly asocial) international sphere. In line with perspectives of intellectual forefathers such as Machiavelli, this view of man could indeed be considered *realist* insofar as it demanded a look at humans and politics as they *are* and not what they *could be*, while, however, simultaneously pushing a particular, pessimistic image of human nature.<sup>57</sup>

Whereas the post-World War II period saw an early relegation of the explicitly anthropological approach within Kenneth Waltz's framework, which theoretically organized world politics into different levels or

<sup>54</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964 [1939]).

<sup>55</sup> It may be worth noting the often overlooked fact that Morgenthau conceived of “a pluralistic conception of human nature.” Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 15. The pessimist/ optimist distinction here serves a heuristic purpose. On Morgenthau see also the chapter by Freyberg-Inan, in this volume.

<sup>56</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Morgenthau, however, did not derive any teleological understanding of international politics from this notion.



“images,”<sup>58</sup> the era until the 1970s was nevertheless mostly shaped by a prolonged prominence of the individual as the theoretical placeholder for an anthropocentric perspective on world politics. However, in line with IR’s embrace of behavioralism, perceptions of what individuals were made of, i.e. how they needed to be studied in order to deliver insights on world politics, changed considerably. Up until the end of the Second World War, IR scholars were mostly trained in history, political philosophy, or international law, but the following generation adopted many principles of the natural sciences, including a particular methodological toolkit. Married to different versions of a positivist philosophy of science and methodological individualism, the movement was still “interested in determining the consequences of individual political behavior for the functioning of political institutions.”<sup>59</sup> However, it concerned itself predominantly with observable and ideally even quantifiable behavior; “looking inside individuals” was considered to be metaphysics. To interpret observable aspects of her object of study, the positivist IR scholar nonetheless had to rely on auxiliary constructions. Hence, the human was reformulated as a rational, self-interest-maximizing individual actor with fixed identity and interests that could be expressed in the form of expected utilities. Most importantly, while methodological individualism proposed that “collectivities do not exist apart from the conduct of their individual members,”<sup>60</sup> IR nevertheless witnessed a continual and serious blurring of the concepts of individuals as agents and states as agents – and hence of the relationship between them.<sup>61</sup>

In this context, two noteworthy theoretical efforts emerged that, while not rejecting an anthropological angle, nevertheless resisted the previously described turn toward a method-driven reformulation of the human and instead subscribed to anti-behavioralism. One was Political Psychology, a transdiscipline that overlaps with IR and Foreign Policy Analysis. While not all its proponents divorced themselves from behavioralism, they nevertheless reopened the black box of the psyche to study the relevance of (social) psychological factors such as beliefs, attitudes,

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). David Singer even went on to omit the Waltzian first image, i.e. the image accounting for the individual/ human; see Aalto, “The Human Subject,” 181.

<sup>59</sup> Heinz Eulau, “Political Behavior,” in David L. Sills and Robert K. Merton (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), vol. XII, p. 205.

<sup>60</sup> Eulau, “Political Behavior,” 205.

<sup>61</sup> See Patrick T. Jackson et al., “Forum on the State as a Person,” *Review of International Studies* 30/2 (2004), 255–316; and Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

emotion, personality and leadership styles, or group dynamics.<sup>62</sup> Annette Freyberg-Inan's Chapter 1 in this volume draws on such an approach in its analysis of the mind frame of realist IR. The other alternative was the English School that, while broadly sharing the realist concept of anarchy, unlike realism conceptualized the human as a subject.<sup>63</sup> In line with the logic of classical liberal thought, this subject was conceived to be an autonomous being that acts on her own volition. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, as discussed by Steven Rosow in Chapter 2, this subject internalized the rules of a quasi-natural liberal order, thus supporting that order's global spread even as it may conflict with its own autonomy.

In the 1970s, in spite of these alternative efforts, the behaviorist revolution nevertheless furthered the reinterpretation of realism and liberalism based on an even stronger embrace of an anthropocentric position, now in the shape of economic models. This, once again, made the role of the human crucial even as it tended to obscure it. Particularly in neorealism, the idea of the separability of facts and values seemed to no longer leave room for human judgment or morality.<sup>64</sup> The assumed "objective dangers" of world politics analytically translated into a focus shift toward the dictates of the international system, i.e. the third image. However, contrary to what its proponents claimed, this did not remove or even de-center but rather conceal the human. While the human had been demoted to the first image, the pressure of the now dominant third image was exerted onto the second image, the state. However, the latter had already been increasingly anthropomorphized and now carried the features of a person endowed with a range of essentialized human traits, needs, and even emotions, such as violence, survival, and fear. Hence, as discussed by Freyberg-Inan in this volume, the pessimistic concept of the human, previously submerged in human nature and the individual, crept right back into the theory. At the same time, its theory-architectural concealment based on the idea of an objective science centered on structural imperatives successfully removed any normative implications from the purview of an open discussion.

During the same period, neoliberal institutionalism came to share many core assumptions with neorealism: the significance of anarchy, the state-as-person model, as well as a foundation in rational choice

<sup>62</sup> See Rose McDermott, *Political Psychology in International Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004) for an excellent overview.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Martin Wight, "Why Is There No International Theory?" *International Relations* 2/1 (1960), pp. 35–48; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

<sup>64</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Addison Wesley, 1979).

theory. Nevertheless, contrary to neorealists, liberal institutionalists projected the classical liberal anthropology of man onto this framework. This brought into relatively stronger focus the cooperative dimension of world politics, compared to the conflictual. Yet, while this stance also brought societal groups, made up of individuals, as well as their possible influence back into the picture, their shared focus on how to interpret politics under the condition of anarchy and commitment to rationalism created a resemblance between the conceptualizations and properties of the human in both approaches. Humans were modeled as rational, their various identities as marginal to world politics, and their relevant interests as largely identical and stable. Not surprisingly, the discussions between neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists in the so-called neo-neo debate focused on but a few aspects of the human, most notably the boundedness of rationality and its implications for the likelihood of cooperation.<sup>65</sup> Underlying, potentially contrasting views of the human and their roots in the theories' rather different philosophical traditions were, strikingly, excluded from the debate.

It took until the late 1980s for a strong and still resonant critique of the rationalist mode of theorizing the human to be formulated. Among other aspects, critics pointed out that individualist as well as holist structural theories, particularly neorealism and world-systems theory, paid too little attention to the "relation of system structures to human agents."<sup>66</sup> The critique was presented as an elaboration of the so-called agent-structure problem for IR and concurrently heralded a "social turn" in the discipline. It prompted an increasing import of social theory to IR, consequently introducing a new approach to the study of world politics labeled "constructivism."<sup>67</sup> With it, numerous fresh or reformulated concepts such as norms, ideas, and identities entered into the discipline's

<sup>65</sup> For a summary, see Steven L. Lamy, "Contemporary Mainstream Approaches: Neorealism and Neo-liberalism," in John Baylis et al. (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The debate was also labeled "neo-neo synthesis," referring to what many criticized as a strategic truce facilitated by the relative closeness of the two approaches in order to fortify their shared academic hegemony; see Ole Wæver, "The Rise and Fall of the Inter-Paradigm Debate," in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 149–85. For an interesting reassessment of this debate, see Filippo Andreatta and Mathias Koenig-Archibugi, "Which Synthesis? Strategies of Theoretical Integration and the Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate," *International Political Science Review* 31/2 (2010), 207–27.

<sup>66</sup> Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41/3 (1987), 335–70.

<sup>67</sup> Stefano Guzzini, "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 6/2 (2000), 147–82.

vocabulary along with the promise to enable a better study of the “human quality” of world politics. Unfortunately, rather than exposing and breaking open the many underlying conceptualizations of the human in IR or even offering a post-anthropological approach to world politics, many scholars merely “poured the newly emerging patterns of thought into the old framework.”<sup>68</sup> As discussed by Samuel Barkin in Chapter 7 in this volume, the extent to which they had really emancipated themselves from preceding approaches was often questionable. Hence, in the ensuing agent-structure debate, it was and is often unclear how exactly individual scholars (dis)agree(d) on rationalism, the human, or either’s role in theorizing.<sup>69</sup>

Three core topics in the agent-structure debate stand out with regard to their relevance for conceptualizing the human in IR: first, the “nature” of agents and structure and their interrelationship; second, the different modes of investigation required to study agents and structures;<sup>70</sup> third, the inquiry into agency and how it may (not) align with the human (agent) – the most under-theorized aspect of the problematic. There has been little explicit discussion of the properties of agents, who may be considered an agent, how one may attain agency or personhood, or whether and how agents are distinct from actors. This is particularly evident in the still mostly unreflective use of the concept of the state as an agent<sup>71</sup> – or sometimes actor – which is endowed with personhood, i.e. a human-like self and addressability.<sup>72</sup> As innovative an impulse as it was, as stressed by Oliver Kessler in Chapter 13, to date the agent-structure

<sup>68</sup> Colin Wight, “Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations,” in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), p. 40.

<sup>69</sup> It is, e.g., quite telling that some, such as Wendt, referred to *agents* and structures while others spoke of *agency* and structures; see Walter Carlsnaes, “The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis” *International Studies Quarterly* 36/3 (1992), 241–70.

<sup>70</sup> See Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations*, pp. 90–120. As of this writing, Wight’s (excellent) treatise is the only book-length discussion of the problematic.

<sup>71</sup> For a laudable exception see, aside from Wight’s effort, the debate surrounding Wendt’s claim that “states are people too” (*Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 193–245), particularly Jackson et al., “Forum on the State as a Person.” Also see the call for a de-anthropomorphization of agency in Ole Waever, “Resisting the Temptation of Post Foreign Policy Analysis,” in Walter Carlsnaes and Steve Smith (eds.), *European Foreign Policy: The EC and Changing Perspectives in Europe* (London: Sage, 1995).

<sup>72</sup> On how easily even renowned scholars slip from individuals to collective structures and back without explicitly addressing the conceptual and analytical consequences, see, e.g., Robert Keohane as quoted in Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations*, p. 178, emphasis added: “The way in which *leaders* of states conceptualise their situations is strongly affected by the institutions of international relations: *states* not only form the international system they are shaped by its conventions, particularly by its practices.”

debate leaves much to be desired with regard to a reflexive conceptual incorporation of the human in world politics.<sup>73</sup>

Although the debate on the agent-structure problematic can be considered the “wrecking ball”<sup>74</sup> that brought attention to the human back into IR, there have also been alternative and equally relevant attempts to come to terms with concepts of the human in the study of world politics apart from the conceptual orthodoxy of the 1970s and 1980s. They developed partly prior to as well as parallel to or overlapping with the agent-structure debate. Above all, poststructuralist scholarship early on dismantled core assumptions underlying mainstream IR scholarship, such as the givenness of anarchy, but most importantly implicit ideas of the sovereignty of “reasonable man” and its discursive (re)production.<sup>75</sup> Poststructuralists also suggested that the theoretical distinction of agents and structures itself may be problematic and may best be dropped in favor of a more contingent view of agency/ agents.<sup>76</sup>

The push for a change in our analytical vocabulary has also been picked up more recently by IR importers of modern systems theory, in particular, or communication theory, in general, such as Oliver Kessler and Daniel Jacobi, writing in this volume. Based in a communicative approach, they offer a view of humans as located outside (or in the environment) of (world) society rather than “in the middle” (or as its core building block) and thus are among the strongest promoters of a post-anthropological view of world politics. Similarly, diverse strands of language or speech-based approaches to IR, represented in this volume by Benjamin Herborth (Chapter 11), have drawn attention to the contingency of the social, and thus political, in IR, by pointing to the legitimating practices that not only come to dominate world politics but are also thought to be co-constitutive of its agents, actors, and subjectivities and thus cannot be entirely tied back to them. Likewise, as the previously mentioned New Materialism but also Colin Wight’s contribution (Chapter 9) to this volume show, the growing embracement of the concept of emergence further points out the need for a more careful analytical distinction between the human and the social, i.e. the political. Last but not least, as illustrated by Mauro Caraccioli in

<sup>73</sup> See also Oliver Kessler et al., “Forum on Critical Realism in International Relations,” *Review of International Studies* 38/1 (2012), 187–274.

<sup>74</sup> Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach, *Remapping Global Politics: History’s Revenge and Future Shock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 95–6.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., Ashley, “Untying the Sovereign State.”

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Roxanne Lynn Doty, “Aporia: A Critical Exploration of the Agent-Structure-Problematic in International Relations Theory,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3/3 (1997), 365–92.

Chapter 10, there have been efforts to elaborate on the human in IR with regard to aspects of its embodiment, which also try to reconcile linguistic approaches with a notion of practice.<sup>77</sup>

These more recent approaches are highly diverse, and we are not able to include all, let alone do them justice, in this brief history. The contributions by Elisabeth Prügl (Chapter 8) as well as Jan-Hendrik Passoth and Nicholas J. Rowland (Chapter 14) in this volume provide further innovative perspectives on how (not) to theorize the human. What we can observe when comparing them is that this diversity of contributions is united by a quest to overcome the blind spots of many classical IR theories in favor of a more reflexive attitude and post-anthropological stance. Still, it seems fair to note that quite a few incarnations of these perspectives, which strive for what we call “post-anthropology,” are themselves no less in need of a consistent reflexive theoretical framing than the “classics.” Quite often, their underlying logic actually seems to not really have detached itself from that of their predecessors, particularly where concepts intended to de-center the human, for example intersubjectivity or communication, nevertheless reintroduce anthropocentric forms such as “individual minds” or “human communications.” Likewise, many approaches that claim to have rid themselves of a notion of the human altogether seem rather to confirm the old Weberian adage about the old gods who ascend from their graves. Disenchanted, they take the form of impersonal forces, striving to gain power over our lives, and thus resume their eternal struggle with one another.<sup>78</sup> One simply cannot ignore the fact that many of the discourses, acts, and practices described in purportedly post-humanist approaches do not simply point out contingent speaker-positions; rather, along with an anthropomorphically connoted vocabulary, they rehearse a still underlying concept of man.

As a conclusion to this section of the introduction, we can summarize that IR clearly seems to have made headway concerning an awareness of the plurality of ways in which we (may) theorize humanity in world politics. However, even with the rise of post-anthropological perspectives as an analytical challenge to the more established anthropological approaches, much fuzziness still remains. This is often due to particular terminologies and their historical baggage – for example, the “subject,” “individual,” or “person” – who come with ethnocentric and Western-centric connotations implicit in their historical semantics. Nonetheless, it is clear

<sup>77</sup> See also Iver Neumann, “Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy,” *Millennium* 31/3 (2002), 627–51.

<sup>78</sup> Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures: “Science as a Vocation” “Politics as a Vocation,”* David S. Owen and Tracy B. Strong (eds.) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004).

that the strongest intra-disciplinary challenge for any current debate on our conceptualizations of the human in IR still arises out of the post-classical turn of the 1980s.<sup>79</sup> It has provided IR scholars with the insight that their knowledge is not objectively given but contingent upon truth claims and the negotiation of their validity.

One can always observe the human in world politics differently, be it through an anthropological or post-anthropological lens. This means that IR will finally have to come to terms with the hardly refutable Wittgensteinian notion that the first step in our actions always tends to escape our notice.<sup>80</sup> The practice of deploying concepts equals the practice of drawing boundaries. IR scholars can only see what lies within these self-elected boundaries and nothing else. Simply claiming a presumably neutral vocabulary or stance is no longer an option, as any such approach would inevitably fall back on mere theorems and reproduce the predicament that our underlying conceptualizations of the human still translate into much conceptual vagueness and unacknowledged normative content. This then would serve to remove any specks of innocence that may at this point still cling to the concepts of the human in IR. We are brought back to this volume's core notion that any investigation of the role of the human in IR needs to be conducted through an investigation of our modes of theorizing – the topic of the following section.

### **Challenges for theorizing the human and world politics**

The preceding reflections have further corroborated that IR needs to revisit its use of concepts of the human and their consequences. Furthermore, it needs to do so by coming to grips with the fact that these concepts and their effects also hinge on how scholars go about their theorizing. This section will clarify how the relative obscurity of the human element in IR is linked to the discipline's vague understanding of the process of theorizing. It proposes an understanding of theory construction that offers possible junctions for all concepts of the human and the study of their consequences.

On the surface, the question of what theorizing in IR means appears to be easily answerable. Looking at the plethora of introductory textbooks or individual texts, numerous definitions of theory are readily available. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that IR scholars have

<sup>79</sup> Note that although the turn challenges classical approaches, it does not render them meaningless.

<sup>80</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1953), p. 103 (§ 308).

so far spent most of their time discussing the qualities of different theories of world politics but have given only little consideration to the process of theorizing as such.<sup>81</sup> Thus, in IR there is not only disagreement on concepts of the human and their use; there is also no shared understanding of theorizing. Even within so-called paradigms it is obvious that as soon as this border-creating device is removed, consistency begins to unravel. Different views of (the status of) the human obviously go along with different views on how theorizing is to be conducted. However, this insight does not yet take us beyond the simple idea that how one sees the world depends on the set of glasses one wears. From such an angle, theorizing in IR must continue to denote the simple activity of measuring the “eternal givens” of world politics, which already appear to exist in the field as “objects” of study when the theorist comes to observe them. We have only gotten so far as to recognize that our different views of those objects may well be incommensurable.

This seems an untenable half-way position between empiricism and rationalism, particularly as the aforementioned social turn in IR has not only distinctively carved out the socially conditioned contingency of world politics but equally the dependence and success of theories on particular world views and institutional settings. It is striking at this stage of disciplinary development that this notion of contingency and its conditioning has never been thoroughly analyzed with regard to the actual process of theorizing. For even though many of the views concocted over the course of this turn have emphasized how any attempts to preclude the ambiguity of modernity must only point back to those doing the precluding, they simply do not tie this finding back to the activity of theorizing. Once we apply this notion not only to the assumed “objects” of a theory but also to the “subjects” doing theory, theorizing under conditions of contingency also always confronts us with the contingent conditions of theory. Theories can then only be seen as volatile forms of knowledge, not as the ultimate vanishing point of a scientific discovery.

Once acknowledged, this clears a path for the key role observation plays in theorizing. Leaving aside any specifics of who exactly observes and

<sup>81</sup> For notable exceptions, see the recent special issue of the *European Journal of International Relations* on “The End of International Relations Theory” (19/3, 2013). The establishment of the International Studies Association’s Theory Section in 2011 can be seen as indicating a growing awareness of this challenge. In contrast, the issue is dodged by the editors of a major reference work, who state that they have chosen “to focus on the art of theorizing in international relations rather than the nature of theory.” See Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, “Between Utopia and Reality: The Practical Discourses of International Relations,” in Reus-Smit and Snidal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 12.



how, observation and the observer may be among the very few theory elements most scholars will agree upon as being crucial. However, if contingency implies that things can always be observed differently, not fully accounting for the literally normative effects of the observer means to miss out on the paramount defining character of the process of theorizing about the social and political realm – its recursiveness and self-referentiality. In the absence of Archimedean points of reference,<sup>82</sup> the conditioned relativity of theorizing<sup>83</sup> and with it the role of the observer as ultimate decision maker becomes fully visible. In line with its etymological roots, theory is then indeed the (temporary) fixing of such observation. Not only is the active participation of the observer revealed, but in the absence of any objective external platform for observation, “the world” can only be theorized within a distinctive yet relative framework and through a particular theoretical architecture and chosen vocabularies used to describe it. Whatever the elements and findings of a theory may be, the boundaries that are drawn by this architecture and vocabulary will allow for what can be seen.

Theorizing thus also exhibits a performative character. This means that theorizing simultaneously claims, creates, and (re)produces the world it describes. As we theorize the human, we also construct “the human” – yet in a very specific, i.e. self-referential and recursive way. With every theoretical decision we open up new perspectives while at the same time suspending others. Theories are then self-limiting networks of observation. This is why paying attention to the previously mentioned Wittgensteinian notion of “first steps” is so important. Only if we are aware of these inherent qualities of theorizing and theory, the inevitable creation of blind spots, can we start to think of ways to deal with them.<sup>84</sup>

As a conclusion to this section, we can summarize that the problem with the conceptualization as well as the elusiveness of the human in IR also appears to be in part due to the unacknowledged yet inherently

<sup>82</sup> Steve Smith, “Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11,” *International Studies Quarterly* 48/3 (2004), 499–515.

<sup>83</sup> Here, “relativity” goes beyond the usual notions of “anything goes.” Far from indicating arbitrariness, it rather implies that a perspective is always relative to its particular history. That is, specific choices will always be made based on preceding specific choices.

<sup>84</sup> This counters conventional wisdom in the discipline: i.e., that neither theoretical nor meta-theoretical disputes can thus be understood as an “invention” of the third (or fourth) debate. Such problems have been part and parcel of the discipline and disciplining of IR from the beginning. The recent discussions are then better understood as “an expansion of the intellectual combat zone”; see, Johann August Schüle, “Einleitung oder: Warum erkenntnistheoretische Diskurse notwendige aber endlose Geschichten sind,” in Andreas Balog and Johann August Schüle (eds.), *Soziologie, eine multiparadigmatische Wissenschaft: Erkenntnisnotwendigkeit oder Übergangsstadium?* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2008), p. 8.

contingent quality of theorizing. The challenges for (understanding) theories of the human element in world politics arise out of this insight, for a reflexive study of humanity and world politics implies more than the usual appeal that one must clearly raise one's particular ontological or epistemological banner up front. It means that any suggestion that one simply needs to switch from the level of everyday life to that of (scientific) IR theory in order to come to terms with the human in world politics is revealed to be simply a trick or a legitimacy move. On the contrary, the everyday level of uncertainty about how to account for the human in/and world politics is essentially mirrored on the more abstract level of scientific theorizing. Even with a "scientific attitude," a presumably bullet-proof theory, and whatever imported expertise on the human, humanity in world politics "escapes us" if we do not understand that in our study of it the very process of theorizing determines what we do or do not see. While this renders the paradigmatic trench warfare in some parts of IR more intelligible, it also implies that if under this constellation IR theorists do not account for the disciplining role of theory, they will inevitably keep on disciplining and reifying the human element as well. They will then resemble little more than salespeople,<sup>85</sup> and theory itself will subsist as an empty signifier or a cluster concept at best.<sup>86</sup>

Consequently, in order to break open and come to terms with IR's uses of the human and the study of world politics, it seems that the question "What is X?" – here human(ity) and world politics – must be extended to "How do we come to observe it?" in order for the present inquiry to unfold its investigative potential. We can no longer go back to our normal mode of theorizing as the discussion here exposes every point of theoretical reference to be contingent and only based on specific conditioning. Between the apparent poles of a strict IR paradigmaticism and a *free-for-all*, the question becomes What do scholars do to allow for or to shut down always possible alternatives? This, in turn, reveals the political character as well as the critical potential of IR theory, for what is politics if not contestation over what is and what ought to be, over which theory "best" captures the answers to these questions? Likewise, what is critique if not the attempt to show how and why things are not but could be otherwise?<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Milja Kurki and Colin Wight, "International Relations and Social Science," in Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theories, Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 33.

<sup>86</sup> Friedrich Tenbruck, "Der Traum der säkularen Ökumene: Sinn und Grenze der Entwicklungsvision," *Annali Di Sociologia* 3 (1987), 11–36.

<sup>87</sup> For a critical perspective in this sense, see particularly Chapter 11.

**Investigating the human in International Relations: how this volume is set up**

The preceding sections have substantiated the introductory observation that all IR theories hint at a human element in world politics. They have shown that while throughout the history of IR most approaches have theorized world politics by placing, if often implicitly, models of the human at the center, i.e. through an anthropological lens, recent developments have seen a rise of theories that opt for what we call a post-anthropological approach, de-centering or even foregoing notions of human beings as being (solely) at the core of, for example, agency or intentionality in the process of world politics. We furthermore corroborated the key role of theory in not only “transporting” a human element but in bringing it about. Against this backdrop, this volume seeks to address the core question of how and with which consequences theories of world politics deal with the human. Our authors were asked to tackle three specific tasks to aid in the inquiry: (1) clarify the (implicit) stance taken in the approach discussed in the chapter toward the anthropological/post-anthropological distinction (i.e., show where and why the approach belongs in this larger debate); (2) explain how that stance is developed in the specific approach (i.e., lay out the “human element”-relevant specifics of the approach); and (3) develop the resulting implications of the approach for IR and ir. In order to productively engage its overall question, the book is then organized into two parts, derived from the distinction between anthropological and post-anthropological perspectives.<sup>88</sup>

Part I of the book presents a domain of study labeled “International Political Anthropology” (IPA). In it our authors discuss those approaches that, even if often implicitly, place the human (being) at the center of their analysis. This allows for a study of the theoretical properties of such approaches to the human in IR, their modes of operation, and the theoretical and practical consequences of their treatments of human being(s). Insofar as these approaches place an anthropocentric concept at the center of their enquiry, they necessarily rely on essentialisms. IPA is then that part of the field of study of the human in IR where we can see how far we can take conceptualizations of human being(s) and where those ideas can be made explicit and critiqued with regard to their theoretical consistency, their empirical accuracy, or their practical and normative implications.

<sup>88</sup> To reemphasize, we consider neither IPA nor IPPA to be a school of thought, paradigm, or theoretical approach; the distinction is a heuristic device to show how fundamentally different perspectives on the human in/and world politics can be and are set up against each other.

In the first chapter of Part I, **Annette Freyberg-Inan** focuses on realism. She examines the quality and implications of the view of human nature that characterizes this theory family by drawing particular attention to the centrality of fear and despair as two key emotional motifs linking realist approaches. Freyberg-Inan argues that while human nature assumptions were often made explicit and justified in classical realist approaches, structural variants rely on them less explicitly but no less fundamentally, consistently, or pervasively. In an argument combining philosophical and psychological reasoning, the centrality of fear and despair in realism is explained with reference to the situatedness of the theorist in historical experience and to his or her emotional needs. The particular combination of these factors that characterizes realism results in a paradoxical and politically problematic theoretical posture combining fatalism and defensive reflex.

**Stephen J. Rosow** then moves us to a treatment of realism's classical rival: liberalism. He reveals a paradox besetting modern liberalism, namely that the international order it envisions depends on de-territorialized flows and movements that threaten to destabilize that very order. His contribution shows that and how conceptions of human nature and "man" are used in liberal theories to stabilize precisely this tension.

To this perspective is added a sociology of science take on liberalism provided by **Jennifer Sterling-Folker** and **Jason F. Charrette**, tracing how human nature assumptions have informed the development of American social scientific theorizing. The chapter shows how historical tensions between Darwinian human nature assumptions and the American liberal academic milieu produced a peculiar form of social scientific theorizing that reverberates in the dominant theoretical perspectives of IR today and essentially subscribes to Darwinism while rejecting Darwinian human nature assumptions.

**Chris Brown** then examines the role of human nature concepts in the third camp of the classic inter-paradigm debate: Marxist IR thought. Whereas Marxism is often thought to be hostile to the idea of human nature, and indeed a component of the tradition stresses the plasticity of humankind, Brown holds that there is an equally strong human nature element to the tradition, which begins with the writings of the early Marx on "species-being" and regards post-capitalist humanity as the fulfillment of human nature rather than a sign of the notion's irrelevance.

**Duncan Bell** explores how a variety of arguments from the biological sciences, including behavioral genetics and evolutionary psychology, are being employed in political science and IR and highlights some of the problems with drawing on such recent (putatively) scientific work on human nature. Implicitly critiquing Brown's sympathetic treatment of

evolutionary biology, Bell identifies a nascent “biological turn” in theorizing international relations and argues that this turn is due to the increasing cultural profile of the biological sciences rather than any intrinsic merits of their arguments.

**Ned Lebow** then reviews contemporary understandings of reason and emotion in political science and psychology and contrasts them with the understandings of the ancient Greeks, finding *inter alia* that recent work in neuroscience offers provisional support for some of the key insights of the Greek philosophers. He holds, following the Greeks, that affect and reason are both essential to good performance of complex cognitive tasks. Together, they determine the kinds of sensory inputs we seek or respond to and how we evaluate this information and act upon it. What matters most in interpersonal and international relations is the *kind* of reason employed and the *nature* of the affect with which it interacts. Drawing on the tragic playwrights Plato and Aristotle, Lebow offers definitions of reason and emotion and constructs a typology to help us understand their relationship and its implications for international cooperation and conflict.

The remaining two chapters in Part I focus specifically on IR thinking on the human after the constructivist turn, clarifying some of the key advantages we have gained from this turn. First, **Samuel Barkin** observes that constructivism and realism share one key assumption about human nature: that it is sociable. The two approaches also agree that beyond basic sociability, we cannot assume *ex ante* what will motivate the behavior of specific people in specific circumstances. This distinguishes both approaches from those that assume particular motivations, such as those which build on economic ideas, ranging from most liberal approaches to neorealism; it also grants them both greater power to account for political change.

Second, **Lisa Prügl** discusses feminist critiques of the idea of Man in International Relations and reviews the conceptual openings made possible once the masculinity of Man is acknowledged. Drawing on the early works of J. Ann Tickner and Christine Sylvester, Prügl illustrates how the psychoanalytic anchoring of work in feminist IR enabled conceptualizations of identity that spilled beyond the self. But she also shows up the limits of this anthropocentric approach: Tickner had difficulty applying it to phenomena beyond the individual level of analysis and ultimately abandoned it. Sylvester was led to focus on finding “women” in IR at the expense of interrogating masculine rule and today also has shifted her approach. Ultimately, embodying Man in IR may entail moving to a post-anthropological theorization of gender.

Part II of the book we have labeled “International Political Post-Anthropology (IPPA).” The approaches discussed under this heading

attempt to steer clear of theoretical notions of human beings as containers of particular qualities by introducing various alternative conceptualizations such as agency, *actants*, language or communication, which de-center the human and develop notions of the process of it beyond the human as core agent. In doing so, they call attention to the limitations of the approaches of an IPA and challenge them to develop. We do not want to suggest that the contributions in this category are inherently superior to those of an IPA. Rather, we believe that IR will benefit from placing the two domains in conversation with one another. IPPA then becomes that part of the field of the study of humanity in IR where we can see how (far) we can move beyond references to human beings, where those ideas can be made explicit and critiqued.

**Colin Wight** begins the discussion in Part II from the observation that a view on the “human” is implicit in all social theorizing. He then shows how a biological substrate – labeled “species being” – can be incorporated into IR theories without regressing to a debilitating biological reductionism. The argument is that social practices, although embedded and emergent out of biological species being, are, in fact, primarily dependent on social and structural factors for their causal power. In this way, social practices, although materially embedded, are not materially determined.

**Mauro J. Caraccioli** aims to broaden our notion of the human condition in the study of international relations. Caraccioli seeks to challenge two assumptions of conventional IR theorizing: First, he discusses the ambiguity underlying phenomenology’s concern with the question of “man” and uses this concept as a entry point for thinking critically about the history of IR. His second objective is to narrate formative periods in the discipline as moments of experiential openness toward the world. He uses this exchange between phenomenology and IR to illustrate a “global human condition”: a state of being that sees the study of world politics itself as a mediating process between the experiences of others and the changing character of scholarly reflection. His approach questions state-centric definitions of the human and offers greater flexibility in the study of human beings, states, and the prospects of agency.

**Benjamin Herborth** observes that *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus* not only inhabit different theoretical worlds but figure as representatives of rationalism and constructivism, respectively; he discusses the pitfalls of such a dichotomizing view as well as of a pervasive reductionism he sees as characterizing IR. He argues that agency should be viewed as a property of social processes, not a property of individuals. The scope of agency and the structural formation of social sites where agency may manifest are two sides of a coin. Against this background, the chapter

provides a critical review of the way in which the notion of agency was assimilated to the ontological status of agents in the course of the agency/structure debate, reconstructs attempts at theorizing agency in IR, and discusses the relation between agency and emancipation from the point of view of critical theory.

Picking up on Herborth's elaboration of the need to account for social contingency in the study of the human in world politics, **Daniel Jacobi's** contribution turns to a critique of constructivism, generally heralded as an approach that has established the social quality of world politics and its human agents. Jacobi analyzes how constructivists live up to their aim to disconnect the human from human nature essentialisms by theoretically accounting for contingency. He finds that, despite their best efforts, the most prominent models of the transformation of whole humans into social agents fail to completely shake off classical substantialist notions of the human being. He then outlines how a different conceptualization of communication might help save constructivism's productive impulses for the observation of the human in world politics.

**Oliver Kessler** follows up on and further substantiates this idea of a "communicative turn" by showing how "visions of man" can be analyzed via modern systems theory, which makes communication and not humans its basic unit. One of the key charges leveled against modern systems theory is its apparent neglect of actors. After a brief review of the more traditional understandings of actors and political order, Kessler lays out how a switch from understanding world politics as a unity to observing how the boundaries of those unities are actually (re)produced leads to a fuller understanding of (political) world society as a highly differentiated and fragmented order and with it of the human individual as torn between the various (sub)systems of those orders. He urges IR to take on a different concept of politics that does not focus on pre-given actors but instead takes their individuality, identities, and subjectivities seriously.

Last but not least, **Jan-Hendrik Passoth** and **Nicholas J. Rowland** then take a closer look at Actor-Network Theory, which, coming from the field of Science and Technology Studies, is known for its disrespectful restatement of central sociological concepts: its focus on symmetry has tackled common beliefs about human and nonhuman agency; its insistence on heterogeneity of networks has arraigned common definitions of social relations. This contribution systematizes some of the consequences of its application to the study of politics. It examines its conceptual and empirical innovations regarding problems of (non) human agency, different modes of ordering practices, and the performativity of politics.

The concluding chapter reflects back on the lessons learned in this volume and anchors its key contributions in a broad discussion of the literatures in which it is embedded.

The link between the two parts of the book is provided by a challenge posed by the latter to the former. Even if we continue to focus empirically on how different models of and assumptions about human being(s) structure political and social practices, we also need to think beyond human nature essentialisms and models of man in the way we practice IR theorizing. Part I of the book presents state-of-the-art critical thought on how IR theories have treated the human, but Part II and its rejection of these models in theory are required to fully reveal their limitations and practical effects. The two parts of this book thus represent not representing dueling perspectives as much as two sides of one and the same coin, i.e. of a comprehensive, balanced, open-minded, and up-to-date study of the human element, its relation to world politics, and our ways of producing knowledge about them.



