There seems to be critics who think that game theory can provide very little insights in doing empirical social scientific research or normative political theory/political philosophy. This is because these people tend to think that game theory is committed to some highly contestable theory of human psychology; namely, that human beings either are or should be primarily motivated by their own exclusive self-interest. From this, critics tend to think that game theory is defective both as a normative theory of action as well as a descriptive theory of action. After explaining the basics of game theory, I will try to show that such criticisms are mostly based on a general misunderstanding of game theory. In the end, I will argue that game theory is simply a mathematical tool that could be used to model any strategic interaction for many different purposes, and is not committed to any substantial theories of human nature.

【Key Words】Game theory, Rational choice theory, Prisoner’s dilemma, PD game, Philosophy of the social sciences
1. Two Common Objections against Game Theory

In this paper, I would like to clarify some common misunderstandings of game theory (or, more generally, “rational choice theory” of which game theory is conceived to be a part) which I find quite a few political philosophers, political theorists, and political sociologists, who are mostly non-specialists in game theory, share. The misunderstandings generally stem from (mistakenly) thinking that game theory is committed to some highly contestable theory of human nature or human motivation; that human beings either are or should be strictly egoistic and self-interest-maximizing beings.

Based on such general assumption about game theory, critics have gone far as to claiming that game theory, and, more generally, rational choice theory have been used as a major vehicle to serve a particular political aim; namely, the expansion of American neoliberal capitalism. 1)

I will not specifically comment on these grand sociological criticisms – namely, that there is some kind of political agenda behind the expansion of game theory and rational choice theory in many empirical and theoretical disciplines. I will simply say that I think these sociological criticisms are exaggerated and are not based on a correct understanding of game theory.

What I instead will do is to comment on two of the most basic forms of objections on which most of these grand sociological criticisms of game theory and rational choice theory seem to be based. The two basic objections can be summarized as follows:

- **Objection 1.** Game theory is defective as a normative theory of action; it urges one to care only about one's own self-interest.

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1) See Amadae (2003), Archer and Tritter (2000).