

Acknowledging an Overlooked Dimension

Religion in International Relations Theory

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Abstract

In spite of numerous evidence of a global resurgence of religion in the post Cold-war world, scholars of international relations have continuously excluded religion from their analysis. This thesis investigates the reasons for this and suggests a way to include religion into the analysis of international politics.

It argues that the reasons for the ignorance of I.R scholars when it comes to religion originates in the philosophies of the Enlightenment and the development of the modern-liberal states of the Westphalian state-system, which has made the dominant rationalist theories incapable of handling a concept like religion in their analysis.

Drawing from the work of its most acknowledged scholars, the thesis presents social constructivism as an approach that has the possibility but, so far, not the willingness to include a comprehensive understanding of religion in the analysis of international relations. This is because of the state-centric research agenda of most constructivist scholars and their uncritical acceptance of the biases concerning religion that are included in the Westphalian state-system.

The thesis concludes that, first when constructivists see their internal differences as opportunities and widen their research agenda will they be able to develop the full potential of their approach.

Key Words: International Relations, Social Constructivism, Religion, Social Science, Sociology of Religion

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1 Introduction

Ever since the foundation of the social sciences, religion has been seen as being of diminishing importance in society. The theory of secularization, that the need for religion would disappear with the emergence of a modern society based on science and rationality, has been considered conventional wisdom, and led to the exclusion of religion as an important societal phenomenon in many fields of inquiry. This is especially true for the study of international relations.

In spite of this, research from the 1970s and onward, produced by sociologists of religion and also some political scientists, questions the assumptions of secularization and argues that there is an obvious resurgence of religion in the world of today, which has clear international implications, the events of September 11, 2001, being the most obvious case. Even so, the interests of scholars of international relations have continued to be focused elsewhere. Is this because the scholars of international relations really does not think that religion matters or is it because the dominant theories of the I.R field is incapable of analyzing a concept like religion, or a little bit of both?

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

Taking as a point of departure the apparent exclusion of religion from the analysis of international relations, the purpose of this thesis is *to explain why this is so, and to suggest a way to include religion into the analysis of international relations*. In order to do so the following research questions will have to be addressed:

- Why has religion been neglected in the analysis of international relations?
- Why do we need to change this and how can it be done?

1.1.1 Limitations

This thesis deals with a large variety of different theories from different fields of research. It is not possible to present all aspects of those complex theories here, and therefore only the parts necessary for the purpose of this thesis will be presented.

Although the thesis deals with religion, it should be stated right from the start that it makes no judgments about whether the claims of religions are true or false.

I leave this to theologians and philosophers of religion, far more equipped to deal with those question than I am, and focuses on religion as a social phenomenon.

It should also be clear that even though I think it is important to incorporate religion into the analysis of international relations, it is not always the most important factor when it comes to explaining or understanding international events, but merely that it deserves its place among the other, already well researched, factors that are thought to explain international relations.

1.2 Outline

The first chapter of this thesis presents the research problem and my points of departure. It also includes methodological considerations and a brief overview of earlier efforts in the field. Chapter 2 sketches out a background for why religion has been excluded from the analysis of international relations and presents the constructivist approach as a possible way ahead. Chapter 3 focuses on religion as a social phenomenon and starts out by arguing why it is important for our understanding of international relations. It also turns to the sociology of religion in order to understand the role of religions in society. Then, in chapter 4, I outline my thoughts of how the use of a constructivist approach to international relations is suitable for including religion in the analysis of international relations. Finally, in chapter 5, the conclusions of the thesis will be summarized and the research questions answered.

1.3 Methodological Considerations

“The departures of this volume are theoretical rather than methodological” (Jepperson et al 1996:65). This statement is equally valid for this thesis because it contains no empirical investigation of any sort. It is designed to be a scientific argumentation and it departs from the words of Alexander Wendt, who writes that “we should encourage scholars to ask new questions. Problematizing the things that communities have naturalized is at least as important a function of science as finding the right answers” (Wendt 1999:89). My study aims at doing just that, investigating the reasons for why religion has been excluded from the analysis of international relations and to suggest *one* way of correcting this.

It is in the nature of an argument that not everybody will agree with it. That is obviously the case here as well. I argue that the social constructivist approach is better suited to explain reality than other scientific approaches because I think that its ontological and epistemological assumptions are more accurate than others. If you don't agree with that, you will obviously not agree with my conclusions either.

However, there is a difference between a scientific argumentation and, for example, a political one. Both Bjereld et al (1999:115ff) and Lundquist (1993:52ff) stresses the importance of *intersubjectivity* in all scientific endeavors. Openness when it comes to how the conclusions of a thesis were arrived at and willingness to discuss this with others are central to academic work. In order to place my arguments within the framework of academia, and to give them some validity, I use the works of acknowledged scholars as a base for my discussion. Like Scott Thomas (2005:85ff) bases his investigation of how to understand religion on the works of Alasdair MacIntyre, I base my arguments about the suitability of constructivism on the works of scholars like Alexander Wendt, John G. Ruggie and Emanuel Adler. The references to their work are my scientific lifelines.

This thesis' argument is intended as a contribution to the debate on international relations theory and by using the work of these acknowledged scholars of international relations it is also intended as a small contribution to the cumulative development of the discipline, since none of them discusses religion specifically. I also compare some results from the sociology of religion to the reasoning of these constructivists and therefore, an open discussion of the thesis conclusions is vital in order to obtain scientific validity.

1.4 Religion in I.R Theory so Far: a Brief Overview

As was stated in the opening paragraphs of this thesis there is an apparent lack of research of how religion affects international relations. There are, however, a few scholars, that have engaged the question of religion in international relations, whose work I will briefly present.

The most comprehensive efforts in this field are those of Scott Thomas (2003, 2005). The focus of his research is the distortion of the concept of religion that made the development of the modern-liberal state possible (Thomas 2003:24) and the need to develop a deeper understanding of religion, than the modern-liberal kind that has been naturalized in the social sciences since the Enlightenment, if we are going to be able to understand the role of religion in the international community. Available theories are, according to him, so entangled in this modern-liberal view of the world that they are of no help when it comes to analyzing religion, and that the development of a new approach in order to do so is necessary (*ibid* 2005:59ff, 80ff). From his post-modernist point of departure he argues in favor of the social theory of Alasdair MacIntyre with its focus on narrative theory, tradition and identity in order to understand the social actions of religious actors in world politics (*ibid* 2003:29ff, 2005:85ff).

Also Vendulka Kubálková (2003) has engaged the question of how to understand religion in international relations and suggests the development of an international political theology, as a subfield to international relations. She works within the field of social constructivism and uses what she calls a rule-oriented constructivism in order to provide a deeper understanding of religion, which she

claims the mainstream constructivists are not capable of (Kubáľková 2003:81f). Central to her work is to view religions as systems of rules that make them rational for the believers. This is because the reality of a believer is impossible to understand without interpreting the representations of that reality, communicated through language (ibid 2003:86ff, 94ff). She also argues for the importance of not being so caught up in state-centrism, when we analyze international relations that we miss the other dimensions of social activity that also affect the international level in different ways (ibid 2003:92f).

Finally, I will also mention the work of Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler (2004). Their focus is not so much to argue for a theory of their own but to map the impact of religion in the international world of today and to explain why it has been ignored in the field of international relations.

1.4.1 Is this Enough?

The answer to this question is obviously no, since an affirmative answer would make this thesis unnecessary. I argue that even though there are important lessons in the work of Thomas, there is no need to dismiss all existing theories of international relations. This thesis will argue that the social constructivist approach to international relations possesses the tools to incorporate a comprehensive understanding of religion in their analysis of international relations and that it in fact can contain an analytical approach very similar to that of MacIntyre. Kubáľková's work is an evidence of that fact. But I will also argue that the constructivist approach are capable of providing some causal explanations of a concept like religion, as well, something that Kubáľková and Thomas does not consider very much.

However, even if I disagree with Thomas concerning the need for a whole new approach to international relations in order to analyze religion in a preferable way, I do agree with some important conclusions of his work. The most important is the need to critically discuss and acknowledge the biases against religion that is an integral part of the modern state-system, something that constructivist scholars in general have been no better at than their rationalist opponents.

1.5 The Problem of Definition

The classical divide, when it comes to definitions of religion in a social scientific context, is that between a *functional* and a *substantive* definition (Cipriani 2000:1ff, Christiano et al 2002:6ff). In the functional definition "religion is seen preeminently as performing certain functions for society" (Christiano et al 2002:7). The substantive form emphasises "the content of around which religion centres" (ibid 2002:7). There are however, problems with both of these definitions. The functional approach is so inclusive, that also ideologies like communism or fascism fall under the category of religion. On the other hand, the

substantive definition, that focuses on what religion is or consists of, says little about how religion works or affects society (Hamilton 2001:18f). It seem like we need a definition that mixes both substantive and functional elements in order to create a wide and somewhat exclusive definition of religion as a social phenomenon. Lincoln (2003:5ff) suggests four domains of such a definition, which are;

(1) A discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status; (2) A set of practices whose goal is to produce a proper world and/ or proper human subjects, as defined by a religious discourse to which these practices are connected; (3) A community whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices; (4) An institution that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendental value (Lincoln 2003:5-7).

Lincoln argues that those four dimensions are necessary for a phenomenon to be considered religious but that the relationship between the different parts by no means need to be static. They can be in conflict with one another or very differently occurring (Lincoln 2003:7) and that is what gives the definition an exclusive and yet open character which I find necessary for this thesis. In order to include religion in our analysis of international relations we need to understand both its substantive aspects as well as it's functional.

2 The Worship of Reason and the Exclusion of Religion in I.R Theory

This chapter provides a background for understanding the reasons to why religion has been excluded from the study of international relations. It does so by investigating modernization theory and the concept of secularization connected to it, and its roots in the thinking of the Enlightenment. It also discusses the implications of this for the social scientific field of international relations and its main analytical schools. Finally, the social constructivist approach will be presented as a first step towards a way to incorporate religion in the analysis of international relations.

2.1 Modernization and Secularization

We find the roots of the concept of modernization in the era that has come to be called the Enlightenment. Philosophers like Voltaire, Montesquieu and Diderot argued in favour of a human rationality where Science and Reason would free humankind from the enslaving bonds of tradition, most notably championed by the church (Höög 2004:51f). Norris & Inglehart writes: “[...] the era of the Enlightenment generated a rational view of the world based on empirical standards of proof, scientific knowledge of natural phenomena, and technological mastery of the universe” (Norris & Inglehart 2004:7).

Modernization enters the public arena through what Kurtz (1995:151ff) describes as two challenges to Christianity, starting in seventeenth-century Europe. Those were the emergence of the natural sciences and later democracy. The French revolution was, for example, not only directed against the monarchy but also the church, as it was the second part of the *ancien régime* that formed the base of the traditional society that the revolutionaries wanted to change. The conflict between the church and science had started even earlier when discoveries in the natural sciences, like Galileo’s, came to challenge the views held by the church which had for a long time been considered the absolute truth. Science became a weapon in the struggle for a social order that was not based on religion but human rationality (Kurtz 1995:153).

In more recent years modernization can be considered to mean the development of a modern society along the ideals that were founded in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and that became the foundations for liberal democracy. Thomas describes it as “[...] the complete transformation of the economic, social, cultural, and political infrastructure of developing countries”

(Thomas 2005:51). This, more political description, implies a division of the world into two parts, one modern and one pre-modern. The pre-modern world is considered the opposite of the modern, that is, that “the sacredness of tradition is society’s unshakable foundation” (Luyckx 1999:973). This kind of “sacred-authoritarian-religious, value driven, tradition-anchored” (ibid 1999:974) view of the world was exactly what the thinkers of the Enlightenment wanted to change into the modern “science-based rational, human rights, free trade, secular [...]” (ibid 1999:975) worldview that makes up the liberal world of today and that has become the measurement of modernity for those countries considered not yet developed.

It is obvious that one of the most striking characteristics of a modern society, in this view and according to modernization theory, is that it is a secular one. That is a society where religion is deported to the strictly private sphere of individuals (Kurtz 1995:161). Berger writes:

Although the term ‘secularization theory’ refers to works from the 1950s and 1960s, the key idea of the theory can indeed be traced to the Enlightenment. That idea is simple: Modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals (Berger 1999b:2).

This decline would progress in relation to the development of modernization until religion, finally, would disappear because it would no longer be meaningful in the lives of the peoples of the modern world. The theory of secularization was agreed upon by such social scientists as Durkheim, Weber, Marx and Freud, and was considered one of the conventional wisdoms of the founding age of the social sciences (Norris & Inglehart 2004:3, Fox & Sandler 2004:10). “Social scientists hoped that secular ideologies, science, and rationalism would provide a basis for a better life in modern times than did the religious basis for society and government of the past” (Fox & Sandler 2004:32). Let us now turn to how this has influenced the social scientific study of international relations.

2.2 Why Religion Was Left Out of I.R Theory

As we can see, secularization theory was a common feature of the scholarships of all the founding fathers of social science. The modern followers of these scholars adopted the same points of departure and therefore, the social sciences were developed under the premise that religion had no important role to play in society (Fox & Sandler 2004:10). Fox and Sandler (2004:14f, 20) argues that the field of international relations is the discipline that is perhaps most likely to exclude religion from the analysis. This, they argue, is because international relations have tended to focus on the West and also being produced by Western scholars. Given these conditions there may be some logic to this, since the West is one of the few places where the stipulations of secularization have been clearly noticeable (Berger 1999b:9). We need, however, to take a deeper look at the reasons for why

religion has not been considered important in the analysis of international relations.

The first part of the explanation of this goes back to the assumptions about science that originated with the thinking of the Enlightenment. These ideals were brought centre stage in what has been called the scientific or behavioral revolution and that started within the field of international relations in the 1960s (Puchala 2003:17, Wendt 1999:48). Puchala quotes Haas, explaining the basic assumptions of this behavioral school: “The behaviorist [...] defines knowledge as the sum of all tested propositions” (Puchala 2003:16). This leads back to the philosophies of the Enlightenment since only what we can observe and test with a rational approach to (natural) scientific methods qualifies as science. The consequence of this thinking is that the main theories of international relations have been *problem solving theories* (Cox 1996:88) based on a very specific form of rationality. That is, “[i]t takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action (Cox 1996:88). It is only that which we can observe that can be scientifically studied and explained (Wendt 1999:60f). This has had effects on the dominant theories of international relations but before we examine them, one more reason for the exclusion of religion must be given attention.

The second explanation for the ignorance of religion by scholars of international relations is based on the main objects of analysis of the discipline, the modern state and the Westphalian state-system (Fox & Sandler 2004:22). Philpott writes: “Deeply embedded in the international system itself is a secularized authority structure whose origins lie in calamitous strife over the relationship between spiritual and temporal authority. [...] This authority structure is the Westphalian synthesis [...]” (Philpott 2002:70f). This synthesis came about in order to put an end to the Wars of Religion and to the devastating influence of religion on politics (Petito & Hatzopoulos 2003:1f). The transfer of power from the church to the secular state and the prohibition of states to interfere in each others religious affairs was a way to break the political power of the Christian church and to secure a power structure that would clearly separate the domains of authority between the state and the church, primarily by excluding religious influences on worldly matters (Philpott 2002:76). This became a central theme of the Enlightenment philosophies of rationality, which even today leads to the exclusion of religion in international relations.

This has, of course, had great influence on the dominant theories of international relations which are often described as state-centric, which means that their analysis focuses to a large extent on the secular state that is the product of the developments discussed above. This is most obvious in the most dominant theory of international relations, the realist school (Fox & Sandler 2004: 26f, Cox 1996:91f). Realism focuses on material resources as the main way of accumulating power, which is the primary goal for every state in order to obtain the national interest of survival in an anarchic state-system (Cox 1996:92, Fox & Sandler 2004:166f). The state is considered a black box and individual attributes of different states are considered irrelevant to the analysis and treated as exogenously given and of no primary importance in explaining state actions, thus

religion is effectively excluded from the analysis (Fox & Sandler 2004:167f, Wendt 1992:391).

Liberalism focuses on the interdependence among states and the need for international institutions and regimes in order to create security for all. This has enabled thinkers of this tradition to incorporate other actors than states in the analysis of international relations. Though, promising, this has so far come to focus on economic aspects of power and since liberals shares the rational approach of realists, religion has been excluded in their analysis also, or treated in a secondary way as some kind of soft power (Thomas 2005: 58).

2.3 Social Constructivism: a Way Forward?

It seems, from the discussion above, that in order to incorporate religion into our understanding of international relations we need to start from an analytical perspective that goes beyond the rationalism of realism and liberalism, and that does not consider properties such as culture or religion as exogenously given. One such perspective could be social constructivism.

The constructivist approach differs from the rationalist approach in three different ways according to Reus-Smit: (1) “where rationalists assume that actors are atomistic egoists, constructivist treat them as deeply social [...] in the sense that their identities are constituted by the institutionalised norms, values and ideas of the social environment in which they act.”; (2) “instead of treating actors’ interests as exogenously determined, as given prior to social interaction, constructivists treat interests as endogenous to such interaction [...]”, and (3) “while rationalists view society as a strategic realm, a place where actors rationally pursue their interests, constructivists see it as a constitutive realm, the site that generates actors as knowledgeable social and political agents [...]” (Reus-Smith 2001:219).

These are common aspects that divide rationalist and constructivist scholars but that is by no means to say that there are no differences within the constructivist camp. Before we discuss these differences, Reus-Smit (2001:216ff) claims that, even though the perspective is divided, all constructivists agrees upon certain ontological propositions (see also Ruggie 1997:878f, Adler 1997:232f). Those include the opinion that ideational and/or normative structures should be considered equally important as material ones, that unobservables matters. This is also important since constructivists argue that these unobservable structures affect states or agents identities, which in turn are considered to have a large effect on their behavior. The final ontological proposition that unites constructivist scholars is the assertion that “agents and structures are mutually constituted” (Reus-Smit 2001:218), meaning that ideational structures affects agents identities but that it is the actions of those agents that constitutes, at the same time, the structure. Wendt writes: “[i]t is collective meanings that constitutes the structures which organize our actions. Actors acquire identities – relatively stable, role specific

understandings and expectations about self – by participating in such collective meanings” (Wendt 1992:397).

Starting out from this common ground, different scholars have adopted relatively different kinds of constructivisms. These can be divided in a number of different ways, but Reus-Smit (2001:225) and Hopf (1998) suggests a division between *critical* and *conventional* constructivists¹. Christiansen et al (2001:8ff) argues that the constructivist approach aims at establishing a middle-ground between the incompatible approaches of rationalism and reflectivism. The differences within constructivism are then dependent on where between the poles of rationalism and reflectivism a scholar chooses to position himself. This is possible because of the constructivist focus on ontology over epistemology (Christiansen et al 2001:9, Wendt 1999:90). Conventional constructivists or *sociological constructivists* in the terminology of Christiansen et al (2001:8) tend to be located nearer the rationalist end of the spectrum because of their methodological and epistemological claims. Jepperson et al. argues that “[p]roblematizing what others take for granted or even reify, such as the construction of state identity and interests, does not in and of itself involve any specific methodological imperatives” (Jepperson et al 1996:67). This methodological conventionalism derives from the focus of conventional constructivists on “empirical work in order to approach the world out there” (Christiansen et al 2001:8).

Critical, or *Wittgensteinian constructivism* following the term used by Christiansen et al (2001:8), then positions themselves nearer the reflectivist end of the line, often stressing the need for an interpretative methodology based on self-interpretation and self-definition (Reus-Smit 2001:223). Their claim is that the methodology of the rationalists is poorly equipped to study human action since humans “attach meaning to their actions, [and] these meanings are shaped by a pre-existing ‘field’ of shared meaning embedded in language and other symbols, and the effect of such meanings on human action cannot be understood by treating them as measurable variables that cause behaviour in any direct or quantifiable manner” (ibid 2001:223). This is the position of Kubáľková, whose work was presented in chapter 1 (Kubáľková 2003:92ff).

Given its ontological points of departure and its wide range of epistemological and methodological options, a constructivist approach, combined with a pragmatic philosophy of science (Adler 1997:328f), seems to be a way forward in incorporating religion into international relations theory, and I will present my argument for this claim in chapter 4. Before that, I will turn to the question of why we need to embark on this mission at all, and how religion can be understood in a societal context.

¹ For other ways to divide constructivists see Ruggie (1998:880f) and Adler (1997:335)

3 Understanding the Societal Role of Religion: How and Why?

This chapter provides an understanding of the role of religions in society, drawing mainly from results and theories from the sociology of religion. It will, however, start with an argumentation of why we need to incorporate religion into the analysis of international relations.

3.1 Why do We Need to Include Religion?

One could ask whether there really is a need to include religion in the study of international relations. Maybe the scholars of realism and liberalism (and even most constructivists!) are correct in their exclusion of religion? Obviously, the argument of this thesis is that they are not and this section is devoted to present two reasons to why this is so.

3.1.1 Questioning the Theory of Secularization

The first argument draws from empirical studies of what has been called the resurgence of religion in the post Cold-war world. It is a well documented fact that religiously motivated organizations are playing a larger part in world and domestic politics than in many years, Islamic fundamentalists and the events of September 11, 2001, being the most obvious case.

A number of studies (e.g. Berger 1999a, Hagevi 2005) shows that the promises of secularization have not been fulfilled and that, in the words of Berger, “the world today [...] is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever” (Berger 1999b:2). Huntington argues that the resurgence of religion has “pervaded every continent, every civilization, and virtually every country” (Huntington 1996: 95f). This is enforced by Jelen & Wilcox who presents a number of case studies exploring the role of religions in politics in as different settings as the United States, Ireland, Japan and the Arab world and that shows that “religion can play a variety of roles in national and international politics” (Jelen & Wilcox 2002:314). Also Esposito & Watson argues that “[r]eligion is indeed substantially involved in contemporary politics around the world, if not always directly yet in ways that have an important bearing on politics at all levels” (Esposito & Watson 2000:17). It clearly seem like it is time to reevaluate the prominence of secularization in the social sciences and thereby also

in the field of international relations and that religion obviously can be considered important in most societies of the world.

3.1.2 From a Clash to a Dialogue of Civilizations

Samuel Huntington's famous argument of a coming "clash of civilizations" is in many ways connected to the discussion of religion and its role in international politics. This is obvious, among other things, in that his division of the world into different civilizations largely follows religious lines. He names a Hindu, Islamic and Orthodox civilization and described the Sinic civilization as Confucian in the article that preceded the book. The Latin American civilization is also differentiated from the Western due to the fact that it has been, historically, more homogenously catholic than for example Europe or North America (Huntington 1996:45f). According to Huntington, "[c]ivilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large. They both involve the 'values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking to which successive generations in a given society have attached primary importance'" (ibid 1996:41). With this in mind it should be quite obvious that religion can play a major role in constructing and sustaining many of the world's civilizations. But Huntington's argument is that these civilizations will clash and that future conflicts will emerge in the fault lines of these civilizations, particularly between the Islamic civilization and others (ibid 1996:312). The question is, then, if religions only enforces this clash and acts as the disturber of the peace that they are considered to be in the classical Westphalian way of thinking, or if the increasing importance of religions can in fact be something that also has a more positive and somewhat opposite effect?

One scholar that argues for a positive effect of religions in world politics is Dallmayr. In his argumentation for a dialogue among civilizations² he draws from the philosophy of St Augustine and his description of reality as consisting of one city of Man (*Civitas Terrena*, the earthly city) and one city of God (*Civitas Dei*) (Dallmayr 2002:27) and claims that "to have genuine peace in the city, we must also be at peace with ourselves, with nature, and with the divine (no matter how the latter is theologically formulated). Any act of exclusion or domination directed against any one of these dimensions is an act of violence undermining peace" (ibid 2002:30). In order to accomplice such a dialogue a form of communication needs to be developed that "is open-ended and hospitable to multiple and expanding horizons" (ibid 2002:27), meaning that it needs to accept the differences between and within the complex entities of the world that are called civilizations. In a study of the spirituality of Christianity and Islam, Dallmayr suggests a way in which religions could take part in such a dialogue and that is to

² Dallmayr discusses his suggestion of a dialogue among civilizations in a much wider context than the specific role of religion in this process, but I focus only on the parts of his argument that has a connection to religion since that is the purpose of this thesis.

use a spirituality based on love (agape) and respect that are present in most religions as a starting point for communication (Dallmayr 2003:230). This may all seem very idealistic and perhaps even naïve, but as Thomas writes: “[t]he role of religious non-state actors has been most noticeable in activity to promote international cooperation through peacebuilding, conflict resolution, faith-based diplomacy, interfaith dialogue, and economic development [...]”(Thomas 2005:149).

It is symptomatic of the tendency to exclude religion from the field of international relations, that these efforts have not yet been included in the debates and the discussions of the field. The main attention religion has been given have focused on so called Islamic fundamentalisms and have been used by different scholars and journalists as an evidence of the inevitable clash of civilizations, as the only impact of religions in international relations. This reasoning is firmly in line with the Westphalian presumption discussed above where religions are seen as a primarily disruptive force. Without neglecting its destructive potential, it is my conviction that an understanding of the positive roles of religion in international affairs must also be taken into consideration and that the possibility of such positive contributions is another strong argument for including religion in the analysis of international conflicts and cooperation.

The same thought is presented by Luyckx (1999:973) as a *transmodern* way of thinking in the way that this kind of thinking “acknowledges that all civilizations need to be receptive to that which is alien, whatever form it may take. It is open to the transcendental, while resisting any authoritarian imposition of religious certainty” (Luyckx 1999:974). A transmodern way of thinking could be a base for the type of dialogue suggested by Dallmayr, but if it is to be so, a reevaluation of the concept of modernity, that tend to ignore religion in a number of different areas, must be made, as a crucial step in creating a space for religion in, for example, the study of international relations.

3.2 The Sociology of Religion: Understanding Religion in Society

In order to understand the way that religion affects people and societies I will now turn to the field of inquiry that has been most occupied by these questions, the sociology of religion. Dillon explains the aim of the sociological study of religion in the following way:

The focus [...] is on understanding religious beliefs and explaining how they relate to worldviews, practices, and identities, the diverse forms of expression religion takes, how religious practices and meanings change over time, and their implications for, and interrelations with, other domains of individual or social actions” (Dillon 2003:7).

It is obvious that the sociology of religion is a vast field of inquiry but I will focus on the parts of the field that present theories that can be of interest when it comes to the impact of religion on international relations.

3.2.1 Religion, Identity and Meaning

According to Hamilton (2001:177f), Clifford Geertz argues that religion is important because it helps to create a worldview that contains some kind of order for existence. Kurtz argues that such a worldview creates an *ethos* for different people that have three different functions; it “(1) facilitates the process of identity construction; (2) shapes and legitimates or challenges the stratification system of the social order; and (3) identifies taboo lines and lays out the ethical guidelines implied in a given worldview”(Kurtz 1995:103). Also Christiano et al stresses the importance of meaning and order when it comes to religion. They write: “Religious culture [...] is a type that for believers is primary, for it comes close to defining identity and purpose for them in this existence” (Christiano et al 2002:273).

Identity seems to be a crucial concept in order to understand how religion affects individual behavior. We will, therefore, have a closer look at the relationship between religion and identity construction.

Our identity is basically a notion of our selves. It answers questions of who we are and where we belong. An identity is a complex construction that at the same time includes “elements of continuity (being the same person over time), integration (being a whole person, not fragments), identification (being like others), and differentiation (being unique and bounded)” (Ammerman 2003:209). Identity is not a static structure, but rather a dynamic process shaped by the social interactions of everyday life.

Ammerman (2003:213) suggests that we view identity as a construction of *narratives*. A narrative is an action-account, or an event, that is being placed within a larger story, or plot, by the actor who must choose among a number of different possible scenarios available to him, and that are selected from all that the actor knows of the world, and then put in a structure of relationships. This process is supposed to provide meaning for the actor but also to create a sense of order and explanation of the event in question. Central to narrative analysis is language and communication and “the *relationship* and *actions* that gives words their meaning” (ibid 2003:213). Two kinds of narratives are important when talking about identity and that is *autobiographical narratives* and *public narratives*. The former is about the self, and contains the core values against which we evaluate new events and experiences and the latter is “attached to groups and categories, cultures and institutions” (ibid 2003:214), that is the values that are promoted by the society in which we live and acts. Ammerman writes:

We may understand identities as emerging, then, at the everyday intersections of autobiographical and public narratives. We tell stories about ourselves [...] that signal both our uniqueness and our membership, that exhibit the consistent themes that characterize us and the unfolding improvisation of the given

situation. Each situation, in turn, has its own story, a public narrative shaped by the culture and institutions of which it is a part, with powerful persons and prescribed roles establishing the plot. [...] Both the individual and the collectivity are structured and remade in those everyday interactions (ibid 2003:215).

When it comes to religious identities then, we must include a religious narrative in the equation, that is “one in which ‘religious’ actors, ideas, institutions, and experiences play a role in the story of who we are and who I am” (ibid 2003:216). In doing this, religious institutions play an important role. Kurtz (1995:107ff) argues that such institutions provides the believer with a social network that offers frames of reference that gives “positive or negative reinforcement in the identity-construction process” (ibid 1995:107). He also points out the role religious institutions play in sustaining identity changes by offering, among other things, rites of passage. Ammerman (2003:217f) also acknowledges the role of religious institutions but she also point to the more negative effect these can have in limiting the options of choices available to people. Religious institutions are, in this respect, crucial if we are to understand the nature of religious identities, since they supply the rules of the game and also regulate the relationship between the religious and the secular. In the same way, secular narratives promoted by secular authorities can have effect on religious identity because it can regulate the believer’s possibility to act religiously outside the religious community to which he belong (ibid 2003:223). In this way, the institutions provide a public narrative in creating a social environment where religious action can take place and be reinforced and they also provide what Ammerman (2003:217) calls “structured religious autobiographical narratives” that present roles which the believer can identify with and adopt, e.g. the reborn, the pilgrim and so forth.

It is, however, important to understand that religious identities are not unchangeable, and are not only constructed within the boundaries of clearly identified religious institutions or organizations. Religious identities are both constructed and constrained and “while powerful authorities keep existing stories in place, new narratives are constantly emerging. Ongoing stories are disrupted by unexpected events and deliberate innovation. Accounts from one arena are imported into another, as new participants carry plots from place to place” (ibid 2003:223), that is, religious identities are continuously constructed at the crossroads of religious tradition and new interactions.

3.2.2 The Political Roles of Religion

There are a number of different ways that religion and politics interact. The political dimensions of religion can be very different depending on which kind of religion is being discussed and the social environment in which it exists. A broad division is suggested by Lincoln (2003:59) as Weberian ideal-types of how religion and politics can be related in different kinds of societies. He calls them religiously *maximalist* and *minimalist* cultures. The minimalist culture is to a large extent the same as Western culture. Economy is its central ingredient and religion

is largely privatized and of no greater importance in defining the culture. This is instead governed by the dynamics of capitalism in a fashion-like manner (ibid 2003:59). The political role of religion in this kind of society is of course quite limited, but not non-existent. Religious parties are present in most countries and have had a varying degree of success. In this respect religion affect politics by being what Manza & Wright (2003:298) calls a *social cleavage* alongside class, ethnicity, gender or region, basically dividing secular people from believers. Manza & Wright argues that “it is through the organizational form of party systems that religious divides in social structure and group identity take on electoral significance” (ibid 2003:299). Most religious parties started out as reactions to the non-religious development of modernity and sought to mobilize people on basis of their religious identity, fighting for religious values the same way that socialist parties fights for the rights of the working class. Since members of a minimalist culture are more prone to regard religion as a some what private business, participation in the democratic system, in the same way as other interest groups are the normal way of trying to affect public policy. The fact that religious organizations have an important role in shaping and sustaining religious identities means that they play an important role in mobilizing believers on issues considered important by the religious organization in question (Williams 2003:316ff).

The maximalist culture, on the other hand, are what Luyckx (1999:973) would call pre-modern in the sense that religion is the foundation for society and that some kind of religious authority maintains order. The cultural preferences of a maximalist culture are based on a sense of morality that has its firm base in religion. The maximalist culture also regards minimalist culture “as powerful and intrusive; a serious temptation for would-be elites and a dangerous threat to all” (Lincoln 2003:59). There are not many countries that are completely maximalist, even though Afghanistan under the Taliban is one recent example, but the maximalist world view are most often found within specific religious movements active in different parts of the world, some violent others not. Williams argues that “participants in a religiously based social movement often have their sacred duty and their immortal souls at stake in their actions” (Williams 2003:317) which is especially obvious when it comes to the religious movements that have been most noticed in the study of international relations, so called global terrorist groups, like al-Qaeda. Such violent religious movements often take a maximalist position in their fight against the secularizing forces of minimalist culture often associated with some kind of westernization. Juergensmeyer (2003:164ff) argues that the devastating violence of these movements are caused by the notion that they are fighting for their immortal souls in what he calls a *Cosmic War*. This means that the fight for religious values and a religiously based way of life are set in a much greater arena, and can not be explained as merely a scheme of earthly power-seeking leaders manipulating their followers in order to maximize their own influence. Juergensmeyer lists three criterions for when a worldly struggle is probable to become a cosmic war. (1) “The struggle is perceived as a defense of basic identity and dignity; (2) Losing the struggle would be unthinkable; and (3) The struggle is blocked and cannot be won in real time or in real terms”

(Juergensmeyer 2003:164f). Once again we see the importance of identity when it comes to the way that religion affects politics, whether it is through participation in democratic elections or in violent movements. The reality of a cosmic war increases, it is safe to argue, when small movements find themselves in a no win situation that is about to change the way they live forever, which is the reality in many developing societies where western trained elites tries to create a minimalist culture in order to achieve economic development in the capitalist system of the global market. Juergensmeyer writes: “religion and its grand scenarios of cosmic war are needed most: in hopeless moments, when mythical strength provides the only resources at hand [...] A struggle that begins on worldly terms may gradually take on the characteristics of cosmic war as solutions become unlikely and awareness grows of how devastating it would be to lose” (Juergensmeyer 2003:165f). The deeply felt belief in the eternal consequences of loosing this struggle is what generates suicide-bombers and other acts of violence which is so hard to understand using standard conceptions of reason, and when religion is treated as merely a convenient cover up for strictly worldly desires of power.

4 Suggesting a Way to Include Religion in I.R Theory

After having discussed the reasons for why religion has been excluded from the study of international relations, and how the concept of religion can be understood in a societal context when it comes to identity, meaning and political behavior, it is now time to outline my argument for how social constructivism can be a good way of including religion into the analysis of international relations.

4.1 The Possibilities of Social Constructivism

Constructivism offers an account of the politics of identity. It proposes a way of understanding how nationalism, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, and sexuality, and other intersubjectively understood communities, are each involved in an account of global politics (Hopf 1998:192).

The quote above seems to indicate that constructivism indeed is a possible way to include religion in the analysis of international relations. It does, however, not explain the reasons for this assumption, that is, in what way constructivism is able to account for a phenomenon like religion. That is what this discussion will aim at doing.

Starting from the very bottom, a central reason for why constructivism is a good way to understand religion in international relations is because of its ontological assumption of the existence of both a material and a *social reality* (Adler 1997:332). This also implies that “the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material” (Ruggie 1998:879). Very basically put, the constructivist approach is “about human consciousness and its role in international relations” (ibid 1998:856) and it emphasizes the role of *collective intentionality* (ibid 1998:869f) or *intersubjective meanings* (Adler 1997:327f). These concepts parts constructivism from the individualistic focus of the rationalist approaches in that it stresses the importance of a kind of collective knowledge, that is, that “although ‘each of us thinks his own thoughts; our concepts we share with our fellow-men’” and that “[i]ntersubjective reality thus exists and persists thanks to social communication” (ibid 1997:327). Ruggie exemplifies this by writing that “[s]overeignty, like money or property rights, exists only within a framework of shared meaning that recognizes it to be valid – that is, by virtue of collective intentionality” (Ruggie 1998:870). Religion could be considered to be a part of such collective intentionality, that for believers is, like Christiano et al argues, primary, “for it comes close to defining identity and

purpose for them in this existence” (Christiano et al 2002:273). This implies that since collective intentionality, or intersubjective meanings, in a constructivist view are social facts (Ruggie 1998:869) (that is, constituting intersubjective reality), like sovereignty or property rights, so is religion. Religious institutions are important in this respect, since “this [religious] knowledge persists beyond the lives of individual social actors [believers], embedded in social routines and practices [e.g. rites] as they are reproduced by interpreters who participate in their production and workings. Intersubjective meanings have structural attributes that do not merely constrain or empower actors. They also define their social reality” (Adler 1997:327 my brackets). That means that constructivists can accept that for believers, religion, and what come along with it, is a social fact that has primary importance in the reality of the believer, but also that religion is a social fact because it is a concept that we all have a subjective understanding of, making it a part of the intersubjective meanings of social reality. This is in line with Adler’s proposition that “constructivism means studying how what the agents themselves consider rational is brought to bear on collective human enterprises and situations” (ibid 1997:329).

Also, the study of *constitutive rules* is central to the constructivist scholar. According to Ruggie, constitutive rules are inevitable because they constitute “the set of practices that make up a particular class of consciously organized social activity” (Ruggie 1998:871). The social world, for a constructivist, is made up of such constitutive rules which are based in the collective intentionality or intersubjective meanings of social reality which makes some of them so deeply embedded in the consciousness of actors that they are not considered rules at all. Even so, “[c]onstitutive rules are the institutional foundation for all social life. No consciously organized realm of human activity is imaginable without them [...]” (ibid 1998:873). Religion obviously supplies a specific kind of such constitutive rules for communities of believers. In this way, religion can be seen as affecting international society and politics by advocating a different set of constitutive rules than those promoted by secular western culture and the scientific tradition of the Enlightenment, since the rules of religions is accepted on faith and not classical (that is, western) rationality. Kubálková (2003:94f) argues that viewing religions as specific sets of rules also makes it possible to consider religiously motivated actions as rational, which according to Adler (1997:329) is central to the constructivist enterprise. This is because “[p]eople use reason or judgment to decide whether to accept or reject rules and what course of action to take. Religion is no exception. Judgment arises from knowledge about the context of the rules involved in a situation and about the consequences of following or violating them” (Kubálková 2003:95). Thus, religion can take different political forms depending on the context within which that judgment is made, which could explain, in part, the differences of political organization and behavior in Lincoln’s (2003:59) minimalist and maximalist religious cultures.

Another way that makes constructivism a promising approach when it comes to taking religion seriously in international relations is its focus on the importance of identity as a guide to interests and action (Waever 1999, Reus-Smit 2001:217, Katzenstein 1996b:23). It could be argued that the constitutive rules of religion

can make up its norms, because norms could be considered to “describe collective expectations for the proper behavior of actors with a given identity” (Katzenstein 1996b:5). This means that having a religious identity, implies an interest in acting in accordance with the norms that constitutes that religion. In that way norms both constitutes what it is to have a religious identity and regulates the desirable behavior of a member of that specific identity (ibid 1996b:5). Religious identities are special in ways that makes them primary to other parts of actor’s identities. One aspect of this is that religion is good at giving a complete narrative, or story, of why the world looks as it does. Following that, religions also presents the reasons for why the world is as it is, which is principally not good, and also provides the ways to make it the way it is supposed (normally by God) to be (Williams 2003:317). In his study of religious movements Williams (ibid 2003:317) explains that “activists often describe themselves as having ‘no choice’ about their involvement in movement actions, and note that they believe they are following God’s will. [...] Not only does faith give the activists the courage to do these things, it often provides a rationale for breaking the law – that is, the necessity for obedience to a higher law makes breaking human laws justified” (ibid 2003:317). Thus, by acting in accordance with the religious narratives of their identity (Ammerman 2003) these activists are good examples of the importance of understanding the norms (or constitutive rules if you will) that constitutes identities in order to understand the actions of, as in this example, religious social movements. Religious identities are also special because they introduce a transcendent reality that affects the interests and actions of religious actors by providing a very specific meaning with their existence. An obvious, but somewhat extreme, case of this is the fundamentalist Islamic movements that believe they are obligated to fight the state of *jahiliyya*, that is, the modern world’s active rebellion against the sovereignty of God on earth (Lincoln 2003:3), in order to save the souls of mankind. They find themselves in a narrative that prescribes the necessity of, what Juergensmeyer (2003:164f) has called, a cosmic war, that involves both an earthly and a transcendent, or after-earthly, existence.

Since the focus of a constructivist approach to international relations is on the ideational features of a social reality that underlines the importance of understanding how actors identities are constructed and how they affect the actors interests and behavior, it is, in my view, very well equipped to include religion in the analysis of international relations. There is however one more argument for this and that is the epistemological diversity of the constructivist approach that I think is necessary for a broad understanding of how religion affects international relations.

According to Kubáľková (2003:86f) there is a fundamental ontological difference between religious and secular thought, making it impossible to learn something about the reality of believers, using the standard methodological tools of positivist social science, advocated by rationalist scholars. She argues that “[a]ttempting to fit religious experience into a positivist framework can only emasculate it, caricature it, distort its meaning, and underestimate its strength” (ibid 2003:87). Also Thomas (2005:248) criticizes the rationalist approach to religion since it does not take into consideration the meaning that religious actors

give to their social interaction. I will suggest that in order to fully understand religion in international relations we need to take the critique of Kubáľková and Thomas seriously, but that does not have to mean that we need to surrender the possibility of talking about religion in terms of a kind of causal explanations. The social constructivist approach can include both an interpretative and a more normal (rational) epistemology. As discussed in chapter 2, Reus-Smit (2001) and Hopf (1998) have recognized two broad camps of constructivisms, conventional and critical, that in a way expand over the width of what Christiansen et al (2001:10) and Adler (1997:330f) calls the middle ground between rationalist and reflectivist, or post-modernist, approaches to social science. Even though these two variants can be seen as hard to combine, they are in fact united by their ontological propositions that separate them from pure rationalists or postmodernists. Adler (1997:232f) calls this ontological position *mediative* and he describe it as meaning that “mediativists’ are ontological realists who believe that reality is affected by knowledge and social factors [...] a mediative approach means that social reality emerges from the attachment of meaning and function to physical objects; collective understandings, such as norms, endow physical objects with purpose and therefore help constitute reality” (ibid 1997:324).

Following this, Wendt (1999:90) argues that ontology is more important than epistemology and that what is important is what the world in fact consist of, which constructivists, as we have seen, agree on. Wendt argues for what he calls *a sociology of questions*, (ibid 1999:88f) which means that he thinks that science should be driven by questions and not methodological constrains. The implication of this is that he argues that constitutive and causal theorizing does not exclude one-another but merely answers different questions (ibid 1999:83ff). Constitutive theorizing (critical constructivism), that demands an interpretive methodology answers how-possible- and what-questions and causal theorizing (conventional constructivism), that includes more traditional scientific methods, why-questions. One important conclusion of Wendt is that answers to causal questions often require answers to constitutive questions first. Now, this may seem like a very easy and convenient (and maybe also idealistic) way to neutralize differences between constructivist scholars of different types, but I will argue that this Wendtian argument is of special importance when it comes to including religion in a constructivist analysis of international relations.

If we are to understand why religion expresses itself in the international arena in certain ways at certain times we must first understand the constitutive elements of religion from the view of the believer. Kubáľková writes “God is not ‘out there’, waiting to be discovered or observed by the processes of rational thought and scientific observation. [...] The meaning ascribed to the reality of God is fixed nonetheless by social conventions and can be expressed in everyday language. [...] The ongoing representation of what eludes representation is required to provide the believer with a map of reality” (Kubáľková 2003:88f). There are in other words, no way of understanding religion without using some kind of interpretative methodology, like the rule-oriented constructivism of Kubáľková or a narrative approach to understanding the special characteristics of a religious identity suggested by Thomas (2005:85ff) and Ammerman (2003).

Again, it is in place to underline the constructivist focus of “studying how what the agents themselves consider rational is brought to bear on collective human enterprises and situations” (Adler 1997:329). In order to understand the rationality of religious actions we must understand the ways that a religious identity constitutes actors with interests that concern both our earthly existence and a transcendent one. That implies that we must try to find out the reasons religious actors have for doing what they are doing. But, according to Adler (1997:329), by doing so we are also, in a way, trying to explain why they are doing it, which leads to questions of causality. In contrast to the rationalist’s view of causality built on material factors, constructivism advocates a kind of “social causality that takes *reasons as causes*” (ibid 1997:329). Adler argues that “causality in social science involves specifying a time-bounded sequence and relationship between the social phenomena we want to explain and the antecedent conditions, in which people consciously and often rationally do things for reasons that are socially constituted by their collective interpretations of the external world and the rules they act upon” (ibid 1997:330). That means that Wendt’s (1999:88ff) argument of the need for answering constitutive questions in order to be able to answer causal ones are supported when it comes to religion, because it is not until we understand how (by interpreting rules or narratives) a religious identity and the rules or norms that constitute it, affects the interests of the actor, that we can predict the behavior of that actor, which means that “determining the meaning of actions provides some knowledge of causes” (Adler 1997:330). In other words, in order to understand religion in international relations we need the contributions of both conventional and critical constructivists, which imply that their common ontology has more important implications than their epistemological differences, since the social causality of constructivists, are considerably more dependent on constitutive theorizing than the materialistic causality of the rationalist approach.

4.2 Some Remaining Critique and Obstacles

Following the discussion above, constructivism seems to be well equipped to include a phenomenon like religion into the analysis of international relations. But Fox and Sandler (2004:29f, 170) argues that even though constructivism can make room for religion, it has in some respects been one of the most reluctant approaches to do so. This is because of the focus of constructivist scholars, like rational ones, on the Westphalian state-system and the states that constitute it. This system is also understood to be a construction of man, which according to Fox & Sandler (2004:29) effectively excludes any discussion of the divine. Even though constructivism could be considered an outgrowth of critical theory (Reus-Smit 2001:215), its empirical approach has come to tilt to the rational side of the middle-ground, due to the influential works of e.g. Wendt (1992, 1999) and Katzenstein (1996a). Wendt, in this respect, seems almost like a realist in his extreme systemic focus that treats states as black boxes who’s identities are constructed mainly in their systemic interactions (Reus-Smit 2001:219), and even

though Katzenstein investigates domestic sources as important factors in the identity construction of a state, where religion could be one, he focuses on classical issues like national security (ibid 2001:220). The problem with this state-centrism is that it effectively excludes religion because of the fact that it uncritically embraces the Westphalian synthesis, just as the rationalist do (see chapter 2). There are few religious states in the system, even though religious parties have gained increased power within countries like Sudan, Algeria and India (Juergensmeyer 1995:379, 387), and the main influence of religion are best located at lower levels of analysis, a place where neither rationalist or, as it seems, most constructivists, are eager to go. The Westphalian synthesis and its focus on sovereign states are treated as a conventional wisdom, just as the secularization theory was by the founders of the social sciences in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

This is where the work of Thomas (2003, 2005) becomes interesting. Working within a postmodernist philosophy of science he clearly recognizes the problems of the modern liberal creation of the Westphalian system, as an obstacle to taking religion seriously in the study of international relations. He argues that in order to establish the principle of state sovereignty, both internal and external, a modern liberal conception of religion as something strictly private, was necessary for the state to obtain the ultimately loyalty of the people (Thomas 2003:28). The consequence of this was that religion became detached from its practices, grounded in the religious tradition of a society and was transformed into a simple body of ideas, in order to break the authoritative structure of the ecclesiastic community that had been the base of the earlier traditional society (ibid 2003:27). From this view, Thomas criticizes rationalist and even constructivist scholars because of their uncritical use of this liberal-modern approach to religion, which he argues does not grasp “the meaning and significance of religion for social action in international relations” (Thomas 2005:69). In order to correct this he proposes the use of the social theory of MacIntyre³ as a better way of understanding religion in society. Central to MacIntyre is the opinion that “the self has a life story, embedded in the story of a larger community from which the self derives a social and a historical identity. The life stories of members of the community are embedded and intermingled with the stories of others in the story of the communities from which they derive their identity” (ibid 2005:91). Thomas also argues that this leads to the conclusion that “human action or social action becomes intelligible only when it is interpreted as part of a larger narrative of the collective life of states, individuals, or communities” (ibid 2005:91). This seems to be in line with my argument above, concerning the epistemological diversity of constructivism as an asset to the study of religion in international relations, but Thomas argues otherwise and claims that there is “an unbearable lightness to social constructivism” (ibid 2005:93) when it comes to taking religion seriously in international relations. This is because of the way that most social constructivists

³ For a more detailed summary of MacIntyre’s social theory see any of the references to Thomas (2003, 2005)

have adopted the Westphalian (that is modern-liberal) attitude towards religion, and thereby excluded it. I think that the unbearable lightness could be overcome by focusing on the ontological similarities of different constructivists, because the work of Kubáľková (2003) is arguably not that far from the reasoning of MacIntyre, since both stresses the importance of interpretative methods in order to fully understand the specific importance of religion for believers. The pragmatist philosophy of science that could characterize constructivism (Adler 1997:328f) can thereby be considered a very suitable way of including religion in the analysis of international relations (ibid 1997:335). However, that requires that social constructivist scholars approach the Westphalian system in a more critical way and that they widen their horizon beyond the narrow field of study that states and the state-system, as the only important actors in international politics, comprises. They possess the proper tools to include religion in their analysis, but have so far, with some exceptions, shown a surprising unwillingness to do so. This points to the decisive need to re-think Westphalia in the study of international relations in order to include a comprehensive understanding of religion in the field.

5 Conclusion

The post Cold-war world has experienced a resurgence of religion as a political force both domestically and internationally. Events like the attacks of September 11, 2001, tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India and Pakistan and the increasing importance of religious parties in countries like Turkey all indicates that religion plays an increasingly important role in the world. Even so, international relations scholars have been extremely silent about this topic. When religion has been noticed at all, the discussion has centred on violent Islamic movements committing terrorist acts in different parts of the world. This thesis argues that even if the destructive side of religions are not to be ignored, there are positive effects as well, of the increasing importance of religion in many parts of the world. Fred Dallmayr is one scholar who recognizes the positive role religion could play in improving the communications between the civilizations of the world, thereby contributing to a dialogue instead of a clash of civilizations. Also Scott Thomas argues for the possibility of positive contributions of religions to areas such as diplomacy and different kinds of development issues, making an understanding of how religion works as a force in international relations all the more important.

This, together with the massive empirical studies of sociologists and some political scientists indicating the increasing importance of religion, would arguably spur scholars of international relations to investigate the international implications of this development, but that has not happened. Two reasons for this are given in this thesis. First, it has to do with the impact of the philosophies of the Enlightenment on the evolution of the social sciences, where secularization theory foresaw the inevitable demise of religions as the modern society replaced the old order of church and king. In the long run, this thinking led to the behavioral or positivist revolution of the social sciences in the 1950s and 60s, in an attempt to match the scientific ideal of the natural sciences, where only the observable and material world can be scientifically investigated and knowable.

The second reason is that the central units of analysis in international relations, the sovereign states of the Westphalian state-system, were created in order to exclude religion from the halls of power, following the devastating Wars of Religion in Europe that led to the peace-treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The combination of the dominance of a behavioral scientific ideal, that hardly takes religion as something more than a convenient way of power seeking individuals to find legitimization and a way to mobilize support, and units of analysis that were created in order to neutralise religion as a source of power and influence in world politics have developed dominant international relations theories that both neglects the importance of religion and the possibility to investigate it scientifically. The rationalist and individualist approach of realism and liberalism

makes a better understanding of religion unnecessary, since material factors and institutions of different kinds are thought to give a comprehensive explanation of world politics. This has led scholars of a post-modern philosophy of science, like Scott Thomas, to conclude that no theories of international relations are capable of understanding a concept like religion.

But I argue that the social constructivist approach to international relations contains the possibilities to include a comprehensive understanding of religion in the analysis of world politics. There are three reasons for this. First, the constructivists recognise the existence of non-material social facts in the shape of collective intentionality or intersubjective meanings. Based in those are the constitutive rules that are necessary for all organized social interaction. Religions provide the believer with a specific kind of such rules which could be argued to comprise the norms of that specific religion. Secondly, constructivists argues that in order to understand the actions of an actor we must understand how that actors identity creates certain specific interests that leads the actor to act the way he does. The identities of actors, according to constructivists, are created in the social interaction with others and are based in the constitutive rules and intersubjective meanings that we share. Religion provides an identity that, according to sociologists of religion, is primary to the believer in the sense that the interests it generates often have dire consequences for the believer, should they not be realized. Thirdly, the different kinds of epistemology that are advocated by different kinds of constructivists is of great importance when it comes to investigating a concept like religion, thus indicating the need to focus on the ontological similarities and create a sociology of questions where both interpretative and more conventional methodological approaches are seen as complimentary instead of mutually exclusive. That is because of the impossibility of understanding the reality of a believer using conventional methodological techniques. In order to understand the identity and interests of a religious actor we must use interpretative techniques like narratives or language interpretations. First then, can we try to give causal explanations of the impact of a religious actor in an international situation, using a social kind of causality that takes reasons as causes.

Using this combination of methodological techniques makes it possible for a constructivist to escape Scott Thomas accusations that constructivists provide an unacceptably thin understanding of religion based in the modern-liberal idea of religion as merely an ideology or set of ideas as any other. But that does not exclude the need for constructivist scholars to be more critical of the biases against religion included in the Westphalian order, that can explain the lack of constructivist work in this field, and the need to widen the horizon of empirical investigation beyond the state in order to learn more about the impact of religion or culture on international politics. First then, will the constructivist scholars be able to utilize the full potential of their approach.

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