Constructivism and Moral Argument in International Relations

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Introduction

Constructivism as an approach to international relations may adopt any one of a number of forms but each seeks to situate the behaviour of agents, whether they be states or otherwise, in a social and cultural context, viewing decision-making as much in ideational as in material terms. In the narrowest sense, constructivism has been identified with the work of Alexander Wendt and of those inspired by his work. In the broadest sense, constructivism has been applied as a descriptive label to all critics of realism, neorealism and liberal institutionalism. The more conventional usage, and the one used here identifies constructivism with an approach that finds the sources of behaviour in international politics in the interaction of social and ideational as well as material factors, and can be discerned in the work of a number of prominent scholars in the field of international relations. From an analytical point of view, this approach reflects the influence of trends beyond international relations in the social sciences generally. From the perspective of moral or normative discussion, the most obvious approach for a constructivist would be to raise questions of authenticity, that is of consistency with the values of a professed tradition, or hypocrisy, that is of inconsistency with the values of a professed tradition. On occasion, suggesting that an agent may be betraying ideals of a professed tradition may be an effective form of moral critique but, on other occasions, critique may be constrained by a lack of distance from the professed tradition. This paper addresses whether such a perspective can be genuinely compatible with an effort to discuss decisions in moral terms.

The Constructivist School in International Relations Theory

Many of those who study international relations have felt some degree of disquiet or frustration with the tendency of realism, at least as frequently practised whether or not that practice conforms to the actual richness of the realist tradition as set out by Morgenthau, Carr and Aron, to dismiss the influence of culture, religion and history on international politics, and to deprecate the relevance of ethical issues. In many cases, these students of international politics appreciate many of the reservations advanced by realists over a deficiency in rigour with what might be called "utopianism". Frequently such individuals are impressed by developments in the social sciences in general, and attempt to introduce or to re-introduce, depending on one's interpretation of the history of international relations as a field of study, a sense of the social. Such are the forces that have attracted many to what has come to be known as "constructivism". While a distinction is sometimes made between "culturalism", which is the term applied to a similar approach in the field of comparative politics, and "constructivism", which is the term typically used in the field of international relations, the term "constructivism" is also frequently used to refer to both. Each apply interpretive social science to discern cultural or social ideational influences, and emphasizes these in analysis at least as much as material factors. From a normative viewpoint, such an approach can be effective in identifying norms and values which a given tradition professes to respect, and may demonstrate either that actors are acting authentically, that is in a manner consistent with the values which they profess to respect, or hypocritically, that is a manner inconsistent with the values which they profess to respect. As far as this goes, normative discussion can proceed by holding hypocrites to account, but the issue arises as to whether such an approach can ever succeed in distancing itself sufficiently from a tradition in order to be able to subject the tradition itself to critique.

Constructivism, as with realism, has been interpreted in a range of ways. Wendt describes the basic tenets of constructivism as ". . . (1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature."[1] Checkel observes that constructivism ". . . is not a theory but an approach to social inquiry based on two assumptions: (1) the environment in which agents/states take action is social as well as material; and (2) this setting can provide agents/states with understandings of their interests (it can 'constitute' them)."[2] Koslowski and Kratochwil write that "Instead of conceiving the international system in terms of distributions of tangible resources and invisible

structures working behind the backs of the actors, constructivism views it as an artifice of man-made institutions, such as (but not limited to) states. In general, institutions are settled or routinized practices established and regulated by norms."[3] Hopf notes that "Contra neorealism, constructivism assumes that actors and structures mutually constitute each other; anarchy must be interpreted to have meaning; state interests are part of the process of identity construction; power is both material and discursive; and change in world politics is both possible and difficult."[4] Price defines constructivism as ". . . a tradition of social and political thought that sees the world as not just consisting of material forces but of ideational social phenomena through which we interpret the material and construct our societies."[5] Price goes on to observe that "Constructivism emphasizes that such ideas are not just individually held, but occur in the form of intersubjective structures that form the broader social context out of which individual ideas emerge; thus, ideas and communities can be studied as social facts, as against the individualist ontology of rationalist theories."[6] Geller and Vasquez observe that "Although, like realism and liberalism, constructivism is better seen as a paradigm that encompasses a number of specific theoretical formulations, it nonetheless has a core set of assumptions and theoretical perspectives that shape its approach and provide guidance to its practitioners. Among the most central in terms of its epistemological assumptions is the idea that 'reality' is constructed by concepts, ideas, and knowledge and not the other way around, namely that the observation or study of 'reality' gives rise to knowledge."[7] These definitions all point to a social or cultural context, which, for analytical purposes, are seen as at least as influential on decision-making as material factors. Some include all approaches which challenge realism and neorealism under the constructivist umbrella, while some distinguish critical, feminist and post-modernist approaches from constructivism.

The sphere of international politics is distinguished from other political spheres by its anarchic character --- that is the lack of an overarching government capable of enforcing law and imposing order on the states within the sphere of international politics. The realist position is characterized by the view that anarchy by its very structure necessarily determines that international politics is a sphere in which the behaviour of state actors reflects insecurity and fear. International politics, according to the realist position, by its nature necessarily turns into something approximating the state of nature depicted by Hobbes in the absence of a sovereign. This view has been criticized for overstating the element of insecurity, and for neglecting the co-operative behaviour observable in international politics and the behaviour characteristic of what might be considered an international society existing even in the absence of a world government moderating the insecurity of the anarchy. The neo-realist position retains the basic realist view that structural anarchy creates a sphere characterized by insecurity but recognizes that other factors like international law, norms, traditional practices, and governmental and non-governmental international organizations.play parts in influencing behaviour. The constructivist position, which in this respect suggests similarities to the English school, sees the consequences of the anarchic character of international politics as being determined not necessarily by its structure as inevitably an Hobbesian state of nature, as the realists would assert, but as being determined by the social, not necessarily individual, perception of the implications of anarchy. In other words, the constructivist would argue that the realist or Hobbesian state of nature view represents not an inevitable outcome of anarchy but one of the plausible outcomes, along with views commonly referred to within the writings of the English school[8] and elsewhere as Grotian emphasizing international law and society and as Kantian emphasizing co-operative behaviours and solidarist influences, determined by how international politics is perceived socially. Wendt replaces Hobbesian, Grotian and Kantian with Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian, and views the constructivist approach as more distinct from the English school than it is thought to be by some such as Buzan.[9]

The end of the Cold War contributed to the attractiveness of constructivism in that it highlighted the possibilities of change in the international system. Given its emphasis on the virtual inevitability of certain outcomes as a consequence of structure and human nature, realism appeared to suggest a stable, even perhaps unchanging, order. Constructivism as conceived of by analysts like Onuf, Kratochwil, Wendt and Adler aspires with its focus on the interaction of structural and social factors to put forward a broader, more nuanced understanding of international politics sensitive in a way in which it was alleged realism had not been to the influence of social and cultural factors. Onuf expresses reservations about the realist approach to international relations, commenting that "This is because I have grave doubts about the claim that anarchy is the central and defining feature of international relations. I would not deny the incidence of anarchical events, but these events always take place under conditions that must be characterized otherwise."[10] Onuf, credited with coining the term "constructivism" in the context of international relations theory, reflects in his work the influence of critical international relations theory to a greater degree than most other constructivists. Kratochwil expresses reservations about the domestic analogy,

suggesting that the absence of a world government capable of enforcing international law need not produce the sort of anarchy that the absence of government might produce at the domestic level because there appears to be a tacit recognition for the most part of norms and customs at the level of international politics even in the absence of the sort of enforcement and adjudicative mechanisms typical of law and government in domestic politics.[11] Kratochwil's work, in his emphasis on the influence of norms, reflects, on the one hand, a Winchean interpretative methodology, and on the other hand, a view of international society specifically as embracing some Grotian elements moderating the anarchic aspects of the international system. Wendt emphasizes the process by which interaction contributes to a social understanding of collective identity.[12] Wendt uses social theory to examine the generation of corporate agency and identity, and to study the relation between agency and structure. Wendt cautions that "Constructivism is not a theory of international politics. Constructivist sensibilities encourage us to look at how actors are socially constructed, but they do not tell us which actors to study or where they are constructed."[13] Viewing constructivism as a product of the liberal-communitarian debate in political philosophy and the rationalist-interpretivist debate in the philosophy of social science, Adler argues that ". . . constructivism aspires and to some extent has managed to find a middle ground between a rationalist perspective that focuses on individuality and universality and an interpretive perspective that takes contextual knowledge, contingency, and human interpretation to be the hallmarks of social reality."[14] Adler suggests that "This approach does not herald the end of the nation-state or underscore the unimportance of individuals and agency in international life. Rather, it argues that what mediate between state, individuals, and human agency, on the one hand, and social structures and systems, on the other, are communities of practice."[15] Adler is the constructivist most identified with the notion that constructivism can bridge the differences between realists, neorealists and liberals, on the one hand, and critical theorists, feminists and post-modernists, on the other. In addition, to the work of Onuf, Kratochwil, Wendt and Adler, the work of such scholars as John Gerard Ruggie, Martha Finnemore, Michael Barnett, and Christian Reus-Smit is frequently characterized as constructivist. Each of these variations on the constructivist approach sees the social and communicative interaction among actors/agents in international politics as influencing understandings of international politics, and as a result, ultimately influencing behaviour. Each of these variations is, as well, characterized by a softening and blurring of the line distinguishing international from domestic politics. Among other effects, this has stimulated consideration of the influence of non-state actors complementing the traditional focus on state actors, and of the influence of factors like political culture and history on the development of foreign policy and perceptions of the national interest complementing the traditional focus on the geopolitical structure of the international system. Some hypothesized the emergence of a new "great debate" between realism and constructivism. Others speculated that constructivism might provide a middle ground bridging between realism and critical or radical approaches.

Not all have been convinced of the reasonableness of such expectations. Some characterize any approach critical of realism as constructivist. Some of the proponents of some of these approaches are uncomfortable with the constructivist label or even reject it outright. In the case of some approaches, like those associated with Marxist political economy, a materialist orientation results in an awkward fit. While conscious of the influence of non-state actors, most conventional constructivists see states as typically the dominant actors although conventional constructivists tend to attach a higher priority than realists tend to do to the process of social interaction by which national interests come to be defined. Wendt, for example, recognizes some variation among constructivists but he takes the position that ". . . since states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics this means that they should be the primary unit of analysis for thinking about the global regulation of violence."[16] In Wendt's case, he explicitly distinguishes his epistemological position from that of some other constructivists, writing that "Given my idealist ontological commitments, therefore, one might think that I should be firmly on the post-positivist side of this divide, talking about discourse and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing and objective reality. Yet, in fact, when it comes to the epistemology of social inquiry I am a strong believer in science --- a pluralistic science to be sure, in which there is a significant role for 'Understanding,' but science just the same. I am a 'positivist'."[17] In contrast, Kratochwil and Ruggie write, "In contrast to the epistemological ideal of positivism, which insists on a separation of 'object' and 'subject', we proposed a more interpretive approach that would open up regime analysis to the communicative rather than merely the referential functions of norms in social interactions."[18] Adler characterizes constructivism as ". . an attempt, albeit timid, to build a bridge between the widely separated positivist/materialist and idealist/interpretive philosophies of social science."[19]Nevertheless, some critical, feminist and post-modernist international relations theorists not only reject the characterization of their work as constructivist but feel marginalized

by notions put forward by some constructivists of a realist-constructivist "great debate". Zehfuss, for example, suggests that "Constructivism is acceptable, and even to some extent welcome, as a critical alternative to the 'mainstream' because it accepts the rules of the scientific game. Occupying the middle ground, in other words, is supposed to enable constructivists to have their cake and eat it, too."[20] Zehfuss takes the view that "Whilst they critically distance themselves from the mainstream, they at the same time receive professional recognition from within it. Constructivism has come to be not only one of the main acceptable ways in which the international world may be studied but also, as Guzzini notes ironically, 'the officially accredited contender to the core of the discipline'."[21] Some conventional constructivists are perceived by some critical, feminist and post-modernist theorists as being so much closer in their positions to those of the realists than to those of the critical, feminist and post-modernist theorists that the latter theorists are skeptical of the credibility or likelihood of success of aspirations of constructivists like Wendt and Adler to develop constructivism into a "via media" or a middle ground capable of bridging between realism and neorealism, on the one hand, and critical, feminist and post-modern approaches, on the other hand. Some constructivists, like Kratochwil, are concerned that Wendt in his Social Theory of International Politics in an attempt to demonstrate that a synthesis is possible between realism and constructivism has, in their view, obscured some of the distinctive strengths of a constructivist approach.[22] Others, like Price and Reus-Smit, worry that the controversies over theory may discourage constructivists and critical theorists from working together to pursue empirical research and to advance discussion of normative issues. They observe that "There are many constructivists, and thus perhaps many constructivisms. Our concern here has not been so much with the purity of categorizing a diverse array of scholars past and present, but to assess whether the empirically oriented scholarship of contemporary constructivists versed in Third Debate critical theory need violate key tenets of the critical project."[23] Their conclusion is that ". . . it need not, and indeed that constructivist scholarship can help to realize the promises of critical theory. The rise of constructivism is often portrayed as a 'turn', and this is certainly the case for those who have embraced constructivism out of a dissatisfaction with their backgrounds in behavioralist traditions. But for the many constructivists self-consciously inspired by the promise of critical international theory, systematic empirical work involved not a turn but a logical continuation of Third Debate critical theory."[24]

Constructivists do not challenge the realist notion that states pursue interests but do criticize the realist tendency to view interests either as given or evident or as a straightforward product of a material situation. Discerning the national interest, constructivists argue, calls for consideration of ways in which a material situation may be perceived. Wendt, for example, asserts that ". . . the meaning of the distribution of power in international politics is constituted in important part by the distribution of interests, and that the content of interests are in turn constituted in important part by ideas."[25] He argues that ". . . power and interest have the effects they do in virtue of the ideas that make them up. Power and interest explanations presuppose ideas, and to that extent are not rivals to ideational explanations at all."[26] Finnemore insists that ". . . much of international politics is about defining rather than defending national interests."[27] It is her contention that "Aspirations to develop a generalizable theory of international politics modeled on theories in the natural sciences and economics have led most international relations scholars in the United States since the 1960s to assume rather than problematize state interests. Interests across the states system had to be treated as both stable and roughly identical if systemic-level theory of this kind was to proceed. Thus, neorealist and neoliberal scholars currently dominating the field make parsimonious assumptions about what all states want."[28] Finnemore suggests that these scholars have been overly "parsimonious", neglecting the way in which norms and social interaction influence the definition of interests. Adler advances the notion of what he calls "communities of practice", a category encompassing epistemic communities, security communities and imagined communities, and embracing national and transnational communities as a way of approaching the analysis of the generation of perceived interests nationally and internationally.[29] Barnett, in an examination of foreign policy formation in Israel, focuses on identity, narrative, frames and institutions.[30] Constructivists are concerned not only with the influence of domestic political culture on the definition of state interests and the formation of foreign policy but, as well, with the influence of evolving norms in international society. Finnemore examines the ways in which changing norms have changed the understanding of why, when and how traditional notions of state sovereignty can be overridden in favour of intervention.[31] The interest of constructivists in the influence of norms in international society has inspired work on regimes and international institutions.[32]

Morality, Norms and Identity

The difficult aspect of discussing morality in the context of international relations is simultaneously avoiding the temptation to approach the subject at too abstract a level, producing arguments that may be fascinating from an academic perspective but which reside at such a detached location that they are of little relevance to any actual world or potential situation, and the temptation to approach the subject at the superficial level of the current controversy of the day, producing little more than arbitrary ad hoc opinions grounded in little more than the biases of the moment. The former temptation can produce philosophical discussions and an international relations theory without the international relations. The second temptation is prone to producing philosophical discussions and an international relations theory without the theory or the philosophy. The trick, which is easier said than done, is to keep one's feet on the ground and one's head in the clouds at the same time. Without compromising the moral element, there must be a sense of what is possible and with what consequences within the international system. An understanding of how the system operates is necessary to avoid, for example, well-intentioned but potentially disastrous or even pointless actions. The morality of foreign policy is more complicated even than individual morality. The selfless sacrifices that may be admirable in individual morality are precluded in the morality of foreign policy because in the latter what is at stake is not so much one's own life or welfare as that of others for whose sake a decision-maker assumes responsibility. Accosted by a felon, one may choose to fight back or not but issues of sovereignty and legitimacy would arise if a state chose not to attach a certain priority to defending its citizens from being attacked by internal and external forces.

Realism has been caricatured as an approach insensitive to moral considerations and some unsophisticated realists have played down to the caricature but the major thinkers of post-war realism like Morgenthau, Carr and Aron have been very aware of moral considerations. They did not so much see morality as irrelevant, indeed they were deeply concerned about morality, but they frequently saw scope for moral decision-making as constrained by tragic dilemmas inherent in the anarchy of international politics. Williams points out that, rather than expressing simple resignation to the fate of the nasty and brutish aspects of the Hobbesian state of nature as a state of war, the post-World War II realists were invoking Hobbes' expressed abhorrence of such a state and the necessity of fashioning an effective response, even as they accepted that Hobbes' solution to civil war of institutionalizing a sovereign was not as applicable to the context of international politics.[33] In other words, they feared that what they viewed as largely unchangeable elements of human nature and the structure of an anarchic international system precluded much deviation from a fundamental concern with national security and international order in an inherently dangerous world. Any substantial deviation from this point of view represented not moral courage but self-indulgence. Carr, for example, for all of his well-known critique of utopianism, cautions that ". . . consistent realism breaks down because it fails to provide any ground for purposive or meaningful action."[34] He advises that "Where utopianism has become a hollow and intolerable sham, which serves merely as a disguise for the interests of the privileged, the realist performs an indispensable service in unmasking it. But pure realism can offer nothing but a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible."[35] Morgenthau cautions that "Political realism contains not only a theoretical but also a normative element."[36] Morgenthau observes that ". . . political realism considers a rational foreign policy to be good foreign policy; for only a rational foreign policy minimizes risks and maximizes benefits and, hence, complies both with the moral precept of prudence and the political requirement of success."[37] Aron suggests that, as long as international politics remains as it is, the result will be that ". . . the morality of international action will also be equivocal."[38] While conceding that the "morality of struggle" and the "morality of law" each have a relevance, he recommends what he calls the "morality of prudence".[39] Some would argue that this sort of focus on prudence disqualifies such approaches from being considered as approaches to morality and politics but this would seem unduly restrictive.

Aside from the realists, a number of other approaches to international relations entailed in one way or another confronting moral issues. Mitrany and the functionalists saw the expansion of cooperation among states in functional areas as improving living conditions and increasing prosperity, as well as removing irritants that might otherwise jeopardize peace. Among adherents of the so-called English school, a debate took place between pluralists and solidarists over the desirability and likelihood of international society resembling either a society of societies or, in contrast, something closer to what might be considered a world society. In addition, Marxists, dependency theorists and other radical political economists questioned the disparity between First and Third Worlds, and the degree to which the international system

either did or could exacerbate or ameliorate the situation. More recently, feminists, critical theorists and post-modernists have challenged both the international system and the mainstream international relations theory which they see as providing political and intellectual justification for that system.

Normative international relations theory, as distinguished from the controversies arising from time to time surrounding issues of foreign policy, has inspired a limited body of work. Some of this work has, however, been noteworthy for its quality. The legitimacy of force and the issue of limits on the potential application of force is a subject that has inspired discussion for centuries and continues to do so. Discussion turned, as well, to the implications for international relations of the opposing positions in the liberal-communitarian debate. In political theory, this debate is defined by the differences between the contractarian and Aristotelian/classsical republican/civic humanist traditions. The liberal position emphasizes measures to bring about in practical terms the universality of human rights for individuals, the liberalization of trade, and guarantees of decent living conditions. The communitarian position tends to be more tolerant of limits to individual rights where those limits reflect culture, and more concerned with sovereignty of states, except where intervention is inspired by demands for national self-determination, in the face of genocide or in response to previous intervention. Morrice classifies Charles Beitz, Andrew Linklater and Onora O'Neill as liberals, and Michael Walzer, David Miller and Mervyn Frost as communitarians.[40] Others, like Brown and Thompson, note the salience of the distinction between liberals or cosmopolitans, on the one hand, and communitarians, on the other.[41] Neither of these groups is entirely homogeneous. Each writer's work reflects the application of philosophical criteria to the messy world of politics. Examples of human rights abuses like apartheid and the Holocaust force thinkers to be cognizant of the potential threats to rights, while experiences like the Vietnam War impress on them the challenges confronting outside powers that might intervene in societies with differing cultures. At least five historical developments influenced these approaches --- the Cold War confrontation between democracy and communism, the expansion in the number of independent states as the colonial empires came to an end, the growth in much of the Western world of the welfare state and the expectation that government had responsibilities in the fields of economic and social development, a growing sense that restraint should be exercised in any use of military force, especially when noncombatants might be threatened, and the expanding reach of communications media and trade making people around the globe increasingly aware of developments outside their own country and increasingly affected by developments outside of their own country.

To start by looking at the liberals or cosmopolitans, Beitz criticizes and finds wanting both the realist approach, which he identifies with skepticism about the notion that normative scrutiny can be applied to the behaviour of states in international politics, and a "morality of states" approach, which he identifies with natural law tradition, espousing as a preferable alternative a liberal cosmopolitan approach in which state autonomy and sovereignty is viewed not as absolute but as conditional.[42] While not proposing specific policy measures, O'Neill argues that debate about poverty and international economic justice should be framed in terms of Kantian universalism.[43] Linklater suggests that identity as a citizen of a particular state should increasingly be superseded by an identity as a fellow human. He writes that ". . . citizens must progress beyond the conception of the state as a repository of absolute rights of ownership of their territorial resources, beyond the view that the state's representatives have economic obligations to insiders which are not similarly due to outsiders, and beyond the notion that international economic cooperation will be perpetuated only insofar as it promotes the state's particularistic goals."[44] The outcome, Linklater maintains, would be that "By imputing rights to one another within a world political system which exercises control over the totality of their resources, members of the human species complete the move from particularism to universalism."[45] Morrice's list is not exhaustive. One could add commentators like Caney, for example, who advances a case for cosmopolitanism, and maintains that ". . . a key feature of a cosmopolitan approach --- whether its attention is focused on how there could be universal values, the content of civil and political rights, the nature of global principles of distributive justice, the appropriate institutional structure of the world, or the appropriate responses to external and internal wrongs --- is that it calls into question the idea that there is any morally fundamental difference between the domestic realm and the global realm."[46] Another example is Jones, who defends a basic-rights cosmopolitanism from a utilitarian or Kantian-inspired cosmopolitanism, and from several forms of communitarianism, leading him to subject the arguments of Miller, Walzer and Frost to critique.[47]

To turn to the communitarians, setting out ". . . to find a background theory which would justify the settled norms of the modern state domain of discourse",[48] Frost asserts that the only such theory would be a constitutive theory which ". . . involves bringing to light those dimensions of the moral order within which

we, together with others in the order, constitute one another as fully fledged individuals."[49] Miller seeks to make the case that ". . . the ethics of nationality is plausible, resting as it does on well established facts about human identity and human motivation. The onus is on the universalist to show that, in widening the scope of ethical ties to encompass equally the whole of the human species, he does not also drain them of their binding force."[50] Walzer is not only one of the prominent representatives of communitarianism in regard to international relations but, as well, in the broader debate in political theory.[51] He argues that each sphere has its appropriate traditional criteria, citing, as an example, the case of the town of Pullman where the attempt was made to apply the criteria proper to the market in the quite different sphere of local government. Although such a focus on tradition may appear likely to lead to conservative conclusions, this need not be the case. Walzer asserts that care and need as the tradition proper to health care leads to the conclusion that, if the tradition is to be respected, universal provision of health care regardless of income should be government policy. In regard to international relations, Walzer draws on the just-war and international-law traditions, and cautions against interventions except under specific circumstances. Doppelt, Luban, Beitz and Wasserstrom's criticisms of Walzer's position inspired a response in which he asserts that, in contrast to what he sees as a distrust of politics on the part of his critics and of philosophers in general, it is one of his aims to defend the notion of politics.[52] He advocates a pluralism of institutions and actors in international society, suggesting that "To appreciate the beauty of this pluralist arrangement, one must attach a greater value to political possibility, and the activism it breeds, than to the certainty of political success."[53] He observes that "The kinds of governmental agencies that are needed in an age of globalization haven't yet been developed; the level of participation in international civil society is much too low; regional federations are still in their beginning stages. . . . We will strengthen global pluralism only by using it, by seizing the opportunities it offers. There won't be any advance at any institutional level except in the context of a campaign or, better, a series of campaigns for greater security and greater equality for groups and individuals across the globe."[54]

Constructivism and Morality

Adler explicitly refers to his approach as communitarian international relations. Some other constructivists take the position that constructivism and communitarian normative theory are not identical but that there is a certain compatibility because of the shared focus on traditions and norms. Constructivists explain the foreign policy of a given state frequently in terms of culture and tradition. Constructivists explain the development of international institutions typically in terms of the evolution of norms and traditions. Constructivists examine the normative issues in regard to a particular aspect of international relations by considering the norms inherent in a particular tradition. To the degree to which actions are consistent with those norms, they are seen to reflect a degree of authenticity. To the degree to which actions diverge from the norms inherent in a given tradition, they are seen to reflect a degree of hypocrisy, whether conscious or not. In certain cases, this can produce a powerful rhetorical and logical tool for pressuring actors to modify actions to comply with the norms which the actors profess to be upholding.

The issue arises as to how effective such an approach can be. Several efforts have been made to respond to this issue. Adler, for example, expresses optimism about the possibilities for constructivism to provide a bridge between apparently contrary positions, suggesting that "Not only is the new turn to communitarian IR, spurred by constructivism, enlivening and driving the quest for a synthesis of traditional cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches; it is also making room for a more ambitious synthesis of normative IR theory and analytic IR theory."[55] Not only does Adler see constructivism as potentially bridging differences between realist and critical international relations theorists but he argues it could also point the way for a bridge between normative and analytic theory, suggesting that ". . . because a communitarian turn to IR theory accents the notion that similar if not identical ontological (structure and agency) and epistemological (truth, the nature of social knowledge) issues inform the disagreements and debates among normative IR theorists and among analytic IR theorists, communitarian IR could point to a synthesis that includes both normative IR theory and analytic IR theory."[56] Zehfuss adopts a radically different view. From a post-modernist perspective, Zehfuss sees constructivism as understating what she views as the inherently political nature of analysis and decision-making. It is her position that ". . . both the act of construction, and the representation of it in constructivism --- which is always already implicated in the act of construction itself --- is political, more political than is admitted. The idea of social construction implies that what is made is something common, shared, intersubjective --- something which

reasonable people can agree on. As a consequence, whilst construction is recognised as a mechanism of world making, its political implications are not acknowledged."[57] Price, although perhaps less enthusiastic than Adler, does see constructivism as having a contribution to make to moral reasoning in the area of international relations, writing that "In attending to the power of ideas and norms, recent constructivist scholarship in International Relations provides a way to avoid a liability of previous generations of liberal- and critical-minded scholarship, not to mention the traditional criticism of philosophy by political scientists, by eschewing the undue divorce of ethics from power."[58] Price observes that "Constructivism offers a way out of the potential critical trap by taking the prevalence of power seriously without precluding the possibility of meaningful progressive moral change nonetheless."[59] How can we assess this? Because constructivism entails a recognition of intentionality --- that is the notion of meaning and intention as causes behind actions --- it fosters a sense that policy-makers can be seen as responsible for the moral consequences of policy. Constructivism, while not oblivious to the reality of structural constraints, does not see those constraints as being as inhibiting as realists would. This, of course, both provides from a constructivist viewpoint more scope for discretion, and more responsibility for how that discretion is exercised. It would be premature at least to be as optimistic as Adler that constructivism can bridge between realism and critical theory, and between normative and analytic theory. On the other hand, Zehfuss' assumption that any acceptance of the notion of an objective reality necessarily reflects a denial of the political and an abdication of free choice and responsibility seems inconsistent with the view that international relations can be a serious object of study. Price's remarks do suggest an appreciation that international relations can support serious normative argument only if it avoids the rival tendencies towards assuming structural constraints preclude discretion, and towards assuming that discretion is unlimited and that there is no danger of irresponsibility in decision-making. Anyone can assemble a wish-list but if constructivism or any other school is going to make a genuine contribution, it has to attempt to support discussion of moral preferences with some sort of understanding of how the system itself operates, what forces are at work, and what consequences can be anticipated to follow from what policies.

Dealing in ideal-types, each theoretical position somewhat exaggerates in the interest of clarity and contrast actual practice. Few realists would see the structure of the international system as so constraining as actually to preclude any scope for agency in the sense of choices in foreign policy-making but it remains the case that realists have tended to place less emphasis on what happens within the state to influence the making of foreign policy. Realists tend, as well, to place less emphasis on the notion of an international society or on cultural elements sustaining such a society but Wendt does observe that ". . . few IR scholars, even the most hardened Neorealists, would deny that contemporary states share a great many beliefs about the rules of the international game, who its players are, what their interests are, what rational behaviour ia, and so on. Few would deny, in other words, that the structure of the contemporary international system contains a lot of culture."[60] It remains, of course, at issue precisely how influential these cultural elements are. It also is the case that realist analysts tend to place less emphasis on the roles of culture, history and religion in the determination of national interests, tending to view interests as either obvious or as reflective simply of maximizing power in the context of a certain geopolitical context. Constructivists, although identifiable as a group exhibiting certain similarities, are not an entirely homogeneous school. Some tend to attach somewhat more emphasis on agency. Some, like Wendt, focus attention on structuration, on how the "we" and "they" constitute themselves over time as corporate collectivities. Constructivists tend to consider to a greater degree elements like culture, history and religion as they contribute to creating corporate entities including, but not restricted to, states. Constructivists ascribe structure to the international system, although they tend to view that structure differently than do realists, and consider norms and traditions as contributing to and derived from that structure.

While not identical, the commonalities are clear between constructivism and communitarianism, and in reading the constructivists' work, one routinely finds references to Frost and Walzer. Because of his prominence in the liberal-communitarian debate in political theory, Walzer's work has attracted both critics and admirers. Walzer's efforts to critique traditions in terms of consistency with values which the traditions profess to esteem, that is in terms of authenticity and hypocrisy, can be effective in cases like that which persisted in the United States for many years in which racial segregation and legal impediments to the franchise were tolerated in spite of a declared commitment to the proposition that "All men are created equal." Similarly constructivists have traced, for example, how notions of when intervention may be acceptable have changed, and can examine arguments as to whether further evolution should or should not take place.[61] Where Walzer has been challenged most obviously is over hypothetical cases where the values embodied in a tradition may be morally offensive. Would cannibalism represent acceptable

behaviour as long as its practice avoided hypocrisy? Examples tend to be hypothetical because in actual cases the true content of a tradition and its values may remain an object of contention. A similar charge is sometimes made in regards to constructivism --- what of cases where it is not whether behaviour is or is not consistent with an interpretation of traditions that is at issue but, rather, the morality of the tradition and its values? Walzer approaches the problem by conceding the necessity for the notion of some minimal standards for acceptable behaviour but he seeks to keep this to no more than would be required to rule out blatantly outrageous behaviour, maintaining his communitarian approach for the vast majority of situations. A similar approach would be workable for constructivists.

Conclusion

Authenticity can be a quite effective test for moral judgement in international relations. It resembles the test of conscience in personal moral judgement by which a person seeks discernment and discipline to refuse to allow enticements to succeed in diverting one from following the dictates of conscience. Discerning the true character of national and international values calls for serious consideration of how norms and traditions are reflected historically, culturally, and institutionally. Empirical research may not provide values per se but it can shed light on what values we claim to profess. It can demonstrate how our understanding of the implications of such values has evolved. Constructivism attempts to accomplish such ends. There are no simple formulas. Considering international relations in the context of history and culture will enrich understanding and explanation but it will not erase the necessity for analysis. Constructivism brings with it a focus on the human and social side of international relations but it will not by itself make clear, for example, to what institutions or social groupings analysis should be applied. In some ways, it makes the job more challenging. Among those typically described as constructivists, there remain differences in approach and emphasis. Issues of identity are inherently difficult and open to interpretation. Nevertheless, a constructivist approach would appear to have real potential for clarifying and enhancing both empirical scholarship and moral argument.

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[1] Alexander Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1.

[2] Jeffrey T. Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory", World Politics, Vol.. 50, no. 2, (January 1998), pp. 324-325.

[3] Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System" in Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, (ed.), International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[4] Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory", International Security, Vol. 23, no. 1, (Summer 1998), p. 181.

[5] Richard Price, "Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics" in Richard M. Price, (ed.), Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 19.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Daniel S. Geller and John A. Vasquez, "The Construction and Cumulation of Knowledge in International Relations: Introduction" in Daniel S. Geller and John A. Vasquez, (ed.), The Construction and Cumulation of Knowledge in International Relations, (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell for the International Studies Association, 2004), p. 1.

[8] For perhaps the most well-known representation of the English school, see Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics, (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977).

[9] See Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, op. cit., Chapter 6, "Three cultures of anarchy"; and Barry Buzan, From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[10] Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations, (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), p. 14.

[11] See Friedrich V. Kratochwil, Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[12] See Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, op. cit.

[13] Ibid., p. 7.

[14] Emanuel Adler, Communitarian International Relations: The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 6.

[15] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[16] Wendt, op. cit., p. 9.

[17] Ibid., p. 39.

[18] Friedrich Kratochwil and John Gerard Ruggie, "International Organization: A State of the Art on an Art of the State", International Organization, Vol. 40, no. 4, (Autumn 1986). p. 774.
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[19] Adler, Communitarian International Relations, op. cit., p. 92.

[20] Maja Zehfuss, Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 253.

[21] Ibid.

[22] See Friedrich Kratochwil, "Constructing a New Orthodoxy? Wendt's 'Social Theory of International Politics' and the Constructivist Challenge", Millenium, Vol. 29, no. 1, (January 2000).

[23] Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, "Dangerous Liasons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism", European Journal of International Relations, Vol. 4, no. 3, (September 1998), p. 288.

[24] Ibid., pp. 288-289.

[25] Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, op. cit., p. 135.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Martha Finnemore, National Interests in International Society, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. ix.

[28] Ibid., p. 1.

[29] See Adler, Communitarian International Relations, op. cit., pp. 14-27.

[30] See Michael Barnett, "The Israeli Identity and the Peace Process: Re/creating the Un/thinkable" in Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett, (ed.), Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[31] See Martha Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[32] See, for example, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, (ed.), Security Communities, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004); Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, (ed.), Power in Global Governance, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); John Gerard Ruggie, (ed.), Multilateralism Matters: The Theory and Praxis of an Institutional Form, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and John Gerard Ruggie, Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

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[34] E.H. Carr, The 20 Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations, (2nd ed.), (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1946), p. 92.

[35] Ibid., p. 93.

[36] Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, (5th ed.), (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 8.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations, translated from French by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 608.

[39] Ibid., pp. 608-610.

[40] See David Morrice, "The Liberal-Communitarian Debate in Contemporary Political Philosophy and its Significance for International Relations", Review of International Studies, Vol. 26, no. 2, (April 2000).

[41] See Chris Brown, International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); and Janna Thompson, Justice and World Order: A Philosophical Inquiry, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

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[45] Ibid., p. 201.

[46] Simon Caney, Justice Beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 267.

[47] See Charles Jones, Global Justice: Defending Cosmopolitanism, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[48] Mervyn Frost, Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations: A Critical Analysis of the Philosophical and Methodological Assumptions in the Discipline With Proposals Towards a Substantive Normative Theory, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 184. See also Mervyn Frost, Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[49] Frost, Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations, op. cit., p. 184.

[50] David Miller, On Nationality, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 80.

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[55] Adler, Communitarian International Relations, op. cit., p. 4.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Zehfuss, op.cit., p. 261.

[58] Price, "Moral Limit and Possibility in World Politics" in Price, (ed.), op. cit., p. 43.

[59] Ibid., p. 41.

[60] Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, op. cit., p. 190.

[61] See Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention, op. cit.