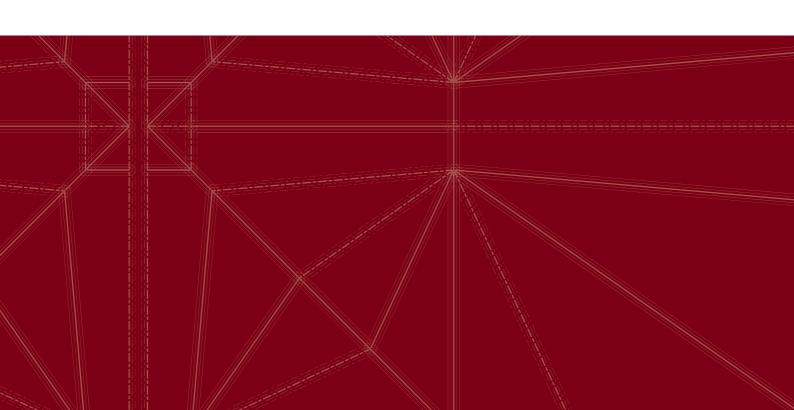


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Carl Schmitt and International Political Theory: Revisiting a Complex Encounter

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Abstract:

Direct interest in Carl Schmitt's work is recovering within International Political Theory, after a period of relative disengagement. However, the way in which Schmittian scholarship and IPT are interfaced continues to suffer from old issues, which limit the potential of the exchange. This article traces of the way Schmitt has entered IPT literature, offering an assessment of the encounter as well as a reflection on why and how a recovery of Schmitt may be desirable. Such recovery appears to be conditioned upon a more upfront contextualisation of his work, and a more courageous engagement with the idea of political theology as a sociological category. Finally, the article identifies a number of areas where Schmitt's role, which is to a certain extent already present, can be further expanded.

Keywords: Schmitt, international political theory, political theology

'Lurking behind the contemporary interest in Carl Schmitt is the sense that this present cannot last for ever'.

(Balakrishnan, 2000: 268)

fter a period of relative disengagement from the work and intellectual legacy of Carl Schmitt, International Political Theory (henceforth: IPT) scholars appear to have recovered some interest in this author. The moment seems favourable for a re-assessment of the encounter between IPT and Schmitt, aimed at the evaluation of whether and in what ways it would be desirable to see a more prominent re-instatement of Schmittian studies in IPT, particularly considering that interest in

the German jurist appears to be continuing in a number of fields, which are more or less directly connected to IPT, such as general political theory, geopolitics and political geography, history of political ideas.

Schmitt has been a prominent figure in legal-theoretical and political theory debates since the 1920s and, despite considerable fluctuations in his fortune, he has remained a constant, remarkable presence in European culture since then. An extensive exegetic literature has been uninterruptedly produced over the course of the last few decades, as clearly visible in the 524-page thick bibliographical volume compiled by Alain De Benoist (though published back in 2010), in numerous languages, proving the durability of Schmitt's intellectual legacy (De Benoist, 2010).

English-speaking IPT literature developed its engagement with Schmitt on the basis of a pre-existing groundwork of translations and early exegetical efforts, which emerged after George Schwab's book on the concept of exception appeared in 1970 (Schwab, 1970) and successive translations, later followed by Joseph W. Bendersky's study (Bendersky, 1983), and Paul Gottfried monograph in 1990 (Gottfried, 1990). This first group of works have been followed by a new exegetic effort, which highlighted the anti-liberal side of Schmitt and his proximity to the National-Socialist regime in the 1930s and 1940s, as put forward by Stephen Holmes (Holmes, 1993: 37-60), William Scheuerman (Scheuerman, 1999), and Dirk Blasius (Blasius, 2001). Undoubtedly, this second wave of more critical interest was at least partially influenced by Jürgen Habermas's appeal to English-speaking readers of Schmitt, later published as Die Schrecken der Autonomie: Carl Schmitt auf Englisch (The Horrors of Autonomy: Carl Schmitt in English) in Eine Art Schadensabwicklung (Habermas, 1987: 103-114), where Habermas sketched a portrait Schmitt as the exponent of a bygone German academic "mandarinate", whose integration within Anglo-Saxon political culture and discussion appears exceedingly difficult, since "the intellectual profile of this man and his political destiny belong to a very German tradition", which appears to be inextricably related to National Socialism and even directly to Adolf Hitler, who was "fateful to him" (ihm zum Schicksal wurde) (Habermas, 1987: 103). Habermas's evaluation of Schmitt in this particular instance, as he lists him as an heir of right-Hegelianism, appears problematic, as argued elsewhere (Orsi 2013: 210-221).

Part I: Schmitt and IPT Literature

In this first part a literature review of the main works dealing with the problem of combining Schmitt's scholarship and IPT is sketched. As all literature reviews, it has limits directly descending from the selection criteria employed. It would be impossible, not to mention of little use, to address all IPT authors who have ever quoted

from Schmitt, either incidentally or in the setting of their own theoretical argument, whether in one paragraph or a few more. This review concentrates instead programmatically on those authors who have addressed Schmitt's work making an *explicit argument* concerning his relation to IPT, particularly in the sense of inclusion or exclusion as a legitimate source for the discipline. A different strand of literature, particularly the most recent one, is in essence exegetical and/or attempting a selective application of Schmittian conceptual devices (enmity, exception, *Großraum*, partisanship: see Hjorth, 2014; Kalpokas, 2015; Rae, 2016; Rech and Grzybowski, 2017; Lebow, 2017; Kalpokas, 2017) to contemporary affairs, largely accepts as the Schmitt-IPT connection as it resulted from the stratification of earlier texts, which the present article intends in fact to problematise.

Schmitt's work made its way into IPT discussions mainly following two paths. The first has been the historical research on the Morgenthau-Schmitt connection and elucidation of the latter's influence on the most famous exponent of classical realism. A second path had its origins in a recovery of Schmitt taking place within intellectual circles concerned with the elaboration of a "radical democracy" project. It then led to the articulation of critiques aimed at the concept of liberal international order, mostly relying on the Schmittian "exception".

The relation between Morgenthau and Schmitt has been explored while studying the impact of German conservatism on US political culture by Alfons Söllner (Söllner, 1987: 161-172), and by Christoph Frei in his biographic work on Morgenthau (Frei, 1994). Hans-Karl Pichler argued that "Morgenthau's idea on the nature of politics and 'the Political' [...] were informed by the German political thinker Carl Schmitt" (Pichler, 1998), a point successively developed by Michael Williams, according to whom "Morgenthau's thinking clearly bears the marks of his engagement with Schmitt", as "his understanding of politics as undetermined realm of pure will reflects a similar position (and Nietzschean-Weberian heritage) on the specificity of politics, and he shares the view that the essence of sovereignty lies in the capability for decision" (Williams, 2005: 7; Williams, 2004; Williams, 2008: 84-104).

The genealogical relation between the two authors has been however discussed in more sceptical terms by William Scheuerman, who did envisage Morgenthau's early fascination for Schmitt's concept of the political, identifying areas of overlap in their respective theoretical effort, similarities which however do not go far beyond the common feature of grounding "their rather sober and arguably bleak visions of political life in pessimistic versions of philosophical anthropology" (Scheuerman, 2008). Along these lines, also Martti Koskenniemi has advanced the view that the Schmittian discourse and conception of the law as a battlefield of political struggles may have informed Morgenthau's international political conception on the point of keeping limited faith in the power of international law (Koskenniemi, 2001: 413-509). Chris

Brown's reading of the Schmitt-Morgenthau relation, after acknowledging how both recognised the value of the old *jus publicum Europaeum* as based not on the abolition/criminalisation, but on the limitation and regulation of war, highlighted how their respective diagnosis of the post-1914 international disorder was predicated on different factors: for Schmitt it was the rise of universalism and liberalism, promoted by the British Empire and by the United States, for Morgenthau it was instead the rise of universalism and nationalism (Brown, 2008).

The second and arguably most important path whereby Schmitt has entered IPT discussions, as anticipated, is the result of a theoretical debate for the re-instatement of radical democracy projects, which identified as a key priority the recovery of agonism as opposed to prevalent discourses of inclusion. Chantal Mouffe (Mouffe, 1993; Mouffe 1999) has famously articulated such discourse by highlighting the Schmittian differentiation between liberalism and democracy (Schmitt 1996 [1923]), where the latter is defined as the direct reciprocal identification of the ruled (the demos) and the rulers, this being the key to realise the will of the people. The question revolves however around the establishment of criteria for membership of the demos, as "without any criterion to determine who are the bearers of democratic rights, the will of the people could never take shape" (Mouffe 1999: 38). The creation and preservation of an identity of the *demos* entails forms of *exclusion*, as it cannot mean the accommodation of all interests. It is instead a hegemonic project, even if such identity is meant to be in a constant process of re-definition and re-construction. In other words, Mouffe uses the Schmittian conception of agonistic politics, i.e. of politics as an eternal, inevitable friend-enemy relation of struggle and enmity, in order to produce a critique of liberal conceptions of democracy on the point of the constitutive moment of a political community, which cannot be exhausted in the *fixation* of a constitutional regime, but it is continuously re-constructed and must remain open to such constant reconstruction work.

Precisely this reflection on the *pouvoir constituant* animates the work of Andreas Kalyvas, who, after pointing out the shortcomings and fallacies in Schmitt's conceptions of liberalism and democracy against the background of his reactionary outlook, nevertheless recognises the value of "Schmitt's rescue of the category of constituent power from oblivion" (Kalyvas 1999: 110; see also Kalyvas, 2008). Kalyvas argues in fact on the one hand that the failure of radical democratic projects has been largely due to a lack of reflection on the relations between law and politics, i.e. on the design of radical democratic political institutions; on the other hand, any future project of radical democracy must overcome the near-monopoly enjoyed by liberal thought on the theory of law, and on this specific point Schmitt should be recovered as a powerful inspirational source.

The recovery of Schmitt in IPT has taken place in this context of radical democratic thinking and the consequent critique of a (perceived) liberal hegemony, where especially the work of Giorgio Agamben can be seen as a bridge between general political theory and international politics (Agamben, 2003). Agamben has been exploring a series of borderline situations and concepts in the theory of law and politics, particularly the state of exception, which immediately refers to the problem of sovereignty, in accordance with the famous incipit of Schmitt's *Political Theology* ("Sovereign is he, who decides on the state of exception") (Schmitt, 2009[1922]: 13).

This Schmittian reference points to the grey zone between the law and the absence thereof once constitutional guarantees are suspended, a situation which Agamben envisages in those measures and policies introduced by the US government in order to fight the so called Global War on Terror after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. According to Jef Huysmans however, Agamben's critique of the neo-conservative imperial reach through exceptional measures is more indebted to Foucauldian biopolitical categories. While Schmitt's reflection revolved around "dialectic between law and politics", in an historical context of constitutional breakdown however leading to a process of legal order restoration, Agamben's conceptualisation of the exception "works with the total collapse of the dialectic between anomie and law and a biopolitical conception that organizes political stakes and dynamics through a spectre of life" (Huysmans, 2006: 180).

While in all works mentioned up to this point Carl Schmitt appears as a reference among several others, sometimes as the main one, for the construction of theoretical discourses with various aims, a direct reflection on Schmitt and IPT first came in a more explicit fashion with the special issue of the Leiden Journal of International Law (19/2006) and more prominently with the 2007 edited volume *The International Po*litical Thought of Carl Schmitt by Louiza Odysseos and Fabio Petito, which has possibly become the authoritative reference on this topic (Odysseos and Petito, 2007). The book comprises several chapters authored by some of the leading Schmitt experts and IR theorists, discussing a number of recurrent Schmittian topics which are deemed to be relevant in contemporary IPT debates, mainly the meaning of sovereignty and influence in a unipolar and/or multipolar world, jus ad bellum in relation to humanitarian intervention and its underlying legitimation, the struggle against terrorism in the light of the legal category of irregular combatants and "partisans". The main goal of such publication appears to be that of promoting the open inclusion of Schmitt into the "canon" of IPT literature, by providing a predominantly exegetic overview of his ideas aimed at underscoring their frequent proximity to IPT concepts and discussions (Bulloch, 2009), although within a variety of different positions. Chris Brown, critical of the main tenets of Schmitt's positions, eventually argues that although "Schmitt's normative position is impossible to sympathize with [...] the clarity with which he

develops his argument is admirable, as is his recognition of the changes in world order that took place in the seventeenth and again in the twentieth centuries." Consequently, Schmitt's *The Nomos of the Earth* "is a book which should be a on the reading list of any International Relations theorist" (Brown, 2007: 67).

The publication of Odysseos and Petito's edited volume spurred a brief debate with David Chandler, who put forward a critical view of such attempt at fostering Schmitt's inclusion in IPT. Chandler argued that Schmitt's recovery can be seen as a reflection of the critical theorists' analytical weaknesses, or even more accurately as an evasive manoeuvre, whereby those authors have been trying to escape the problem of providing sound foundations to their own critical theories. He points at the unbridgeable divergence between Schmitt's fundamentally reactionary political posture and its underlying logical framework, which appears to be incompatible with the essence of critical theorising as an emancipatory, progressivist endeavour, finally arguing that this attempted Schmitt's revival by critical IPT circles "highlight[s] the exhaustion of their own critical perspectives and the fact that even a political and legal theorist explicitly hostile to an emancipatory perspective has more to offer than they do themselves" (Chandler, 2008: 47-48).

Odysseos and Petito replied to Chandler's harsh remarks by rejecting the criticism of having produced a selective reading of Schmitt for purposes which are fundamentally incompatible with the basic rationale of critical theory, lamenting instead that Chandler himself is culpable of a selective reading of Schmitt, one depicting him as a "crude materialist and unsophisticated realist" (Odysseos and Petito, 2009: 475), while in reality the German author has to be understood as a legal scholar chiefly preoccupied with the crisis of the state and the state-based international order, a crisis inscribed within the tragedy of modernity, conceptualised as "the end of the uncontested foundation for legitimacy of Christian unity and the necessity to assume plurality, conflict and chaos" (Odysseos and Petito, 2009: 471). The persistence of this crisis is what arguably constitutes the core of Schmitt's continuous relevance in philosophical-theoretical reflections on international affairs.

William Hooker's book on Schmitt and International Relations (Hooker, 2009) recapitulates the question of this author's position within IPT as a contest between those who consider Schmitt as "an arcane and reductive Nazi who has little to offer" and those who, albeit recognising his problematic and potentially subversive traits, see however a potential, namely between those scholars who wish to continue a "process of exhumation" and those who "try to keep him buried" (Hooker, 2009: 2). Hooker argues from a reading of history which appears to be the exact contrary of Schmitt's stark opposition to liberal political doctrines and their geopolitical bearers, namely the British Empire and the United States of America. As Schmitt "regards the global ascendance of liberalism as a catastrophe" (Hooker, 2009:4), Hooker praises instead

the progress of a humanity united under the banner of a global liberal movement, admittedly originated and maintained by Anglo-Saxon powers, which have militarily defeated those powers opposing their hegemony. He not only dismisses Schmitt's *Großraum* theory as "a fudge", but most importantly rejects the value of those interpretations of Schmitt's work grounded on a discussion of his frequent theological references, arguing that "whilst most readers will admit to there being great validity in a religious reading of Schmitt [...] for political readers, religion in Schmitt is an embarrassing sideshow somehow to be ignored, explained away or conceded to obscure German-speaking theologians to debate" (Hooker, 2009: 195-196). The pervasive apocalyptic tone of the great jurist is explained as the expression of extravagance, extreme personality traits, perhaps bordering on neurosis. In sum, Hooker concludes his study by denying that a more systematic inclusion of Schmitt's international thought would produce any particular positive contribution.

To similar conclusions, albeit from a very different analytical trajectory, comes Benno Teschke in a comprehensive study of IPT's engagement with Schmitt (Teschke, 2011), whereby he highlighted numerous questions pertaining the viability of Schmitt as an IR theorist, namely whether his work does actually offer theoretical tools for the understanding of international politics meeting established criteria of scientificity. Teschke summarises Schmitt's thought, focusing predominantly on *The Nomos of the* Earth, as expanding from three axiomatic premises, namely decisionism, the concept of the political, and concrete-order-thinking. While trying to consider Schmitt's ideas as a system, Teschke finally shows the inherent contradictions which arise from the analysis of different works, most importantly the eventual discrepancy between Schmitt's explanans and his explanandum, revealing "fundamental deficiencies in the explanatory power of Schmitt's theoretical work" (Teschke, 2011: 183). Consequently, Teschke questions "IR theorists' reliance on Schmitt's history and theory for the purposes of formulating a general, plausible, and coherent international theory" (Teschke, 2011: 183). Such deficiencies are mainly identified as the heavy contextdependence of many of Schmitt's ideas, and their rapid change in accordance to mutable circumstances, an "opportunism" which has been pointed out by several other scholars. Teschke identifies contradictory tendencies, as "while [...] Schmitt's critique of legal normativism and his partial retraction from decisionism during the mid-30s predisposes his new programme of concrete-order-jurisprudence towards sociology - domestic and international — his definition and handling of the sociological writes 'the social' out of the construction and dynamics of special (dis-)orders and replaces it with the reification of the geopolitical" (Teschke, 2011: 215). From a social scientific, sociological perspective, there can be therefore little usefulness in Schmitt's work, whose "restrictive conceptualization of the political from the angle of the extreme situation provides no pointers as to what processes lead to the extremization of politics" (Teschke, 2011: 2016). Finally therefore, his ideas cannot

constitute valid theories for explaining historical changes both in international politics and geopolitics (Teschke, 2011: 216).

Evaluating the Encounter

IPT's engagement with Schmitt has resulted in a patchwork of interpretative efforts and evaluations going in different and often opposed directions. On the one hand, the constant presence of a background discussion on Schmitt's relation to National-Socialism directly impacts any prospected use of this author in contemporary debates, and not exclusively in IPT. On the other, earlier attempts at promoting Schmitt as a canonical author of the discipline have suffered from shortcomings deriving from the above described suggested use of his ideas in critiques of neoliberal order which appear however to focus on excessively contingent matters, which have rapidly aged, thus making Schmitt's presence within IPT as an ephemeral phenomenon.

The inclusion of this author in a canonical reading list of IPT, while certainly to be understood as an invitation to appreciate the relevance of Schmitt in key conceptual areas, alongside more or less contemporary authors, may easily lead to a somewhat simplistic idea of IPT as a coherent and clearly defined field of studies, as it may appear from browsing through the syllabi of academic curricula. At closer scrutiny however, such impression of IPT is largely conveyed by a forceful ordering effort justified by didactical purposes, rather than by an inherent order. IPT remains extremely diverse in the variety of proposed ontologies of international politics, and of epistemological approaches, ¹ so much that the prospected inclusion of Schmitt cannot refer to IPT in general, but more precisely to certain sub-sets within it, as it will be clarified below.

In this sense, on the one hand Schmitt is already included in IPT discussions, and on the other, critiques such as the ones articulated by Hooker and by Teschke do make a valid point: within certain established strands of IPT, i.e. under the lenses of consolidated discourses of what an international political theory ought to explain and how, Schmitt can play limited or no role, as his work simply does not match the criteria underpinning such discourses. Of course, the ground of such discussions not being permanently fixed, there is always room for further reconstruction of ontological and/or epistemological discourses, and the consequent shifts in attention paid to particular sources. This in turn may also be related to the way in which sources, Schmitt's work in this case, are presented to the international theorist through the stratification of exegetical literature, developing new interpretative pathways and novel connections to ongoing or emerging discussions.

The case for a re-appraisal of Schmitt within IPT studies seems to be closely dependent on the ways in which this author's work is understood and, crucially, *contextualised*. The problem of contextualisation appears already in the above mentioned polemical exchange between Odysseos/Petito and Chandler, with reciprocal accusations of having misplaced Schmitt, i.e. of having used him in a context of progressivism not suiting the general aim, tone, and genealogy of his theoretical effort (Chandler's point), or conversely of having a too-narrow reading of his work, one which focuses on a selection which cannot grasp the critical potentiality of Schmitt as an author who, albeit from a conservative or even reactionary position, has nevertheless captured the essence of certain political mechanisms, a knowledge which can be appropriated also by those who come from different political orientations (Odysseos and Petito's claim).

Teschke's analysis of Schmitt highlights another aspect of this question. As Schmitt cannot be considered a theorist of international politics, even more so from historical sociology's epistemological standpoint, nevertheless Teschke himself indirectly acknowledges that other readings are possible, as in the prominent case of *The Nomos of the Earth*, which is "largely written in the register of history of ideas, more akin to the contemporary practices of 'semantic history' [...]", hence it cannot be completely disregarded, if not as a full-blown theory, at least as the repository of intuitions and possibilities which is still worth exploring (Teschke, 2011: 215).

This prospected work of appropriation of Schmitt cannot but start therefore from an assessment of what Schmitt can do, and what cannot do, for IPT, with such questions being intimately connected to the way in which Schmitt's work is read, in order to avoid misplacement and/or anachronism, namely by demanding from it direct answers to questions not existing at the time Schmitt was writing, or stemming from domains which are only tangential to the discussions and topics to which Schmitt's works were intended to be contributing to.

Part II: Contextualisation of Schmitt

In the second part of this article, a contextualisation of Schmitt will be provided precisely with the aim of clarifying, if not what Schmitt can or cannot do for IPT, at least those ways by which IPT scholars may look for answers to that question. While it may be true that elements of this session are known, or even well-known, to Schmittian specialists, they do not appear to be sufficiently known to the broader IPT circles, and they are certainly worth re-stating, precisely in order to avoid anachronisms and misplacements which remain all too common.

Schmitt did not think about himself as a political theorist, a political scientist, or a theorist of international politics. He understood his work as squarely grounded in

discussions about theory of law and jurisprudence (Lanchester, 1983; Odysseos and Petito, 2006).²

As much as Schmitt's work is essentially of legal nature (Salter, 2012), it has to be understood in the horizon of constitutional studies as produced in early twentieth century Germany (Stolleis, 1999). In that country, departing from contractualist conceptions which characterised (particularly from a German standpoint) the French tradition, already Hegel had articulated a view of the constitution not as something "made by the people" but "rather [...] as the purely self-begotten and self-centred being, to be regarded as the divine and perpetual, something above and beyond what is made" (Hegel, 1911 [1821]: 225). Legal theorists like Friedrich von Savigny and Georg Puchta elaborated on this conception by founding the Historische Rechtsschule, which viewed the law as result of the historical evolution of an organically defined nation (Volk), particularly of its spirit (Volksgeist) (von Savigny, 1815). Schmitt admired the historical school of German jurisprudence, and wrote that Savigny's name "should be inserted in a list of the greatest Europeans" (Schmitt, 1950: 21). In the course of the nineteenth century, the historical approach became increasingly questionable on a series of accounts. On the one hand, the codification process (aimed as superseding customary law, which culminated in Germany with the promulgation of the Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch in 1909), emerged against the background of natural law theories. The nineteenth century saw the birth of legal positivism, according to which the law has to be understood as the corpus of codes and other legal norms as expression of the legislator's will, regardless of any other (historical) consideration, as articulated by a series of legal theorists such as Karl von Gerber (von Gerber, 1865), Paul Laband (Laband, 1876-1882), the first Rudolf von Jhering (von Jhering, 1872), and Georg Jellinek (Jellinek, 1900). Such intellectual movement continued in the early twentieth century and Weimar in the works of Gerhard Anschütz (Anschütz, 1926), Richard Thoma (Anschütz and Thoma 1930-1932), and, most famously, Hans Kelsen (Kelsen, 1912; Kelsen 1934). Legal positivism soon encountered resistance, with the rise of the *Freirechtsbewegung* (the "free law movement"), which proceeded to attack legal positivism's key claim that all law proceeds from the state, as in Hermann Kantorowicz (Kantorowicz, 1906) and more thoroughly in Eugen Ehrlich's project for a sociology of law (Ehrlich, 1914). Ehrlich advanced a definition of the law as the product of complex social processes, which constitute a legitimate object of study and reflection for the legal discipline. Schmitt's work has to be framed in the continuum of these debates, alongside Ehrlich's position and crucially Max Weber's parallel attempts at constructing a sociology of law grounded in the sociological-conceptual investigation of political power (Herrschaftssoziologie) (Breuer, 1991; Hanke and Mommsen, 2001) and more importantly of a sociology of religion (Religionssoziologie) (Lehmann, 2003).

Schmitt, who attended Weber's seminars in Munich in 1919, took a sui generis approach in the clarification of key legal concepts by addressing political realities, which the legal-positivistic perspective programmatically excluded, and still does, from the disciplinary jurisdiction of legal studies. Schmitt's work can be largely captured as a sociology of legal-constitutional concepts revolving around the perceived crisis of the state and, at international level, of a system of relations centred on the state. Any reading of Schmitt should try never to lose sight of the specific environment and the kind of debates in which his work was conceived. This requires, more in general, and specifically for the purpose of identifying Schmitt's place within IPT discussions, appreciating Schmitt as an historical author, who, despite his relative temporal proximity, operated in nevertheless a remarkably different intellectual *milieu* from today's. He cannot be regarded, so to speak, as a full-blown contemporary. Consequently, looking for methodological standards and intellectual sensitivities which have historically emerged later, or even just in the past few decades, is of little use. Equally simplistic would be any attempt to browse Schmitt's books in search for answers to questions which animate IR theories in their current formulations. In other words, Schmitt does not provide and was not interested in providing to his readers anything which can be defined today as a (coherent) international theory. It is therefore somewhat of an over-stretch to plead in favour of Schmitt's inclusion in the "canon" of IPT literature. What Schmitt thought and wrote does not have to be considered as an established achievement of science, but it appears more fruitful to consider it as an historical, background reference which can provide, more than answers, early and sometimes pioneering formulations of questions which have been recurring in debates up to the present day, or are relevant for new, incipient, or most probably future debates in IPT.

So while Odysseos and Petito's core claim of Schmitt's relevance for today's IPT can be regarded as fundamentally correct, the articulation of such instance as a direct relevance of Schmitt as the primary source to interpret contemporary IR phenomena appears more problematic. Chandler's remarks about the mismatch between the emancipatory goals of critical theory in a post- or neo-Marxist fashion and the fundamental reactionary core of Schmitt's message seems to identify a major obstacle. This does not imply the abandonment of Schmitt as a reference, but it does suggest that he may not be utilised without extensive contextualisation and filtering in matters of contingent international political questions.

Both Teschke and Hooker, in their very different approach to Schmitt, correctly highlight in an exegetic fashion how Schmitt has little to offer for a direct reading searching for an international political theory as an explanatory device according to contemporary standards. However, while Teschke appears willing to admit that Schmitt may have to be understood primarily as an *ante litteram* attempt at history of ideas,

Hooker exceeds in his tout court exclusion of the author from IPT from the perspective of a "political reader". Precisely this dichotomy between an ideal "political" reader and opposed to a "religious" one betrays a problematic contextualisation of Schmitt and the exegesis of his work. Schmitt's sociology of law is based on the very point of blurring the boundary between politics and religion. It consists in an attempt to deconstruct the category of "religion" by showing how such separated domain from politics is, in historical terms, not at all to be clearly separated, and that the genealogy of legal-political modern concepts leads directly to theological concepts. The "religious" cannot therefore be separated from the political in Schmitt, and his continuous reference to religious concepts echoes this core conviction that key political realities, as well as a sociology of the law and state, can only express itself in a theological language. This because the main work of the theologian, namely the definition of the terms and qualities of the relationship between God and the human, functions as a template for all kinds of intra-human relationships, crucially the ones between the authority and its subjects. It is certainly possible to disagree with such a view, but disagreement ought to be articulated more thoroughly than sheer dismissal.

Teschke's evaluation of Schmitt underscores nevertheless a point which can result as quite relevant in the attempt at understanding a possible role for this author in the context of IPT, namely to be summarised by the questions: Is there a Schmittian methodology? Is it possible to flesh out of his however complex work some kind of method? The answer to this question remains controversial even in the specialist literature, thus making it admittedly difficult to find an immediate connection with contemporary IPT on the point of methods and the underpinning epistemological conceptions (Müller, 1999; Egner, 2013). However, not only secondary literature has analysed the question of Schmitt's method, but particularly the historian Reinhart Koselleck has identified Schmitt as one of the key antecedents of his own work, and consequent methodological reflection, for a history of concepts (Begriffsgeschichte), whose origins are to be traced back to the 1930s, with Schmitt among the pioneers of its "systematic elaboration" (Koselleck, 2006: 11). This appears evident in the way in which Schmitt has anticipated Koselleck's analysis of conceptual change in terms of content occurring beyond the permanence of particular linguistic labels and thought structures, i.e. concerning the semantics of social and political language. Schmitt has "strongly inspired the history of concepts, as then further developed by Otto Brunner. In his political-historical writings he certainly investigates the word in the correct time and correct place. To that extent, Carl Schmitt represents a radically historical fundamental position, which rests on the particular uniqueness of a concrete word use", but he was also capable of diachronic historical reconstructions, as in the case of his monograph on the concept of dictatorship and the shift from commissarial to sovereign conceptions thereof (Koselleck, 2006: 382).

Schmitt provides therefore starting points for reflection, to be verified and tested, certainly not to be endorsed as conclusive results, on a number of matters. Ultimately the recovery of Schmitt is the work of the historian of ideas reading an earlier historian of ideas, as the Schmittian jurisprudence is, as illustrated above, in reality a *Begriffsoziologie*, and as such also a *Begriffgeschichte* and *Ideengeschichte* (history of concepts, history of ideas).

Political Theology, the State and inter-state Order

Schmitt ought to be read in the IPT context as an author chiefly concerned with the diagnosis and monitoring the crisis of the state, and consequently of the state-based international order. He describes the crisis of such political order in the context of its historical change, which he understands, as a jurist and as a pioneering historian of ideas, as based on background, almost archetypal, conceptions of good, of justice, and consequently as a reflection on the trajectory of history (and on the destiny of the political communities within it), leading ultimately to the exploration of eschatological narratives. This is Schmitt's political theology as a sociology of the state, and of law. Schmitt did not invent it, as he simply developed ideas which were already widely circulating within German-speaking academia, particularly, of course, the work of Max Weber, not to mention Hans Kelsen's 1922 contribution on the topic to which Schmitt's *Political Theology*, published later in the same year, can be seen as a direct response (Salter, 2013).

Indeed Kelsen, who came to embody the legal positivistic school of jurisprudence (as opposed to the sociology of law), is the author of God and the State, where he drew a series of parallels between theological and legal thought. His starting point is constituted by the Freudian explanation of the father-child relationship. The father "intrudes as a giant, as an overwhelming power into the soul of the child, and becomes for the child the authority par excellence". Any authority tends consequently to be experienced as the paternal one, including the relation to the divine, as much as between the citizen and the state. Kelsen envisaged a parallel between the legal system and religion, whereby both are conceptualised in terms of "social ideology". Such ideology "is originally identical with that social ideology, which can be indicated in the broadest sense as the state" (Kelsen, 1964: 37). While in the earlier stages of the state-concept's history the state coincides with the national god, namely the divinised nation through personification, these two elements eventually separate: the state becomes the hypostatisation of legal order, while God becomes the hypostatisation of natural order. The question arises therefore, both in jurisprudence and in theology, about how to conceptualise the relation between an order and its hypostatisation.

Kelsen articulated thus his understanding of political theology as a parallel in the conceptual structures underpinning both the state and God.

Schmitt could not be satisfied by this explanation, as it produces the image of a complete legal order and state, which his sociology of law (and of the state) intends to reject. In his *Political Theology*, he traced the emergence of a such legal-positivistic conceptions as stemming from a deistic theological concept which, after Descartes, envisages God as the great architect or clockmaker, creator of the world but at the same time external to it, as the machine runs by itself in accordance to unchanging and even-valid laws of motion, and God has been consequently pushed aside (Schmitt 2009 [1922]: 52). Deism does not contemplate the suspension of such natural order and so the very idea of exception, of gaps in the legal system. To this model, Schmitt opposed the one coming from theistic theologies, whereby God can always intervene in the natural order by suspending its functioning my means of miracles (Wunder), the veritable state of exception, gap in the continuity of the law, which enables the emergence of the radically new (Schmitt 2009 [1922]: 43). This has a profound impact on the theory of the state and consequently on the conceptualisation of a state-based international order, as only the suspension of order makes visible the essence of sovereignty, which "cannot be grasped with concepts grounded in the natural sciences" (Schmitt 2009 [1922]: 47). Sovereignty can only be understood through a sociology of law, although not one consisting simply "in a spiritualist philosophy of history as opposed to a materialist one" (Schmitt 2009 [1922]: 48) (that was the shortcoming of reactionary authors of the nineteenth century such as Joseph De Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and Louis Bonald), but through a sociology of concepts which "transcends juridical conceptualisation oriented to immediate practical interest", but to "discovering the basic, radically systematic structure and to compare this concept structure with the conceptually represented social structure of a certain epoch" (Schmitt 2009) [1922]: 50). Begriffgeschichte appears to be however only a preparatory work for understanding sovereignty, which can be achieved only by means of "radical conceptualisation, [...] a consistent thinking that is pushed back into metaphysics and theology", aimed at capturing "the metaphysical image that a certain epoch makes of the world" (Schmitt 2009 [1922]: 50-51).

While Schmitt's work displays a strong connection to Weber's sociology, there are however important differences in the way in which Weber's sociology of religion relates to the explanation of the economic-political sphere, and Schmitt's political theology. For Weber, every theology is "intellectual rationalisation of religious salvation (*Heilbesitz*). No science is absolutely without presupposition, and no science can provide foundations for its values to the one who rejects such presuppositions. However, every theology adds some specific presupposition for its work and consequently for the legitimation of its own existence. [...] For every theology is valid the

presupposition: the world must have a sense (*Sinn*) and the question is: how should it be construed, so that it may be thinkable?" (Weber, 2002 [1919]: 508).

Weber dealt with a critique of religion, from Feuerbach to Marx and beyond, which regarded it as a form of false consciousness, whereas he intended instead to explore it culturally. As summarised by Gary Ulmen, one of the most sophisticated commentators of Schmitt, the critique of religion "transmutes theology in anthropology, and the sociology of religion considers religious phenomena from an anthropocentric perspective", so political theology (as in Schmitt) "transmutes back anthropology in theology, but it considers anthropocentrism (understood meta-theoretically) as secularisation of theocentrism" (Ulmen, 1991: 176). This political theology "does not need to assume nor to reject the existence of God, as it concerns itself with the *idea* of God, and the latter can be replaced only by another idea" (Ulmen, 1991: 177).

The relevance of Schmitt from the perspective of IPT can therefore be seen in his attempt at capturing the constitutive moment of the state in the singularity of the exception, and informed by the metaphysical imageries which characterise a particular age. Although it is arguably very difficult to try to systematise Schmitt's thought, all this has immediate connections with his investigation of the political, and of international politics. As later also articulated by Panagiotis Kondylis in his Macht und Entscheidung (Kondylis, 1984), metaphysical images are necessary for the construction and maintenance of political communities, as these are erected on the basis of the omnipresent possibility of war with other communities (the enemies), i.e. of the constant possibility for being called upon, as a citizen, to kill and die (Schmitt, 2009 [1932]: 31). Metaphysical narratives appear therefore necessary if the unavoidable contemplation of death and its aftermath is implied by the inescapable nature of any political organisation. On the other hand, as a multiplicity of metaphysical narratives is possible, the political world is necessarily a pluriverse (Schmitt, 2009 [1932]: 50-51). In such pluriverse, a modicum of order appears only achievable by means of accepting the recurrence of conflicts while trying to constrain them within given limits (Hegung des Krieges) (Schmitt, 1997 [1950]: 114). The concept of limit or border in its geographic dimension plays furthermore an important role in the construction of international order, which Schmitt indicates as impossible to disentangle from its territorial articulation in the form of land division (Nomos) (Schmitt, 1997 [1950]: 114; cf. Orsi, 2014). Theorising is therefore always related to some territorial dimension: paraphrasing a famous sentence by Robert Cox (Cox, 1981), theory is always for somewhere, for some geographic space.

Part III: Domains of Schmitt's Relevance

So far this article has produced an overview of the ways in which Schmitt has entered IPT literature, alongside an evaluation of such encounters, and has indicated a more upfront contextualisation of the author as the preferable way to encourage a stronger re-appropriation of his work, insisting particularly on political theology as the most relevant concept for such task. In this last part, a number of ongoing discussions are indicated as the more promising areas for a fruitful exchange between Schmittian studies and IPT. Because of the limits of this publication's format, only a broad-stroke picture of such areas can be delivered. Most if not all of them are already established (and to a certain extent overlapping) discussions in which Schmitt often appears as a reference (see for instance Prozorov, 2014a: 38-39 and 42-43; Prozorov, 2014b: 79-80 et passim), but his role could be further expanded.

The first area is constituted by theoretical studies concerned with political theology focusing on the role of what may have been traditionally termed "religious ideas" in shaping international political theory. These studies are expanding on the image of a "long detour" in theoretical thought, initially envisaged by Steve Smith (Smith, 1992): while being already openly debated in the period preceding the rise of behaviouralist IR, political theological concepts were unfortunately pushed aside for a number of decades, but have finally resurfaced in the wake of a combination of historical studies, "thick" constructivism, and normative IR theory. As polemically articulated by Nicholas Rengger, the "theological argument was relatively familiar in the general discussion of international politics" (Rengger, 2013: 141), but "[d]uring the 1960s and 1970s, however, as the sterile aridity of behaviouralism began to stultify the academic study of international relations, first in the United States and then, to a lesser or rather more partial extent, elsewhere, the conversation between theology and international relations began to dry up" (Rengger, 2013: 142).

As mentioned, the re-emergence of the theological has been facilitated by and is growing in prominence thank to the investigation of the intellectual roots of classical IR authors such as Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Wight, leading the exploration of the interrelation between Christian political-theological thought and realism (Troy, 2012). This investigation has been targeting the clarification of several concepts dominating realist theories, in particular its fundamentally pessimistic philosophical anthropology rooted in the Augustinian theological doctrines (Paipais, 2015).

The second area is the emerging literature concentrating on the place to be attributed to religious beliefs and organisations in the context of the so called "global religious resurgence" (Haynes, 2006; Bellin, 2008; Snyder, 2011, Philippot, 2009; Luoma-Aho, 2012; Vattel, 2011). The stratification of these studies have also connected with

more radical attempts at re-thinking the very category of religion as a domain which can be stably and successful separated from politics, as addressed by several post-colonial authors such as Talal Assad (Assad, 1993; see also Sheilk, 2012). Indeed Schmitt's political theological reflection, as argued above, rested already on the historical opinion that the very establishment of the category of "religion" as a separated domain from politics in the early modern European context has been a profoundly political act (*silete theologi in munere alieno*) (Schmitt, 1997 [1950]: 91-92), but also one which has been riddled with ambiguities and ideological underpinnings since the beginning.

This leads to the third area where Schmitt can play a more prominent role as an historical reference in IPT discussions, namely those, closely connected to the one just mentioned, which deal with the problem of secularisation and fundamentally with the nature of modernity in relation to religious and theological themes. Those discussions take place in International Relations against the background of specialist literature on the topic, such as William Connolly's politics of becoming (Connolly, 1999), Charles Taylor' Secular Age (Taylor, 2007) and of course Habermas's engagement with theology (Habermas, 2005; Habermas, 2010; see also Adams, 2006; Calhoun, 2013), harking back to even earlier reflections by, among others, Hans Blumenberg, Karl Löwith, and Eric Voegelin, and have seen a growing number of dedicated publications, especially Peter Berger's edited volume The Desecularization of the World ("the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false") (Berger, 1999: 2), Elizabeth Shakman Hurd's The Politics of Secularism in International Relations (Hurd, 2008), Erin Wilson's After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics (Wilson, 2012), and the more recent work by Adrian Pabst (Pabst, 2012). The key argument has been reiterated by Friedrich Kratochwil in his *Politics, Law and the Sacred*, where he openly challenged "the myth of a purely secular and contractarian international order", while showing how "the narrative of progress is hardly 'progressive' (in the sense of increasing our understanding)", since the problems addressed by religious and metaphysical accounts of human life "are not passé, but still with us" (Kratochwil, 2013: 1).

This failure in bracketing the metaphysical by means of secularisation, echoing Schmitt's claim about the "legend of the closure of all political theology" (Schmitt, 2008 [1970]), regardless of whether one may agree with the details of Schmitt's political theological views, together with the mentioned deconstruction of the very category of religion, opens or better strengthens paths for researching the theological origin of a number of key concepts still largely dominating contemporary international political discussions, particularly universalism and the tenability of the idea of humanity, namely the totality of the human species, as some kind of political community (with the corresponding debate on global citizenship) (Schmitt, 1997 [1950]:

50-54). Schmitt's position regarding international politics as expressed by the conception of a necessary pluriverse of distinct communities or peoples (*Völker*) is not, however, intended to reject universalism *tout court*, but certainly simplistic forms thereof not taking sufficiently into account the possibility of radical diversity (Cf. Jackson, 2003: 410), which may arise from the adoption in different societies of opposite organisational principles, leading however to sustainably functioning political units. The way in which the human species can instead be conceptualised as a series of differentiating, diverging, even competing projects immediately leads to the topic of the *Nomos* as land division, namely the erection of political and physical boundaries and borders, which are deemed to be guarantees of a political community's freedom. Such discussion on *Nomos*, land division and borders has never ceased in the domain of political geography (Minca and Rowan, 2015; Minca and Vaughan-Williams, 2012, Legg, 2011).

Conclusions

The relation between Carl Schmitt's heritage and international studies has been so far characterised by a variety of different approaches which however have not yet released the full potential of this encounter, even if the existence of such potential has been directly or indirectly recognised by many. The key to a recovery of interest in Schmitt appears to be the overcoming of the resistance vis-à-vis his political theology, to be understood in the framework of a more upfront contextualisation, revealing how such political theology may be treated as a sociological concept, or better a concept operating in specific discussions of *Begriffssoziologie* and history of political ideas. The stage for the recovery of Schmitt is already largely set, thanks to the ongoing efforts by numerous theorists engaged in the task of closing the long detour away from the theological and from the methods of conceptual history.

Notes

1. The recurrent preoccupation with the question of defining IR studies (and IPT within it) has generated a vast literature over the course of several decades. Among the latest most relevant contributions: Tim Dunne *et alii*, 'The End of International Relations Theory?'(Dunne, 2013); Patrick T. Jackson, 'Must International Studies Be a Science?' (Jackson, 2015); Helen Louise Turton, *International Relations and American Dominance*. *A Diverse Discipline* (Turton, 2016); Peter Marcus Kristensen, 'Discipline Admonished: On International Relations Fragmentation and the Disciplinary Politics of Stocktaking' (Kristensen, 2016), 243-267; Justin Rosenberg, 'International Relations in the Prison of Political Science' (Rosenberg, 2016); Jeff D. Colgan, 'Where

is International Relations Going? Evidence from Graduate Training' (Colgan, 2016); Beate Jahn, 'Theorizing the Political Relevance of International Relations Theory' (Jahn, 2016).

- 2. Cf. also "Ich bin Berufs-Jurist und kein Berufsrevolutionär", draft letter from Schmitt to Jacob Taubes dated 26/27 November 1977, in Kopp-Oberstebrink H et alii, 2012: 41).
- 3. Cf. 'Denn die Gerechtigkeit beruht zwar auf gesellschaftlichen Strömungen, aber sie bedarf, um wirksam zu werden, der persönlichen Tat eines einzelnen. [...] Die Gerechtigkeit, so wie sie in Gesetzen, Richtersprüchen, literarischen Werken individuell gestaltet wird ist in ihren höchsten Äußerungen das Ergebnis genialer Synthese der Gegensätze, wie alles Großartige, das je geschaffen worden ist.' (Ehrlich, 1914: 162).
- 4. Cf. 'Ich habe eine Methode, die mir eigentümlich ist; die Phänomene an mich herangekommen zu lassen, abzuwarten und sozusagen vom Stoff her zu denken, nicht von vorgefaßten Kriterien' (Schickel, 1993: 11).
- 5. See the recent exegetical work by Monserrat Herrero in *The Political Discourse of Carl Schmitt. A Mystic of Order* (Herrero, 2015).
- 6. Hans Kelsen's 'Gott und Staat' was originally published in *Logos: Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur* 11 (1922–1923), 261–284; available in *Aufsätze zur Ideologiekritik* (Kelsen, 1964: 29–55).
- 7. An excellent overview is provided by Luca Mavelli and Fabio Petito (Mavelli and Petito, 2012); see also Vendulka Kubálková's 'A 'Turn to Religion' in International Relations?' (Kubálková, 2009).

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