International Politics, **2007**, **44**, (19–36)


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Distant Suffering and Cosmopolitan Obligations[1]

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How far does globalization extend the boundaries of community by bringing distant suffering directly into the lives of onlookers, and how far does the greater visibility of suffering arouse compassion and a willingness to help? Modern self-images that stress the growth of emotional identification between the members of the same society encourage the belief that similar attachments may develop at the level of humanity as a whole. Critics of this position emphasize deep-seated tendencies to remain indifferent to remote suffering. In the light of these differences, this paper asks whether the extension of human solidarity largely depends on the development of feelings of guilt or shame when harm is done to 'distant strangers' or when little is done to help them. It asks whether universal vulnerabilities to basic forms of mental and physical suffering create the possibility of global empathy and sympathy, and whether the idea of 'embodied cosmopolitanism' provides adequate normative foundations for collective action to reduce unnecessary suffering in distant places.
International Politics (2007) **44,** 19–36. doi:10.1057/palgrave.ip.8800156

Keywords: cosmopolitanism; globalization; global ethics; distant suffering; moral emotions

Introduction

> 'Today human power and its excesses, which far outstrip any certain knowledge of its consequences, have taken on such enormous dimensions that even the daily exercise of our powers, which makes the routine of modern civilisation possible and which we all depend on, becomes an ethical problem' (Hans Jonas, 1996).

The need for cosmopolitan thinking has never been greater, and it may yet come to shape political theory and practice to an unprecedented extent. The project of 'making poverty history' is one expression of how cosmopolitanism has become central to the political imagination in recent years. Concerns about human rights, avoidable suffering in war and environmental degradation animate post-national ethical commitments. Unsurprisingly, globalization has not produced a consensus about how the human race should organize its

political affairs. Cosmopolitan rhetoric informs the liberal struggle against 'barbaric' threats to 'civilized' humanity as well as rival Islamic concerns about the plight of the Palestinians and the perceived oppression of Muslims across the world. Nationalist responses to globalization remain powerful while public concerns about Islamic terrorism subject multicultural commitments to a demanding test. No all-encompassing cosmopolitan project gives direction to popular responses to matters of universal concern, and yet an increasing number of individuals believe that they must take a moral stand on some vital global issue. Cosmopolitanism has become central to contemporary social and political theory for these reasons (see Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Brock and Brighouse, 2005).

A recurrent question is whether any form of cosmopolitanism can achieve neutrality between rival ethical traditions. Debates about various conceptions of dialogic politics are particularly relevant in this context. Many social theorists, such as Bourdieu, Derrida, Foucault, Habermas, Lyotard and Rorty have made non-coercive speech central to contemporary ethics. There are ongoing debates about whether the most elaborated defence of this argument — Habermas's discourse theory of morality — privileges a conception of the self which understands morality in terms of rational, universalizable principles and is unsympathetic to those that take their ethical bearings unthinkingly from established forms of life (Shapcott, 2001; Vaughan-Williams, 2004; Linklater, 2005). Critics maintain that discourse ethics is an example of how cosmopolitan ethical reasoning lacks secure foundations, is not neutral between different moral codes and contains the seeds of new forms of power and domination.

Suspicion of cosmopolitanism has been a feature of communitarian thinkers who prefer to cultivate principles that are embodied in tried and tested customary moralities, and which have the advantage over cosmopolitanism of reflecting the concrete needs and preferences of those who have worked out over time how to live together in particular communities. The members of such associations, it is argued, do not have much affinity with the members of other societies, and they do not see themselves as poised to join all other human beings in promoting some cosmopolitan project. Communitarians do not deny that societies have international obligations to avoid unnecessary harm or to assist each other (Miller, 1999).[2] For some, cosmopolitan sentiments are an outgrowth of what liberal democracies take themselves to be (Walzer, 2002). The belief that 'cruelty is the worst thing we do' has been regarded as the source of cosmopolitan orientations which are already implicit in the self-understandings of liberal communities (Rorty, 1989; Shklar, 1984). Whatever their position on the question of philosophical foundations, most cosmopolitans accept the communitarian thesis that universal moral principles are not given in human reason or the properties of 'disembodied selves'

(Erskine, 2002). It is preferable to rest the case for cosmopolitanism on socio-psychological commitments to empathy and sympathy, which are among the universal pre-requisites of social life. The upshot of this argument is that moral agents need not look beyond the moral resources which are essential for the reproduction of their forms of life for ways of organizing new social relations that result from global interconnectedness. But because of the partiality of moral points of view, they must subject their initial sense of rightness to a dialogic tribunal with the aim of correcting all ethnocentrisms.

Cosmopolitans do not argue that identification with existing nations or states should be replaced with allegedly higher loyalties to the human race. Most argue for universalizing the 'scope of ethical concern' (Erskine, 2002, 457) and for transforming political communities in accordance with the belief that 'cosmophils' should display, in the words of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'friendship towards the world'. Kant's cosmopolitan duty of hospitality expressed this theme, as has Derrida's defence of responsibilities to the refugee in more recent times (Kant, 1970; Derrida, 2001). Friendship towards humanity has come to mean supporting the universal culture of human rights by protesting against violations wherever they may occur, possibly by using military force in the most serious humanitarian emergencies (Wheeler, 2000). Visions of world order which claim that the welfare interests of every person should receive equal consideration in cosmopolitan democratic structures also express the desire to universalize the 'scope of ethical concern' (Held, 1995).

Whatever their differences — about the rights and wrongs of humanitarian intervention, for example — a commitment to human equality is central to such standpoints. As noted, this belief is rarely turned against the nation or state as such but is used for the modest purpose of criticizing state structures that violate global responsibilities to protect human rights. Although this is controversial, many regard the state — supported and cajoled by international and transnational movements — as a key instrument for advancing cosmopolitanism. From this standpoint, the main political task is to develop state structures that envisage new relations between national and global loyalties, and ensure that cosmopolitanism becomes a more significant component of national identities as they shake off the 'totalising' qualities which characterized state demands for popular loyalty in an earlier era of endemic great power rivalry. Lawler's case for 'classical internationalism' which draws on the experience of the Scandinavian social democracies resonates with the philosophical defence of 'embedded' cosmopolitanism — with a doctrine that stresses how existing forms of life can encourage the broadening of individual and social identities (Erskine, 2002; Lawler, 2005).

The rest of this article makes the case for embodied cosmopolitanism. This position begins with the premise of universal human vulnerability to basic

forms of mental and physical suffering and with a shared capacity for empathy with injured others (Jonas, 1996). The significance of globalization for emotional responses to distant suffering is then considered. How far does globalization extend the boundaries of community by bringing distant suffering directly into the lives of onlookers, and how far does the greater visibility of suffering arouse compassion and a willingness to help? Several reasons for doubting that globalization widens emotional identification in response to 'distant suffering' must be explored. Collective self-images in modern societies have emphasized advances in reducing violence and cruelty in line with the growth of emotional identification between fellow-nationals, and between co-nationals and the members of other societies to some degree (Elias, 2000). Critics have argued that such flattering self-images ignore the ability of modern societies to remain indifferent to suffering in distant places; some insist that a high level of indifference to others typifies the condition of modernity. It is important to ask whether an ethic that begins with the duty not to harm others has a special capacity to promote progress in widening the scope of emotional identification to include the suffering in all regions.

Human Vulnerability

The discourse theory of morality holds that every individual has an equal right of involvement or representation in any decision-making decision that may affect them — and an equal right to influence decisions that may harm them. Critics have argued that background claims about basic human needs and universal vulnerabilities do more work in discourse ethics than its advocates realize. They have protested that certain basic needs which are common to all human beings provide the real basis for a cosmopolitan ethic (Geras, 1998). The critique invites the advocates of discourse ethics to unpack background assumptions about human vulnerability and to ask whether they lead inexorably to a doctrine of universal human needs.

At best, certain needs (such as enjoying health, security, emotional stability, the support of others and so forth) are 'nearly universal': not all persons seek to satisfy them (Brown, 1991). Recent ethical inquiries which foreground the theme of vulnerability reformulate the point by claiming that some interests (such as killing, torturing or in other ways harming others) are not generalizable; these are not objectives that all human beings can reasonably have. Interests in avoiding pain and anguish, in being treated honestly and in receiving assistance in desperate circumstances are generalizable, however, since it is reasonable for all human beings to have these objectives although many do not (Habermas, 1973; O'Neill, 1996).

Deciding what is and what is not generalizable in domestic and world politics is a matter that is best determined by dialogue. Dialogue is essential because it is invariably the case that some interests can only be satisfied by sacrificing others or by deferring their realization to another occasion. When all legitimate interests cannot be satisfied, it is necessary to resort to dialogue to ensure that all voices are heard in the attempt to prioritize objectives. Additionally, as colonial practices demonstrated, great dangers are inherent in perspectives which believe it is self-evident that all human beings have some interests in common (Bauman, 1993, 103; also Anderson, 1999). Open dialogue offers some guarantee that universalistic notions of well-being do not lead to efforts to impose alien beliefs and practices on supposedly inferior cultures.

As noted, the critique of discourse ethics invites further discussion of background claims about human vulnerability and the capacity for suffering. Their importance features in the claim that discourse ethics resonates with struggles for 'recognition' which stem from 'the suffering incurred by… concrete cases of denigration and disrespect' (Habermas, 1998, 25). This formulation echoes Marx's emphasis on the socialist's concern with human suffering and with related themes in the writings of the Frankfurt School — most notably Adorno's contention that Auschwitz demanded a return to what Bernstein (2000, 122) calls the 'vulgar materialism of the injurable animal', and his observation that although human beings fail to agree about the 'good life' they have rather less difficulty in identifying 'forms of the bad life' which must be resisted (Adorno, 2000, 167–168).

Adorno's stress on human vulnerabilities provides a useful starting point for an inquiry into distant suffering and cosmopolitan obligations (see also Zehfuss, this issue). To pursue this argument is to return to the oldest expressions of cosmopolitanism. An emphasis on the need to protect human beings from universal vulnerabilities was central to the version of cosmopolitanism found in the Hippocratic School which influenced Thucydides and sophists such as Antiphon and Hippias of Elis (Baldry, 1965; Jouanna, 1999; Lu, 2000). Critics of unnecessary violence and cruelty in European history have often invoked what Thucydides (1972, Book 3.84) described as 'those general laws of humanity which are there to give a hope of salvation to all who are in distress'. Of course, the West has no monopoly over this idea of entitlements to be spared unwarranted suffering. Many world religions have regarded frailty and suffering as a natural point of solidarity between strangers, and also as the source of moral obligations to all sentient creatures (Lu, 2000, 254). For many moral philosophers, shared frailties rather than some supposedly universalizable notion of the good life is the proper foundation of a cosmopolitan ethic that dissolves pernicious distinctions between insiders and outsiders (Butler, 2004). Efforts to preserve the idea of moral progress have invoked such themes in pointing to advances in reaching an agreement on global standards that

prohibit certain harms to human beings *qua* human beings. Prohibitions on 'serious mental and bodily harm' which are embedded in various international legal conventions illustrate these advances (Linklater, 2001). These cosmopolitan legal conventions are designed to place strict limits on what co-nationals can do in the course of promoting their interests (and what regimes can do in relations with their own citizens). A central sociological question is whether the globalization of images of suffering can preserve these conventions from the dangerous encroachments of power politics.

Globalization, Ethics and Suffering

Globalization has made affluent societies more aware of distant suffering than ever before, but how this affects the relationship between obligations to fellow-citizens and duties to the rest of humankind is unclear. There is still much truth in the observation that a man who cannot sleep because he will 'lose his little finger to-morrow… will snore with the most profound security over the ruin of a hundred million of his brethren' (Smith, 1982, 136–137). In the main, absorbing personal pain, anxiety or fear contract the moral universe; the suffering of the geographically remote is usually less pressing than the difficulties of the self, or the needs of family, friends and co-nationals. Adam Smith qualified his observation by arguing that undisturbed sleep for the man who is aware of the suffering of distant strangers is easier 'provided he never sees them'. The implication is that the inward-looking moral life is more difficult to lead when suffering is proximate; in this condition, compassion is more easily aroused.[3] This interpretation of human responses to misery has often rested on the judgment, which Smith shared with Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Horkheimer and many others, that sympathy is the most natural and fundamental of the moral emotions. The upshot is that the human capacity for compassion is the key to global solidarity.

Various social-scientific studies have explored the relationship between distance and morality in more detail. Writings on the Holocaust and modern warfare have shed considerable light on how distance can override the taboos on violence in stable societies. Analyses of the psychology of those directly involved in the physical extermination of the Jews have examined the destructive effects of mass shootings on 'ordinary men' (Browning, 2001). In particular, various personality disorders tend to confirm the analysis of the 'civilizing process' which holds that modern societies have a reduced tolerance of cruelty and violence, and a related preference for concealing the unsettling or distasteful (the slaughter of animals, death and so forth) 'behind the scenes' (Elias, 2000). Industrial killing in remote death camps was designed to expedite the destruction of the Jews but also to protect the mental stability of ordinary citizens by reducing contact with human suffering.

The exact relationship between the Holocaust and the civilizing process is deeply controversial however. Bauman (1989) argues that the extermination programme dashed the belief that modernity had progressed from barbarism to civility. The bureaucratized nature of the Holocaust revealed that dangerous tendencies exist in all modern societies. The fragmentation of tasks within a complex social division of labour allowed functionaries to believe that they were simply performing specific administrative tasks with maximum efficiency. Distance from the extermination sites provided protection from the moral turmoil which most persons would have experienced if they had been directly involved in killing — particularly women and children. On this argument, the capacity for detached involvement in the mundane features of the bureaucratic administration of mass murder is the most disturbing feature of the civilizing process.[4] Bauman links this with the wider phenomenon of detachment from, and indifference to, strangers, which is inherent in modern forms of life.

Milgram's famous study of how 'normal' persons can be persuaded to override traditional taboos against harming others influenced this thesis that all modern societies must be alert to the dangerous qualities which are present in the banal, social-psychological pre-requisites of bureaucratic systems and in the impersonal social relationships that typify modernity. In addition to stressing the part that 'obedience to authority' played in encouraging such violations, (Milgram, 1974, 175) maintained that moral agents were more likely to yield to pressures to injure when distance shielded them from the distress of others. Drawing on this study to make a larger point about globalization, Bauman (1989, 192–193) argues that the capacity 'to set limits to the harm inflicted on the other' decreases as social relations stretch across space, and sympathy for others decreases when distance makes suffering 'inaudible'. Like Adam Smith, Kant (1965, 126) struck a similar chord two centuries earlier when he asked if the 'oceans make a community of nations impossible', and if globalization simply increases the human capacity to export 'evil and violence' to new regions. For Kant, the issue was whether human beings can expand their moral horizons in line with the geographical extension of social and political relations, whether they can reduce the moral importance of distinctions between insiders and outsiders in response to the changing significance of territory and space. This Enlightenment problem remains one of the central questions of the age.

Emotional Responses to Distant Suffering

Prevalent attitudes to harm cast some light on the relationship between morality and distance. Most of the inhabitants of relatively stable societies are socialized into believing that violent harm is *prima facie* wrong. Harm is not

impermissible (take the example of legitimate self-defence) but the presumption is that it must be justified. Taboos against harming others can disintegrate rapidly when individuals and communities fear for their survival, but many war narratives note how distance matters for human behaviour by indicating that military personnel who can destroy civilians in large numbers if their suffering is invisible may find it harder to kill a single adversary whose vulnerability is obvious (Walzer, 1980, 138ff; Caputo quoted in Bauman, 1989, 25–26).

There has been much discussion of whether the global media alter dominant attitudes to distant suffering (Taylor, 1998; Cohen, 2001; Sontag, 2003). Certainly, more suffering is more visible than in any other phase in human history. Privileged groups cannot escape media representations of the plight of the most vulnerable members of the human race; it is now more difficult to concentrate the mind on promoting immediate personal concerns (subject to Adam Smith's caveat) without reflecting on the fate of distant others. At times, certain identifiable actors are responsible for misery elsewhere but, on other occasions, there may be no causal links at all, or the connections are hard to establish or may be too weak to arouse sympathy for the suffering. Whether causal responsibility for suffering tends to arouse emotions such as shame or guilt, and whether this is the key to the development of demanding cosmopolitan obligations, is a matter to address later.

Many observers defend a cosmopolitan ethic by pointing to connections between affluence in one part of the world and poverty in another, or security in one place and insecurity elsewhere. Examples include accounts of how the world economic system disadvantages the poor; how national policies protect agricultural incomes in affluent areas by disadvantaging weak foreign competitors; how responses to global terrorism purchase security by eroding the universal human rights culture; how military action to prevent human rights violations, or to address actual or imagined security threats, may protect co-nationals by causing unnecessary civilian suffering; and how affluent lifestyles lead to environmental harms that are often most painfully felt in the weakest communities. These are important examples of how the global media have made modern publics conscious of the ways in which they harm others or are morally implicated in needless suffering.

It is also difficult to ignore human misery when little effort is needed to alleviate it; in this case, the shame of failing to assist — rather than the shame of harming others — is crucial. The ease with which the affluent could assist the victims of the Asian tsunami in December 2004 partly explains generous public donations to relief programmes. The more general point is that agents usually need to identify with other human beings before they will be troubled by the harm they do to them and before they feel compelled to assist them (De Swaan, 1995). Media representations of suffering may be important in widening identification to include persons who stand outside the traditional

boundaries of moral concern, and in promoting a willingness to assume new global responsibilities. For many, compassion alone can produce cosmopolitan behaviour. But one must ask how far efforts to promote identification with 'distant strangers' can also encourage emotions such as shame or guilt which play such a vital role in harmonizing personality structures with social norms in bounded communities. The question is whether the extension of human solidarity depends not only on emotional identification and compassion but also on feelings of guilt or shame when harm is caused or when little is done to alleviate misery. The conjecture is that shame and guilt along with compassion must become 'cosmopolitan emotions' (Linklater, 2004).

Globalization invites moral agents to question ingrained habits of privileging the interests of insiders: it creates new opportunities for increasing support for a cosmopolitan ethic which holds that all interests deserve equal consideration. It is immaterial for many cosmopolitans whether the victims of suffering are near or remote; the plain fact of misery demands a cosmopolitan reaction (Chatterjee, 2004). Singer's memorable defence of global measures to end famine in Bangladesh is an important illustration of this standpoint. Recent arguments for humanitarian intervention which maintain that sovereign political communities should be prepared to sacrifice the lives of co-nationals to 'save strangers' share this belief that affluent societies should bear the costs of solving problems which they did not create (Kaldor, 1999, Wheeler, 2000). On this argument, a strong sense of moral responsibility can and should develop quite independently of any causal responsibility for the suffering of others.

Prior to contrasting this standpoint with the idea that support for cosmopolitanism depends on convincing moral agents of their responsibility for harming others, it is necessary to consider some criticisms of the belief that the visibility of suffering is sufficient to entice human beings to widen their moral horizons. Realists argue that states are not obliged to sacrifice the lives of co-nationals for the sake of strangers. A related claim is that individuals do not have the duties which Singer (1973) insists they have — to contribute to alleviating the misery of others until their actions bring comparable costs to themselves. The contention that states have primary duties to assist co-nationals who are signatories to the 'social contract' leads to the conclusion that decisions not to assist strangers simply withhold a benefit rather than violate fundamental duties. On this reasoning, assistance belongs to the realm of the supererogatory. The greater the assistance, the more heroic and praiseworthy the relevant benefactor is. But in choosing not to assist, no perfect obligation is breached, and no blame should be attached to the unresponsiveness of bystanders.

The realist argument that states often face circumstances in which survival requires them to impose undesirable but justifiable costs on civilians in enemy

societies compounds the cosmopolitan's difficulties (Mapel, 1996). For realists, political necessity poses the greatest threat to cosmopolitan norms and attachments. Necessity (whether real or imagined, assuming the distinction is ever clear) is the reason why the history of international relations is marked by tragic conflict rather than by the progress of cosmopolitanism. Others stress that the dissemination of images of pain and misery may not engender transforming waves of compassion. Their proliferation may dull the senses or result in compassion fatigue or a sense of hopelessness (Sontag, 2003); they may nurture the 'blasé self' which is indifferent to suffering or finds delight in witnessing the latest in the rapidly changing procession of sensational images (Tester, 1998). Photojournalistic representations may frame human misery in ways that foster the detached or voyeuristic contemplation of alien experience. The objectification of suffering persons may either exploit misery or allow others to exploit it as consumers of tragedy who then reproduce pernicious contrasts between advanced social systems and hopelessly backward ways of life (Taylor, 1998).

Recalling an earlier argument about modernity and indifference, globalization may simply extend the impersonal nature of social relations, and spread feelings of detachment from others which typify life in large cities (Boden and Molotch, 1994, 257ff). At the same time, the global media disseminate images of suffering that invite a moral response, and they give particular actors or their representatives an unusual capacity to publicize terrible suffering. This is one of the striking tensions at the heart of globalization, one that requires cosmopolitan thinkers to ask whether any vision of world order may have a special ability to overcome indifference and to induce positive reactions to remote suffering.

Responsibility for Harm

Assume that two beggars arrive at someone's doorstep, that the resident had previously caused the plight of one of the callers but had no responsibility for the equal misfortune of the other and, finally, that s/he can help one but not both beggars without significant personal cost. It may be argued that as a general rule the householder should assist the person s/he harmed in the past, and that a duty of restitution comes before an act of benevolence (see Ware, 1992, 68). The ethical injunction to assist does not ask more than it is reasonable to expect — it does not invoke the claim that persons should do everything they can to alleviate suffering.

This standpoint is consistent with psychological studies of moral development that analyse the nature of ethical motivation. The early stages of infant development are marked by the often painful journey of learning how to live

alongside other centres of experience with independent feelings of pain, fear, anxiety and so forth. Parents or carers inculcate understandings about how the child's actions affect others and may harm them. Developing this awareness along with the capacity to take personal responsibility for harming others are universal features of elementary socialization processes (Harris, 1989, Hoffman, 2000). In the course of routine patterns of socialization, children are exposed to shame when they infringe prohibitions against harming others, and they are equipped with a capacity for guilt or remorse for either committing or contemplating harmful deeds. These emotions are critical for compliance with social conventions governing harm (Harris, 1989; Hoffman, 2000; Tangney and Dearing, 2002).[5] These socialization processes may provide ways of bridging the gulf between everyday moral experience within bounded communities and cosmopolitan principles which defend the equal consideration of every person's interests.[6]

Whether the sense of a duty to assist others usually develops in tandem with the obligation to take responsibility for harm or appears at a later stage of moral development is unclear, and there may be crucial cultural and gender differences (see Hoffman, 2000). Certainly, some moral philosophers have argued that the duty not to harm others is almost always the most 'stringent' moral obligation — or the most stringent *prima facie* one because circumstances arise in which it is socially acceptable to harm others. On this argument, individuals are not obliged to do everything in their power to help strangers, but they are required to do all they can not to harm them (Ross, 1930).

As noted, there is reason to question Ross's claim that once moral agents have learned that they should not harm others they may move to a higher ethical plane that revolves around acts of benevolence. Whether individual moral development is necessarily sequential in this way need not detain us. In the history of international relations, however, the chief moral problem has usually been how to prevent harm rather than to promote altruism. The assumption has been that Mill's comment about individuals ('a person', he argued, 'may possibly not need the benefits of others; but he always needs that they should not do him hurt') applies equally to states (Mill quoted in Mackie, 1977, 135). Circumstances arise, as Mill's formulation recognized, when an individual or state desperately needs assistance, and when others can be accused of lacking humanity if they insist that the duty not to cause harm exhausts their obligations to other persons. In the case of the two beggars mentioned earlier, it is not obviously the case that the interests of the beggar who had been harmed earlier should take precedence over the interests of the person whose misery was caused in some other way. A moral agent might be expected to favour the beggar whose plight was especially desperate rather than to compensate the person s/he had harmed previously. Relative need and hardship must enter the moral equation.

Some political theorists have argued that an ethic which is based on the harm principle is defective because it fails to regard humanitarian assistance as a matter of moral urgency (Geras, 1998). Complex issues surround this contention. One must remember that liberals have used the harm principle to limit the province of the criminal law. Punishment, they have claimed, should be reserved for those actions that seriously harm others. It has therefore been imperative that liberals develop a tight definition of harm, one that states cannot exploit to justify interfering in areas that liberals regard as the sovereign preserve of individuals. Whether the concept of harm can be restricted in this way is a moot point but, however it is defined, abstaining from harm is insufficient to preserve liberal freedoms (Geras, 1998). Duties to assist the vulnerable must also figure prominently in a global ethic. How far individuals should make significant personal sacrifices to aid others is a difficult question. Geras (1998) is correct that there is no easy way of settling this matter; consequently, there is no simple way of deciding when a failure to rescue should result in punishment. In their reflections on this matter, liberals stress the need to balance personal freedoms and duties of assistance. Duties of rescue must not overburden individuals or unreasonably restrict the right to pursue legitimate objectives (Hart, 1968). On this argument, the harm principle justifies 'limited altruism'; but for some liberals it is also capable of defending duties of rescue.

This last comment about the implications of the harm principle denies that moral obligations can be neatly divided into duties to avoid unnecessary harm and obligations to assist the desperate. The key argument is that there are circumstances in which a failure to rescue another (when it is easily within one's power to do so) not only infringes the harm principle but violates it so seriously as to invite the sanction of the criminal law. Feinberg (1984) argues that the belief that an agent should not be blamed for failing to save another rests on a dismally 'restricted' account of causality. Any account of how the person came to die must include the potential rescuer's decision not to intervene. More generally, acts of omission can be as harmful as acts of commission, and punishment may be appropriate for that reason. To recall an earlier point, critics of this position argue that failures to rescue should generally be regarded as a legitimate decision to withhold a benefit rather than as a potential criminal offence. Large issues are raised by the tension between these points of view: whether the failure to assist can constitute harm, whether the negative obligation not to injure can give rise to positive duties of assistance and, finally, whether the harm principle can be used to criminalize certain acts of omission.

Studies of indifference to suffering suggest ways of resolving some of these disputes. It has been argued that, by doing nothing, bystanders effectively cast their lot with the perpetrators of violence (Elie Wiesel in Brown, 1990). The onlooker's gaze can compound the victim's suffering by conveying the absence of compassion and indifference to whether or not that person survives (*ibid*). In

the case of a failure to help a drowning stranger, a bystander may deserve blame because inaction prolonged suffering. Many may think that the Bad Samaritan should feel remorse, shame or guilt; and many may believe that it is right that a failure to rescue, when no significant personal risks are involved, should attract the scrutiny of the criminal law.

The contention that the negative duty not to injure is the source of positive obligations of assistance has been applied to international politics to defend the redistribution of world resources to eradicate severe poverty (Pogge, 2002). This thesis maintains that the affluent are the unjust beneficiaries of the 'global coercive regimes' which have been imposed on the vulnerable; it is buttressed by evidence that only 1% of world aggregate income is needed to end serious poverty. Reforming global regimes is not a matter of charity. As in the case of the drowning stranger, the negative duty not to cause injury is the source of positive obligations to assist others by removing hindrances to their well-being. The duty to dismantle political structures that disadvantage the vulnerable is one of justice — of ensuring restitution for past and continuing harm (see also Dobson, 2005). This argument can be applied to national economic policies that cause harm by dumping surplus product in unprotected markets or give domestic producers the decisive advantage of public subsidies. As noted in Hans Jonas's remark quoted at the beginning of this article, an intriguing feature of the modern world is that these moral arguments invite individuals to decide where they stand on similar matters which arise in everyday life — for example, with respect to forms of consumption that raise the issue of fair trade or complicity in the exploitation of cheap labour, and with regard to everyday conduct that harms other species and the physical environment.

Some societies turn to Bad Samaritan legislation to punish those who choose not to use their capabilities to help the imperilled. The political consequences following Hurricane Katrina are a reminder that co-nationals generally think it is appropriate to condemn the Bad Samaritan for a failure to assist endangered members of the same community. There are no exact parallels in international relations. Although this may change, societies do not blame each other for the failure to devote say 1% of their Gross Domestic Product to overseas aid. Those who allocate an equivalent amount of their personal wealth to humanitarian relief are usually praised for their kindness rather than commended for simply 'doing their cosmopolitan duty'. Acceptance of preventable infant deaths in poor societies is not regarded as the equivalent of Bad Samaritanism with respect to the same phenomenon in one's own society. Cosmopolitans may find encouragement in evidence that this troubles many in affluent societies, along with inaction in the face of serious violations of human rights, but against the subtle changes in socialization processes which may be upgrading matters of global importance must be set the fickle nature of compassionate sentiments and their restricted application.

As noted earlier, some philosophers insist that there is no justification for the double standard with respect to preventable infant deaths and similar phenomena. Even so, distance from the victim matters psychologically in connection with decisions about whether to help. Potential rescuers may wonder if their efforts will succeed or if aid will be squandered; they may believe that those who are closer to the afflicted are better placed to assist effectively. Public demonstrations of success in assisting the vulnerable may convince rescuers of their ability to make a substantial difference to the lives of distant others; they may make it more likely that moral agents will experience guilt or shame if they fail to contribute to future humanitarian efforts, and more likely to act from compassion.

Rescue operations can take different forms including famine or disaster relief, and military action in the case of human rights atrocities. Whether force is the best means of defeating regimes which use force against sections of their own population is a keenly contested issue (see Smith this issue), but on occasion there may be no alternative. There are powerful objections to relaxing the norms against military intervention. The possible longer-term consequence that the great powers will find it easier to devise pretexts for interfering in other societies must be weighed against the short-term benefits of breaching sovereignty. An additional problem is that military intervention authorizes force as a remedy for political crises when the long-term goal in world politics should be the Kantian one of promoting perpetual peace (Booth, 2001).

But how to respond to serious human rights violations is not the solitary global problem that requires an ethical response from the affluent; and there are various ways of being cosmopolitan apart from using force to safeguard human rights, a course of action that must be reserved for exceptional circumstances in any case. The harm that the affluent inflict on weaker societies — and the harm that results from inaction in the face of the permanent or 'resident emergencies' of starvation, illness or disease, crippling poverty and so forth — have a permanent claim on the global conscience. One might ask how the obligations which arise in such circumstances are best summarized. In his efforts to define the essence of morality, Schopenhauer (1995, 69) argued that the principle, 'injure no one; on the contrary, help everyone as much as you can' (*neminen laede, imo omnes, quantum potes, juva*), encapsulated the ethical life. This maxim is only a starting point, of course. Social and political life will continue to be shaped by disagreements about what it means to injure others, by disputes about the permissible and impermissible forms of harm and by differences about where the line should be drawn between heroic and obligatory assistance. Even so, Schopenhauer's maxim is hard to beat as a focal point for further reflections on the principles that should inform cosmopolitan ways of life.

Conclusions

A traditional problem for cosmopolitans is explaining how human beings can be expected to assume demanding global duties when the emotional distance between the members of different societies is so great. Communitarian critics of cosmopolitanism argue that relations between distant strangers are usually characterized by indifference or mild concern; the bonds of nationality or their equivalent are the key to deep solidarity. On this argument, cosmopolitans should be more troubled than they usually are by the evidence that national populations are not motivated to organize their lives around a universal ethic.

But the gulf between human societies may not be so difficult to bridge. The most basic human vulnerabilities are much the same everywhere — or sufficiently alike that human beings who have no social ties with each other can sympathize with those who have lost, or are in danger of losing, the preconditions of a decent life; however, this is defined within their society. A sense of responsibility for endangering these universal pre-requisites can be developed from emotional dispositions regarding harm to others which are acquired in most societies through routine socialization processes. Guilt or shame because of actions that harm distant others — and moral unease because of indifference to terrible suffering — do not have to be invented *ab initio*; they are an extension of moral dispositions which are common to most societies although they are invariably more central in relations between members than in relations with distant human beings. One response to criticisms of cosmopolitanism is that the moral resources which are present in conventions against harm and in the attendant moral emotions make the extension of moral and political community possible. This emphasis on the *immanence* of universal obligation in everyday realities is the key to embodied cosmopolitanism.

Globalization poses the intriguing question of whether societies with particularistic moralities that reflected their relative isolation from, and frequent rivalry with, one another can develop common ground about shared vulnerabilities through dialogic processes. Contemporary international law offers some encouragement on this point. The obstacles to substantial progress have been well documented, and they will continue to shape the tracks along which globalization travels. But it is not beyond the ingenuity of the human race to rise above increasingly problematical particularistic moralities, and to create global arrangements that have the primary task of implementing cosmopolitan obligations to reduce distant suffering.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Toni Erskine, the participants in the Warwick workshop on *Cosmopolitanism and Beyond,* and the two referees for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2 David Miller's *On Nationality* (1995, 57–58, Oxford: Oxford University Press) highlights the problem of motivation as follows: '…universalism rests upon an implausible account of ethical motivation. When I act on moral principle, I am supposed to act simply out of a rational conviction that I am doing what morality requires of me…For the mass of mankind, ethical life must be a social institution whose principles must accommodate natural sentiments towards relatives, colleagues and so forth, and which must rely on a complex set of motives to get people to comply with its requirements – motives such as love, pride and shame as well as purely rational conviction'. Obligations that arise from harming others – or from failing to help them – can supply a cosmopolitan ethic with the vital emotions that are the key to 'ethical motivation' (see p. 10ff).

3 It may be argued that social distance which is anchored in national, racial or other differences may be more important than geographical distance in Smith's example. A person will be distressed on hearing about injury to a family member or close friend, whether the individual concerned is distant or near. Social distance means that some persons will show little concern for others no matter where they live. It would be wrong to conclude that the geographical distance has no significance for attitudes to suffering. Its relevance is especially important when there are neither strong affinities nor distrust or grievances between different groups. The question of whether the global dissemination images of suffering can significantly alter human behaviour is most relevant under these conditions.

4 See (Elias, 1996) on the extent to which the gas chambers were an expression of some features of the civilizing process as well as a retreat to barbarism.

5 Shame and guilt can have different effects. According to some studies of infant development, shame, which revolves around the loss of respect in the eyes of others, typically leads to efforts to conceal wrongful behaviour or to blame others for rule violations. Guilt, which is linked with the development of an inner conscience which allows individuals to regulate their behaviour, is the more 'pro-social' emotion because it more likely to lead actors to take responsibility for personal wrongdoing, to display remorse and to seek restitution and forgiveness (Tangney and Dearing, 2002).

6 The fact that socialization processes inculcate in-group/out-group distinctions is no less important, of course. Their moral significance has to be reduced before everyday, universal concerns about harm and related moral emotions can be embedded in an effective cosmopolitan moral code.

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