

**GLOBAL ETHICS AND GLOBAL STRANGERS  
BEYOND THE INTER-NATIONAL RELATIONS FRAMEWORK: AN ESSAY  
IN DESCRIPTIVE ETHICS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Discussions of global ethics--about the types of normative claim made on groups and individuals (not only states), by groups and individuals around the world--must move beyond the categories inherited in the International Relations discipline. Many important positions are not captured by a framework developed for discussion of inter-state relations. The blindspots seem to reflect an outmoded expectation that (i) giving low normative weight to national boundaries correlates strongly with (ii) giving more normative weight to people beyond one's national boundaries, and vice versa; in other words that these two dimensions in practice reduce to one. The paper develops and illustrates a considerably enriched categorization. We need to distinguish various types of 'cosmopolitan' position, by recognizing the separate importance of the two dimensions; and to note and investigate many varieties of libertarian position which give neither national boundaries nor pan-human obligations much (if any) importance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Global or world ethics is the study of ethical claims made on human beings -- individually or in groups, not only grouped as states -- in their relations with individuals and groups (again not only states) throughout the world (Dower, 1998). Nigel Dower and others have highlighted as a new agenda this broadening of attention beyond states, in the context of the intensification of global interconnections and internationalizing of problems of absolute poverty, conflict, environment, refugees and more.<sup>2</sup>

This paper adopts the agenda, including for descriptive as well as normative ethics, and argues first for wide-ranging description and analysis of existing ethics, including practices as well as doctrines, and not only the elaboration, evaluation and advocacy of old or new formal doctrines. Section I suggests the importance of this sort of sociology of ideas and practices, by reference to the growth of groups and persons who have attenuated or no national loyalties and instead worldwide but not pan-human loyalties, and to debates about world free trade versus protecting established communities.

Attention to a wider range of actors, and to practices as well as doctrines, will lead global ethics well beyond traditional normative IR with its focus on the relations between states. The common expectation has been that positions which stress the normative importance of national boundaries will also put low weight on obligations that cross national boundaries, in particular obligations on the basis of a common humanity; and vice versa, low normative weight to national boundaries will go with higher weight to global obligations. We will see that the expectation is misleading, and that a wider range of positions must be investigated than normative IR conventionally considered, including positions which give *neither* national boundaries *nor* pan-human global obligations much ethical importance. Section II therefore considerably extends Dower's taxonomy of standpoints in world or global ethics.

Section III takes further the identification and clarification of these 'neither-nor' positions. They include enormously powerful anti-humanist stances, notably for unrestricted markets and even for unrestricted contestation as the principle for all spheres of life. We will specify various such positions: in current responses to crises in the supply of global public goods, in the reconsideration--and decline--of international aid in the 1980s, and in the Darwinian 'ethics' of those who will trade in anything. Section IV

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<sup>2</sup> I will use 'global ethics' in preference to 'world ethics'. 'World' connotes world-level organizations, world-powers, etc., whereas 'global' suggests the sphere, across which numerous projects link and sum.

then offers a set of conclusions and underlines the importance of descriptive ethics for any realistic and effective practical ethics.

## **2. FROM SOCIAL CONTRACT TO MARKET CONTRACT**

### **2.1 Ethical liberalization: liberation from obligation?**

Namibia is an unusual country with a painful history. It has reportedly the highest Gini coefficient for income inequality in the world. Its large groups of settler whites, both German and Afrikaner, enjoy exceptionally high average incomes, in what is otherwise largely a country of poor people. This is a country with manifestly no integrated national community. Many of the white Namibians in particular appear like a continuing colonial group. In some ways they are long-term expatriates who require, in other words demand, almost the same rewards as short-term expatriates plus greater rights and opportunities than them -- and who are likely to emigrate when they no longer receive these. An extreme and minor case, surely?

Let us take a far larger case, at correspondingly greater length: a country with almost a sixth of the world's population, India. If one walks the streets of a metropolis in India nowadays one can get a feeling that not only the rich but also increasing numbers of the professional classes have morally seceded from the nation. Many now seem to live the same in certain ways as do Indian professional emigrants abroad, or foreign tourists, or those same tourists when back home in the North. The smartly dressed well-to-do proceed from gleaming cool office or home interiors, communicating to each other on their cell phones, through streets with many wretched begging people whom they generally ignore, to shops and hotels full of luxuries and imports from America, Britain and Singapore for which they can evidently afford to pay close to world prices. In the 1990s while consumerism reached new levels in India, public social sector expenditures were squeezed. The affluent seem to have become semi-detached in their own country, inhabitants of a quasi-apartheid system moving in the direction of Brazil or South Africa. In effect they declare that if the elites and middle classes of other parts of the globe are entitled to live in a certain way, then so are they - by the principle of equal real income (post-taxation) for equal work.

What's new, one may ask? Was it ever different? Consider masses of Indians starving in the streets of Calcutta in 1943 while grain was procured for war purposes, or in the 1870s in the interior; or the Irish expiring *en masse* in the 1840s while grain was exported and the society balls rolled on in Dublin and London. Were not the ruling and

professional classes of those periods often international too, with investments and family members spread across the world ? But after independence in India drastic mass starvation was prevented, by timely public action. And while the failures to attend in non-starvation times to the basic needs of up to half the population -- and the concomitant evasion of taxation -- were a national, and global, scandal, the national community appeared as a dominant image and aspiration. Indeed precisely on those grounds external criticism was sometimes resisted: "You cannot criticize or share in policy discussions about India if you are not a resident national, sharing these conditions, this destiny, its joys and pains" -- a principle of, if not equal pay for equal work, then at least equal voice only if equal pay.<sup>3</sup>

At least three shifts may have happened, in significant measure, in the past two decades.

- The ethics have now been globalized, and liberalized: elites may comment on anything, worldwide, but have been liberated from obligation. The principle has become: "If we are obligated to the poor here in India [no longer 'our poor'], then so are you. Since you are not, then nor are we."
- The professional and business elites in the South can now emigrate mentally rather than physically, thanks to the intensity of trans-national communication and flows. The software engineer in Chennai (Madras), Bangalore or Hyderabad employed directly or indirectly by a corporation in Europe or America can now live in many ways almost the life of his emigrated classmate in the North.
- The vastly eased and intensified transnational contacts and flows -- messages, visits, financial transfers -- allow even an average professional family of the new millennium to act as a global unit. Thus what made the Rothschilds unique and supreme in the early and mid 19th century is now mundane.

My main point is however not historical, not dependent on whether or not this sort of stance is new or has grown; rather that such positions are widespread and significant. India was already a country where group and family loyalties took precedence, where condensation into a national entity was quite limited.

Huge numbers of course still emigrate physically - a high proportion of the best Indian engineers, computer specialists, doctors, and scientists of every description:

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<sup>3</sup> See Gasper (1986), Section 7: 'Nationalist and Internationalist Ethics'.

sometimes even the majority of the output of elite training institutions paid for or heavily supported with public funds as a subsidy to elite and upper middle class families. Once abroad many remain in some ways mentally in India: in an émigré cocoon and intensively connected home through telephones, e-mail, money transfers, visits in both directions, etc. Many do return. Whether they return home, or stay home, may make little difference to their loyalties: their life-norms are often largely the same as the émigrés. They typically want to work for the same corporations, acquire, consume, travel and perhaps invest abroad, send their children there for studies and work. Often the extended families function as multi-national corporations: they are the project, more important as a machinery, base of identity and focus of investment than the nation. The nation is still one base for their activities, but not predominant organizationally, let alone normatively.

## 2.2 Economic liberalization versus national communities?

Many authors continue to assume that there is a national social contract, and that the 16th-20th century condensation into national entities and largely territorially (as opposed to functionally) based governance remains dominant.<sup>4</sup> Let us take as an example, the American economist Michael McKeever's concluding piece in his widely disseminated 2000-2001 series of Web essays on 'Moral Economics'. It gave his views on the debate on international trade liberalization.

**MCKEEVER'S TEXT** (at [www.mkeever.com](http://www.mkeever.com))

**COMMENTS**

### DUTY OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

A responsible national government speaks for all the people in its country; as such, it has the duty to protect its vulnerable citizens from the harmful effects of free markets while taking advantage of the benefits they offer. In practice, this means for example that domestic food markets should be protected from cheaper food imports if domestic farmers will lose their livelihood and become homeless job seekers migrating to cities. This protection can take the form of tariffs, quotas or domestic content requirements. This is justified because protecting families from misery is a higher duty than protecting the rights of business enterprise to make profits.

*'A responsible national government' is assumed to be responsible to 1. 'all the people in its country'; not to 2. 'the country' as measured by financial wealth, nor to 3. all people in the world.*

*McKeever gives a formulation, under which protection may be permanent rather than temporary. The families he (and his 'responsible national government') considers are within the nation, not worldwide.*

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<sup>4</sup> For well-argued other views, of the global business corporation as now dominant, see Harrod (2001) and Korten (1995).



In a broader sense, a responsible national government has the duty to protect weaker portions of society from stronger portions... [and] will take actions to provide labor with some bargaining power so that power to determine wages and working conditions is more evenly divided.

*This proposal may rely on the existence of a feeling of national community.*

## CONTROL CAPITAL

A major difficulty with this issue is that capital is free to move from country to country in search of cheaper wages while workers are less free to move to higher paying jobs; a business owner can close his factory in a high wage location and re-open in a low wage location, effectively removing any bargaining power from workers in high wage locations.

*Here McKeever seems mainly concerned with the position of workers in countries like the USA.*

This argues that a responsible national government would prevent capital from leaving the country to seek lower wages; however, since competitive firms in other countries will seek lower wage costs, domestic firms will be harmed by higher wage costs. The remedy is to protect domestic companies that pay higher wages by enacting tariffs, quotas and domestic content requirements. Such a policy is in direct conflict with current trade agreements that call for reduction or elimination of restraints on trade. Again, such actions are justified because protecting families from misery is a higher duty than protecting the rights of business enterprise to make profits.....

*McKeever calls in effect for rejection of the liberal world economic order.*

*This position is not cosmopolitan; nor 'internationalist' in Dower's sense, insofar as it repudiates existing trade agreements.*

*McKeever pays no attention here to the position of workers in other countries, and their opportunities to reduce their misery.*

## RESULTS OF INCOME AND WEALTH DISPARITIES

The growing imbalance between poor and rich people will probably continue if current economic thinking continues. As the trend toward accumulating wealth by rich people continues, the poor will have less and less; as a result, they will lose hope of obtaining more than a survival pittance of material goods....

*This part of McKeever's projection implicitly leads to disappearance of the national community which he still assumes to be present now. It arguably matches in part the situation we commented on earlier for countries like India..*

## PROTECTIONISM

Since globalization facilitates and accelerates these trends, there will probably be a backlash against globalization and toward protectionism as a way to keep wealth in the country that produces it instead of transferring wealth to already wealthy countries.

*McKeever now seems to refer to the position of low-income countries; but without trying to relate this point to his earlier comments about protection for workers in high-income countries.*

McKeever presents a quasi-communitarian model: producers in rich Northern countries (say, farmers) should be protected against international competition, by governments which represent and sustain national communities. These governments will

not represent also the interests of outsiders. Insofar as such interests are reflected through effective demand in the market, and hence financial rewards for some nationals, the governments are still supposed to control markets rather than be controlled by them, and to represent all nationals, not only those who receive market rewards.

Onora O’Neill has remarked sceptically:

The upsurge of communitarian thinking [in the North] about virtue and (in small measure) about justice in the 1980s fits oddly with the reality that economic and political structures were and are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan. Might it reflect the fact that cosmopolitan claims are no longer advantageous to [Northern] elites, as they perhaps were or were thought to be in the recently past era of imperialism? In a post-imperial world, cosmopolitan arrangements threaten rich states with uncontrolled economic forces and immigration and demands for aid for the poor of the world, and autocratic states with demands that human rights be guaranteed across boundaries. (O’Neill, 1996: 28-9).

With these introductory examples in mind, let us try to build a picture of the range of viewpoints about global ethics.

### **3. POSITIONS IN GLOBAL ETHICS: BROADENING OUR VIEW**

#### **3.1 Dower’s classification**

Nigel Dower’s book on ethics and international relations, *World Ethics - The New Agenda* (1998), helpfully characterizes and assesses three normative approaches to international relations, and compares how they treat a series of broad problem fields.<sup>5</sup>

1. First, ‘sceptical realism’/‘international scepticism’ holds that countries (national States) overwhelmingly do and should pursue their own (long-term) interests, even when that involves breaking agreements.
2. Second, ‘internationalism’ and communitarianism hold that, while countries are the primary units on the world stage, held together internally as established communities, a community of countries emerges to some degree, for and through regulation of their interaction and mutual continuation. Within *that* community a *modus vivendi* is established, with agreements which must be respected, just as within countries. The participants (the national States) remain predominantly ethical nationalists, so that the label ‘inter-nationalism’ fits this case better.<sup>6</sup>
3. Third come cosmopolitan positions, which hold that all humanity is the reference group in ethical discussions, some common values apply across humanity, and

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<sup>5</sup> This section builds on Gasper (2000).

<sup>6</sup> The inter-national agreements concern notably: respect for sovereignty; rules of warfare, rules of diplomacy, and the very principle of respecting agreements.

some responsibilities exist towards all humanity. Three major variants are presented:

- ‘libertarian-minimalism’ [Cosmopolitan.1], in which individuals and their liberties are all that matter worldwide, not nations/States, which must not interfere with those liberties;
- ‘idealism-dogmatism’ [Cosmopolitan.2], in which some more extensive set of values is deemed universally appropriate and to be promoted;
- ‘solidarism-pluralism’ [Cosmopolitan 3], in which global-wide concerns and obligations are emphasized but with large spaces accepted for variation in values and behaviour between settings. Dower adopts this position, and tries to delink valid points in communitarianism from its sectarian and relativist variants.

Thus Dower discusses five approaches in all. The classification goes further in characterization and scope than many previous treatments. We will see how it still needs to be extended.

Of the positions we looked at, McKeever’s could fit communitarianism. In contrast, the positions of some Indian emigres, whether mental or physical emigres, might approximate most to ‘libertarian-minimalism’, and lead us to distinguish two dimensions: the ethical status accorded to national boundaries, and the acceptance or not of pan-human obligations as opposed to obligations arising out of specific contracts or affinities. Using these two dimensions, Dower’s five approaches can be compared and ordered as in Figure 1

<b>Figure 1: An analysis of Dower’s five-fold classification of approaches</b>		PAN-HUMAN VALUES & RESPONSIBILITIES ?	
		<i>HIGH</i>	<i>LOW</i>
ARE NATIONAL BOUNDARIES ETHICALLY IMPORTANT ?	<i>IMPORTANT</i>	‘Solidarist-pluralist’ (Cosmopolitan 3)	‘Inter-nationalist’ Communitarian. ‘International sceptic’
	<i>NOT IMPORTANT</i>	Full cosmopolitans (‘idealist-dogmatist’/ ‘solidarist-globalist’; Cosmopolitan 2)	‘Libertarian-minimalist’, e.g. TNCs without national loyalties (Cosmopolitan 1)

This suggests how diverse is Dower’s ‘cosmopolitan’ family: it fills three of the four cells. Positions which meet either of the two criteria seem accepted as cosmopolitan,

yet the two criteria are very different.<sup>7</sup> Let us examine this further.

### 3.2 Investigating and broadening the classification

Dower's classification and discussion still seems to reflect an International Relations (IR) tradition. Much of his book is on international scepticism and internationalism, views standard in the IR discipline. Dower's purpose is indeed to recognize the range of starting points and then seek areas of agreement where different views can reach a common conclusion even if by different routes. A declared solidarist-pluralist cosmopolitan, his own views seem a plausible mix of elements drawn from the strengths of various philosophical traditions, and with an emphasis on priority to fulfilment of common basic needs, as rationally required for the coherence of each tradition (including the libertarian). He concludes against strong versions of globalism-solidarism: 'World government would only be acceptable when it would become unnecessary. So let us be good world citizens instead' (p.196). World citizen here means member of a global political community that is far less integrated than a state.

The IR-based classification needs to be elaborated. There appear fewer differences in practice between Dower's 'sceptical realists' and 'inter-nationalists' than exist *within* his cosmopolitan category. His sceptics about inter-national morality manage to not also be sceptics about intra-national morality and duties; they too may be communitarians, intra-nationally. And while the libertarian-minimalists indeed give no special priority to *national* boundaries, rather to personal boundaries--they deny having large responsibilities to almost any others, not only to foreigners--as a result they are far closer on many international issues to the sceptics and lesser nationalists than to other cosmopolitans. Dower's statements about cosmopolitan views do not always hold for libertarians who deny human solidarity and extensive obligations to others. Further, some libertarians, zealots for unrestricted world markets, well fit Dower's label 'ideal-

<sup>7</sup> Dower (2001) likewise distinguishes two versions of 'internationalism'. In type A the inter-state norms are based only on convention and contract; in type B they derive from a background universal moral theory and so are 'implicitly a cautious form of cosmopolitanism' (p.5). We can then derive Fig. 2, in some ways similar to Fig. 1 and en route to Fig.3.

Figure 2: A restatement of Dower (2001)		SCOPE OF INTER- STATE MORALITY		
		<i>EXTENSIVE</i>	<i>INTERMEDIATE</i>	<i>LIMITED</i>
SOURCE OF MORALITY FOR INTER-STATE RELATIONS	<i>SPECIFIC AGREEMENTS</i>			'Inter-nationalist' A
	<i>UNIVERSAL MORAL PRINCIPLES</i>	Solidarist-globalist	'Inter-nationalist' B	

ist-dogmatist cosmopolitan’ even though not the content he attaches to the label. It seems better to distinguish that content by the separate label ‘solidarist-globalist’.

We need then not only two dimensions of classification -- whether values and responsibilities of universal scope are accepted or not; and whether or not national boundaries are considered important -- to adequately capture Dower’s five positions. We have to specify strong, intermediate and anti- views on each axis. We thereby identify four more positions, which Figure 3 below marks in italics.

<b>Figure 3: A fuller classification of viewpoints in global ethics</b>		PAN-HUMAN VALUES & RESPONSIBILITIES ?		
		<i>EXTENSIVE</i>	<i>MODEST/SLIGHT</i>	<i>NONE</i>
ARE NATIONAL BOUNDARIES ETHICALLY IMPORTANT ?	<i>VERY IMPORTANT</i>	1. ‘Scandinavian’ <sup>8</sup>	2. ‘Inter-nationalist’	3. ‘International sceptic’
	<i>INTERMEDIATE IMPORTANCE</i>	4. ‘Solidarist-pluralist’ [Cosmopolitan 3]	5. <i>TNCs with national loyalties/priorities, but some accepted global duties</i>	6. <i>Typical domestic corporation</i>
	<i>NOT IMPORTANT</i>	7. Full cosmopolitans (solidarist-globalist) [Cosmopolitan 2]	8. ‘Libertarian-minimalist’, e.g. TNCs without national loyalties but with some accepted necessary global duties [Cosmop.1 - ‘Soros’]	9a) <i>Business-only corporations</i> 9b) <i>Robber-baron corporations</i> 9c) <i>Family &amp; clan ‘corporations’</i> (9d) <i>‘L’etranger’ individuals</i>

Non-italicized positions = discussed by Dower. Italicized positions = not covered by Dower.

One of the four additions is perhaps typically ‘Scandinavian’ (#1). The other three are possible business corporation viewpoints (# 5, 6 and 9) other than that of a pure transnational corporation (TNC) which would follow laws and agreements but also actively seek to sustain a system of global order (Position 8).

- Position 5 includes corporations which retain a primary national loyalty but also invest a certain amount in good causes worldwide; for example Ford or various Japanese TNCs.
- Position 6 includes corporations which have only the primary national loyalty: they

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<sup>8</sup>. Arguably, all positions in the first row could have communitarian variants. Thus the ‘Scandinavian’ position could be communitarian and give lexical priority to needs at home, while still leaving major concern for needs abroad. Concern for others, derived from feelings of shared values and sympathy, is unlikely to suddenly cease at the national boundaries.

feel some concern to maintain community viability in their home base, not elsewhere, but even this can be outweighed by the call of profit.

- Position 9a includes corporations which have no such national loyalty, nor any geographically wider loyalties other than profit.
- In contrast, Position 8 concerns corporations without national loyalties who yet accept some need to invest in ‘global services’--the Soros stance--also perhaps to maintain the credibility of an equal-opportunity liberal ideology. There can be disagreements on the minimum needed to maintain a libertarian system, and thus on the appropriate meaning of ‘libertarian-minimalism’.

In a fuller-blown sibling of Position 9a the concern for profit and disregard for national jurisdictions leads to disregard for national laws too: 9b) the ‘robber-baron’ capitalist, ready to buy officials and politicians not only (other) commodities. Position 9 also includes the cases we saw earlier: individuals or groups estranged from national loyalties (9c and 9d). The individual could even be estranged from almost any human loyalties, like Camus’s “L’Etranger”, a European colonist who casually kills an Arab (barely recognized as such) in French Algeria. We will consider later (at the end of Section III) how far these Darwinian positions, the robber-baron and l’etranger, deserve to be called global ethics. L’etranger as colonialist (as currently in Israel, Brazil, and many other locations), or even immigrant, continues as a major player worldwide. Clearly identifiable as an ethic with worldwide obligations are the values of the family, lineage or clan which is spread across two or more countries and operates to provide mutual support. A hybrid case that could deserve separate attention are the criminal mafias, which combine ‘robber-baron’ predation, ‘family’ bonds, disregard for national bounds, and routine killing. In the terms of Figure 3’s extension of Figure 1, Position 9 might be called ‘post-liberal’; but historically speaking it seems ‘pre-liberal’ too. The proliferation of variants of Position 9 suggests that one might later further refine the classification dimensions and labels.

Figure 3 already suffices for some important findings. Note first the distribution of attention across the various viewpoints.

- Dower's classification (covering the non-italicized positions) is stronger in attention to the bottom-left to top-right diagonal in Figure 3. For it may assume a strong correlation between positions in the two dimensions: that low ethical importance given to national boundaries will conduce to acceptance of values and responsibilities

with global scope, and vice versa. That assumption may well be becoming outmoded (again). Positions along the top-left to bottom-right diagonal need major attention too.

- Since States consider national boundaries (very) important, IR (Inter-National Relations) discourse has concentrated on positions like 2, 3 and 4, though with position 7 as an idealist counterpart or outpost which shared the same belief in a correlation.
- Positions in the bottom right of the diagram -- nos. 8 and 9 -- are growing in particular. They hold that national boundaries are not ethically important, but that there are few or no responsibilities with global scope.

We can see secondly the value of multiple criteria in classification. Using two dimensions lets us see the ambiguity in the term 'cosmopolitan'. Even the five positions covered by Dower are hard to fit into a single low-to-high sequence (is #2 more cosmopolitan than #8 or vice versa?). Cosmopolitanism in one respect (low weight to national boundaries) can be combined with extreme parochialism in the other (non-interest in foreigners). Position 9 is thus more comprehensively sceptical than the 'international sceptic' position 3. It rejects national loyalties as well as trans-national pan-human ones.

Thirdly we see the need for dimensional analysis, not just binary contrasts. The gaps only emerge to view when we introduce intermediate positions. With only a 2x2 classification, Dower's set of schools may seem to have covered the range, as in Figure 1 above. But if one feels uncomfortable at grouping together inter-nationalists and international sceptics one is led on to a profounder map of the universe of discourse.

A similar concern arises when one reads Charles Gore's insightful picture of major positions and trends in development policy analysis (Gore, 1996; Gore, 2000). The types of global ethic contained in his final column are very varied (Figure 4 below). If we use Dower's terms we might describe the 'Washington Consensus' as libertarian-minimalist: it is cosmopolitan in the sense that there is only one moral domain, but there are minimal international obligations, just as there are minimal domestic obligations. UNDP's Sustainable Human Development School is closer to a 'pluralist-solidarist' stance, or in its stronger variants to 'globalism-solidarism'.

Figure 4: Gore on paradigms in development policy analysis		NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK	
		National	Global
EXPLANATORY	National	Competing mainstream development paradigms pre-1982, e.g. balanced v. unbalanced growth	1. Dominant development paradigm post-1982 (labelled as 'Washington Consensus') 2. 1990s Sustainable Human Development
FRAMEWORK	Global	Counter-currents pre-1982 (Latin American structuralism & dependency theory). East Asian models. Latin American neostructuralism	Predicted paradigm shift

Thus it makes a great difference for Gore's predicted paradigm shift which of those cosmopolitan ethics will be the future 'global normative framework', and whether the shift into the bottom-right quadrant comes from the bottom-left or top-right. One fears the emergence of perspectives based on a sophisticated global framework for explanation and a consistently selfish, but global, normative framework.

We could go further in elaborating Dower's classification.

- One might change the definition of cosmopolitan, so that it no longer spans two dimensions. One would then use 'cosmopolitan' simply to mean acceptance of the world as in important respects one moral domain ('cosmos' as a 'polis')<sup>9</sup>, across which members have some obligations and rights; 'solidaristic' for views in which such obligations and rights are relatively extensive; 'pluralistic' for respect for a plurality of ways of life and conceptions of good/right; and 'universalistic' for views that certain values should be respected world-wide for and by all. Robber barons can be universalist in asserting that the same values hold good everywhere, but non-solidaristic in rejecting any extensive content to such values, any extensive obligations.
- We might perhaps add a second dimension in the question 'values and responsibilities with global scope?': to distinguish between these types of commitment: 1. pan-human, 2. worldwide but restricted to some types of person (e.g. from one's race or lineage or other network), 3. internal to the national political unit.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> According to the Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy, *polites* = citizen, and cosmopolitanism is the doctrine that we are citizens of a world community.

<sup>10</sup> One would similarly try to include Erskine's 'embedded cosmopolitanism', where an inclusive ethic can arise because individuals are simultaneously members of *many*, overlapping, non-territorial, morally constitutive communities.



- We might seek to add other dimensions, for example concerning the level of agents considered: state-corporation-ethne-clan/family-individual.

There will be no perfect classification. We have enough refinement already, with one exception, to put several insights to effective use. We need first however to consolidate and extend our analysis of the ‘liberal-minimalist’ position (Cos. 1).

#### **4. THE ETHICS OF POSSESSIVE INDIVIDUALISM: ON LIFE-STYLE CONSUMERS AND MARKET BIRDS OF PREY**

We saw that the ‘libertarian-minimalist’ category appears underanalysed in Dower’s classification and deserves fuller investigation. It contains importantly different variants and siblings; and further, to put its form of cosmopolitanism -- the cosmopolitanism of free trade areas rather than of liberal politics or direct promotion of positive freedom -- together with the others can be misleading. Let us examine this category and its variants further.

##### **4.1 Libertarian minimalism and the crises of global warming and AIDS**

Fujiwara (2001) observes that the clash between the US and most of the rest of the world in the greenhouse gas discussions is a clash of frames and doctrines as well as a clash of material interests. I suggest that the US is in effect applying a market morality, or mentality, in the climate change discussions. (There seems little need in this case to disaggregate ‘the US’ and distinguish between the government and the major corporations.) Damage to others need not be culpable in a market framework, if not produced by direct assault or breach of a law. In fact the doctrine of competition, a central legitimating motor of the market mechanism, demands that one try to inflict damage on competitors and indirectly on their employees and suppliers. After long denial of the damage, actual and impending, inflicted on others as a result of its high-gas lifestyle (twice the per capita greenhouse gas emissions of the European Union), the no longer credibly deniable damage can instead be defined away. As with a corporation found to be polluting a common resource and hence indirectly damaging others, the defence offered is that no one has property rights over the common resource. Therefore those who have broken no law and who only indirectly and unknowingly may have harmed others are judged as non blame-able (‘blame’ originally means ‘to speak ill of’); and within a

defensive individualistic world-view, no blame means no responsibility.<sup>11</sup> Only when Americans perceive global warming as of direct major harm to them is change in their stance probable. Possibly corporate America's world-wide interests will help such an evolution eventually.

In a parallel case, there has not been dispute over the large direct *benefits* that would arise from wider access to patented anti-AIDS drugs in the South, by low-cost supply from Southern companies. The patent-holding Northern pharmaceutical corporations have for years sought to block that access since they perceive it as at the cost of their profits and argue that the profits (which apparently are not distributed) serve the long-run benefit of all by funding research. When one considers the scale of the health disaster and societal disaster already begun across much of Africa, and the scale of the corporations' past and ongoing profits and dividends, such future profit projections could be shortsighted as well as obscene. But no exceptions were to be made - profit has been rigorously defended. If an exception were made in this case, and need put before projected profit, where would such argumentation stop? - nowhere short of dictatorship, has run the market mantra. Further, profit must be distributed to shareholders, and managers, otherwise a corporation risks being taken-over. The corporations refer in addition to market doctrine about rights of possession and about the long run superiority for all (compared to the alternatives) of the market system. It seems unlikely though that they would maintain the same stance if the people dying were in the heart of Europe or America, rather than Africa. Further in the North the gap between corporate profit needs and impoverished patients' life needs would largely be bridged by government. Possibly Northern government aid will eventually belatedly help to bridge the gap in or for Africa. How such aid will be labelled will be interesting and important.

Through the 1980s and 1990s most Northern governments' aid budgets declined steadily as a proportion of national income and public expenditure. Per capita aid for Africans fell by 40% through the 1990s. It is worth examining the attacks on aid in the 1980s for further insight into libertarian-minimalism, as well as into other viewpoints in global ethics.

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<sup>11</sup> On this world-view in the work of Hayek, see Gasper (1986), Section 5: Absolutization of Just Process.

## 4.2 Aid ethics: return of the stranger<sup>12</sup>

The question '*Has international aid to poorer countries the right to exist at all?*' was kept on the agenda through the 1960s and 1970s by a small number of Right-wing theorists antagonistic to aid, such as Peter Bauer, and became a major focus in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>13</sup> The following set of viewpoints indicates most of the spectrum.

1. *An obligation exists, the same as intra-nationally*: International aid is seen as morally identical to resource transfers to poorer regions, groups or individuals *within* national boundaries (*and* the domestic transfers are considered legitimate and desirable). A set of positions exists here, according to the perceived moral basis for intra-national transfers (whether needs, utility, rights, historical debt or connections, or whatever). Sometimes it is held that aid should consequently be organised in a similar way to domestic transfers, routinised and with little space for discretion, as one part of welfare policy. But factual constraints differ in the international case and might profoundly affect and limit how and how far the rich can help. These positions match Dower's solidarist cosmopolitan categories. He argues that globalist-solidarist and pluralist-solidarist positions are divided not on the degree of commitment to help, but on how we should help. One suspects though that pluralism-solidarism is liable in practice to give some priority to domestic clients, for example by placing a heavier burden of proof on foreign aid.
2. *Lesser obligation*: International aid is considered a moral obligation upon richer countries, groups and individuals, but subject to certain major conditions (for example about its urgency and potential efficacy; or about the existence of past and present North-South links), and is in general accorded lesser priority than obligations closer to home. This position may match Dower's inter-nationalist B category, (Figure 2 above). It partly fits Scandinavia and the Netherlands, the donors who bind themselves to and implement a substantial target level of support; even if view 3, aid as charity, has influenced the manner in which they give.
3. *Charity*: International aid is beyond obligation -- so while to give it is an act of superogatory virtue and may be commendable, not giving it cannot be condemned. Thus the former Soviet bloc held that it had no historical links with and hence no present obligations to give aid to the South. In contrast, the work of development-

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<sup>12</sup> This section builds on Gasper (1999: 29-31).

<sup>13</sup> See Riddell (1987) Gasper (1986, 1994), and Opeskin (1996) for surveys of the debate.

oriented foundations such as Rockefeller and Ford, and Ted Turner's immense (albeit tax-reducing) donation to the U.N., can reflect a stance of benevolent charity.

4. *My country first and only*: aid to people in other countries is a betrayal of co-community members at 'home' who have unsatisfied needs and/or other claims -- except when international aid furthers their interests better than would domestic uses. This position largely matches Dower's communitarian and 'international sceptic' categories (e.g. Bauer, 1961). It influences some governmental aid, though not (one assumes) NGDO aid.
5. *A matter solely for individuals to decide*: Charity may be commendable, and national boundaries insignificant, but individual self-ownership makes both intra- and inter-national *obligatory* (i.e. tax-derived) transfers immoral. This is the implication of the influential possessive-individualist philosophy of Robert Nozick (1974), presented for consideration in development policy by Deepak Lal (1976.) Tax-based aid provided by a donor government is deemed illegitimate, unlike voluntary transnational aid from individuals. This position matches some variants of Dower's libertarian-minimalist category. The view that foreign transfers by a national government are illegitimate was long followed by for example Switzerland.<sup>14</sup>
6. *Morally indifferent*: whether a person or group of persons (e.g. an organisation) chooses to help others, either in their country or another, is considered an entirely optional consumer matter. To do so is no better or worse than any other (legal) use of their wealth. Charity is not commendable. This position matches a less humanistic variant in Dower's libertarian-minimalist category. Foreign aid as a morally indifferent life-style option might be how most corporations view their tightfistedness.
7. *Culturally relative*: here the 'consumer', the entity that adopts life-style options, is an entire culture. Some cultures are 'into' helping others, others are not, and, it is claimed in this viewpoint, there are no defensible ways of saying one value position is better than the other. This more casual 'post-modern' stance differs from the nationalist viewpoint -- which certainly believes that its own position is better than others -- but readily coexists with it. This position too matches Dower's communitarian category in part.

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<sup>14</sup> Switzerland is home too to the amoral or Darwinian Swiss banks and the genuinely charitable International Committee of the Red Cross, an international affairs committee with exclusively Swiss membership. 'International' refers to the Darwinian mess in the world outside.

Views 3, 5, 6 and 7 might be under-highlighted in Dower's typology: that international aid is purely superogatory, charity; or that inter-national aid is illegitimate, extra-national transfers being a matter only for individuals to decide; or that such decisions are purely the whim of a particular consumer or culture, and are 'beyond good and evil'. Many positions are merged under Dower's libertarian-minimalist and internationalist versus communitarian categories. In practice many composite forms indeed appear, but for analytical clarity we must distinguish their heterogenous parts.

All of views 3 through 7 seem widespread in the USA, including amongst powerful Republican politicians. International scepticism is of course prominent, and many a Hollywood movie burnishes the myths associated with View 4's 'my country first and only'. A generation back, in the early days of the American New Right backlash, Sumberg (1973:60) 'looked for...without finding [any] duty laid upon us. There is no such duty... [Aid] is purely discretionary', even in emergencies and--according to him--even inside a nation. Typically in such views, attempted aid through governments is seen as pernicious too: a channelling of rewards via the ignorant and corruption-prone to the incompetent and work-shy.

#### **4.3 'Libertarian-minimalism': theories and practices**

We can now consolidate certain key distinctions required within Dower's 'libertarian-minimalist' category.

- *Libertarian humanist positions.* Some positions here reject any distinction according to group or nation and declare respect for all individuals, who are to be as far as possible unconstrained (so far as consistent with equal freedom for others).
- *Libertarian anti-humanist positions: legal market power.* In practice, however, the overwhelmingly most important operationalization of 'libertarian-minimalist' conceptions is through power in the market, and this leads in a dramatically different direction. Individuals are weighted in proportion to financial strength. Individuals without purchasing power are ignored. Billionaires are big. The market is world-wide, presided over now by the *World Trade Organization*, an entity differently titled from the bodies of the *United Nations* like the *International Labour Office*. As we saw in the anti-AIDS drugs case, money-power's forms of cosmopolitanism and universalism are very different, and anti-humanist, even though sometimes legitimized by use of libertarian humanist discourse. While these market-based ethics

formally centre on claims of providing fair process, their political viability may rest as much on the theory that market operation does in the long run benefit all, at least as compared to the benefits from the real alternatives.

- *Libertarian anti-humanist positions: market power converted into lawless socio-political power and immunity.* In principle, markets operate with respect for laws established at both national and, increasingly predominant, international levels. In practice, however some market operators systematically evade and subvert *both* national and international rules. ‘Minimalism’ applies for the proclaimed limits to their obligations, not for the scope of their own interventions.

For decades, traders from all over Europe have flocked to this lakeside Alpine town [Zug], attracted by stringent privacy laws, low tax rates and guarantees of corporate anonymity. But no one has achieved the dominance of Marc Rich, the billionaire metals dealer... [famous for] the business practices cited in his 1983 indictment of racketeering by the Southern District of New York - trading with pariah states [e.g. as the leading supplier of oil to apartheid South Africa], manipulating the market for huge personal gain [e.g. cornering the international aluminium market in the early 1990s], hiding profits in a thicket of offshore companies.... While [Rich and his partner] denied wrongdoing and refused to produce documents relating to the [1983] case, they ended up paying \$200 million in back taxes and penalties in partial settlement...

"There is a lawless quality about the way he operates", Mr. Weinberg [prosecutor in the 1983 case] said. "He will do whatever he needs to do to close a deal."

"He sees himself as a citizen of the world, unencumbered by the laws of sovereign nations", said Howard Safir, a former U.S. marshal...

*(International Herald Tribune, 14 March 2001; italics added)*

Is this a global ethic? We would still need to consider Mr. Rich and his ilk even if it were not, as an analytically interesting and historically important outlier, in a discussion of world ethics. Using Nigel Dower's definition though (cited at the start of this paper), Rich's "My Way" could arguably constitute a system of ideas concerning the ethical obligations of human beings, individually or in groups, in their relations with individuals and groups throughout the world. But it would be a Darwinian<sup>15</sup> or Nietzschean perfectionist ethic, in which unlimited contestation is claimed as the route to maximization of some prioritized excellence or qualities.<sup>16</sup> It supports the extension

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<sup>15</sup> Or rather, evolutionary; for what defines Darwinism is not fully clear. Inheritance of acquired characteristics is Lamarckian rather than Darwinian (Blackwell's *Dictionary of Human Geography*).

<sup>16</sup> In Rawls's sense, perfectionism in ethics holds that we should maximize excellence in art, science and culture (*The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*). Thomas Hurka defines it as promoting the expression and fulfilment of those features which are deemed to make humans human - e.g. for Aristotle rationality, for Marx productive activity, or for Nietzsche the exercise of the will to power (Hurka, 1993:3). Hurka discusses Nietzsche's views at length as a form of perfectionism, notably the principle of maximizing the quality of a minority of the best individuals.

of money power and market struggle to all matters: if one can buy aluminium, why not voters, politicians, judges, legislators, regulators,...even lives? The advocated rules apply universally and equally to all, to the strong and the weak. All are allowed to sleep under bridges, as Anatole France remarked; and the super-rich from anywhere are welcome in Zug.

## **5. CONCLUSION: FROM INTERNATIONALISM TO GLOBALISM-LOCALISM-INDIVIDUALISM-FAMILISM-CORPORATISM - THE NECESSITY OF BETTER DESCRIPTIVE ETHICS**

I have suggested the following points.

1. Global ethics as a field of study and practice needs to pay considerable attention not only to bodies of published prescriptive doctrine. It must examine intently the ethics implicit in practice.
2. It must in particular move beyond the state-centred perspectives and taxonomy of doctrines inherited from the academic field of International Relations. It must attend to agents other than the state; and it must not assume that views which accord low (/high) normative importance to national boundaries correlate strongly with views which grant high (/low) weight to the normative claims of people beyond those boundaries. Many 'national elites' and other upwardly mobile groups seem *de facto* to reject both national and international moral community, except insofar as other people's claims are heard through markets.
3. Normative IR and global ethics therefore must recognise and study positions which give *neither* national boundaries nor global pan-human obligations much ethical importance (Position 9 in Table 3 above), the 'neither-nor' positions. These positions take individuals or groups as the relevant units, rather than nations, and do not revolve around debates advocating or denying duties between nations. It is not appropriate to group these views together, as 'cosmopolitan', with other views which also deny the moral priority of national boundaries.
4. Since the label 'cosmopolitan' has ambiguously spanned those two dimensions--(i) whether or not values and responsibilities of universal scope are accepted; and (ii) whether or not national boundaries are considered normatively important--we could reserve 'cosmopolitan' for acceptance of the world as in important respects one moral domain, across which members have some obligations and rights; and use 'solidaristic' for views in which such obligations and rights are relatively extensive.

5. Within dimension (i), we must further distinguish whether global commitments, if accepted, are: 1. pan-human or 2. worldwide but restricted to some types of person (e.g. from one's race or lineage). In the second case, the rejection of national moral community and pursuit of advancement on a global stage by many aspirant groups is often buttressed by the social capital and morality of their groups and networks of kin and region, in some cases with their own functional equivalents of an international income tax. Communitarianism is alive and thriving at a global scale.
6. The 'neither-nor positions' seem relatively neglected in IR discourse. Position 9 in fact covers several varieties, not all well described as 'libertarian-minimalist'. We noted: 9a) the business-only market agent, which pursues only profit but within the law; 9b) the 'robber-baron' market agent, which pursues only profit, *basta*, and may use a Darwinian-Nietzschean perfectionist ethic; 9c): the 'family corporation', operating communally on a world scale; and 9d): the individual estranged from national and even active communal affiliations, perhaps pursuing some personal life-project while or through working for the global corporations and consuming their products.
7. Relatedly, the 'libertarian-minimalist' ethic deserves closer attention and subdivision. (Table 3 distinguishes at least four positions: 5, 6, 8 and 9a, not one.) The formal libertarian-minimalist ethics referred to in IR literature arguably do not cover the reality of business-only practice (Position 9a). As a body of doctrine a libertarian-minimalist ethic is likely to present itself as strongly concerned with individuals and their freedom (e.g. Nozick, 1974) and thus with ensuring the necessary preconditions for such freedom (Position 8). In business-only practice, however, liberal doctrine becomes operationalized through market calculations which weight people by purchasing power and ignore those who have none. Our analysis of aid ethics shows further relevant divisions, notably concerning whether aid is seen as commendable even if not obligatory. We need more than a single 'libertarian-minimalist' category.
8. The relative analytic neglect of 'neither-nor' positions and some variants of libertarian thought are major substantive omissions for understanding the contemporary world. Market theology is rampant, as seen for example in the climate change discussions and in attempts by drugs companies to have their familiar level of profit override the needs of AIDS sufferers. And the theology of Position 8 diverges from the usual practice of Position 9a, where only money talks in the market and big



money has a megaphone; let alone from Position 9b, where all of life becomes a market. Amongst ‘neither nationalist nor solidarist’ positions are some which are not humanist too.

9. We gain from a complex classification of views, with explicit dimensions of comparison and more than binary contrasts in each dimension. The main classification scheme used in this paper (Table 3 above) proves helpful, but we are already straining at its limits and further refinement might be worthwhile. Applications are vital, however, to make the distinctions more vivid, communicable, and demonstrably worthwhile, and to deepen our awareness before attempting much more taxonomy.

My main purpose has been descriptive rather than predictive or directly prescriptive: to provide better categories and ways of thinking about categorization, as a prelude to more detailed description. In support of that project, I have argued that the ‘neither nationalist nor solidarist’ positions, including anti-humanist variants, are massive, even central, and growing. They must be recognized and studied.

As to prediction, I would note only that there are multiple trends, including some which clash or provoke their opposite, as both McKeever and O’Neill observed. Some hope for an ethical backlash against possessive individualism, and claim that pressure for corporate social responsibility has led to most corporations now genuinely accepting some wider obligations. Dower offers a valuable critique and broadening of ‘us-here-now’ moralities and comments on alternative ethics of sustainable development. ‘[The] more radical agenda is not a call for self-sacrifice, [but] it may involve a re-evaluation of what is important in our lives... We...need to fundamentally re-evaluate our idea of well-being and thus the idea of development... Part of my moral optimism in the face of a world that invites pessimism resides in the view that doing what we ought can be self-affirming rather than self-denying’ (Dower, 1998:196). He hopes that enlightened self-interest too leads to cosmopolitan conclusions. The ‘we’, his main audience, are the well-off in the North. But more attention is needed to the constitution of the ‘us’, ‘we’, and ‘self’ in post-modern consumerism. Cohesive national communities, bound by social contracts within clear national containers, judiciously if sceptically pursuing some interpretation of their group interest in the world arena, cannot be presumed. We have to revise and extend our categories as we move from normative international relations to global ethics.

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