1-2009

Cosmopolitanism, freedom and indifference: A Levinasian view

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Citation

Cosmopolitanism, Freedom, and Indifference: A Levinasian View

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Despite cosmopolitanism's concern for the world's poor and its concomitant heavy moral demands, cosmopolitans establish a limit to the self's responsibility for the global poor. This contrasts with Emmanuel Levinas's view that the self has an infinite responsibility for the other, a responsibility that derives from the self's questioning of the impact of his freedom on others. From a Levinasian perspective, cosmopolitanism's restriction of the self's responsibility for others creates a sphere of rightful indifference to the needs of the other; lends legitimacy to a disregard of the other; forestalls an ethical awakening to the other; constrains the achievement of a more just global order, given that, from a Levinasian perspective, a better justice is built on the self's open-ended responsibility for the other; and points to a tension at the heart of cosmopolitanism, considering the coexistence of elements that both frustrate and aspire to the achievement of global justice. It is concluded that the achievement of cosmopolitanism's goals would require the acceptance of an open-ended responsibility for the other. KEYWORDS: Levinas, cosmopolitanism, responsibility, otherness, the global poor.

In an introduction to a collection of his papers, one of the leading cosmopolitan theorists, Thomas Pogge, expresses his dismay at our indifference to the world's poor through two questions. He asks, "How can severe poverty of half of humankind continue despite enormous economic and technological progress and despite the enlightened moral norms and values of our heavily dominant Western civilization?" and "Why do we citizens of the affluent Western states not find it morally troubling, at least, that a world heavily dominated

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by us and our values gives such very deficient and inferior starting positions and opportunities to so many people?"[1] Pogge's short answer is because we do not find the eradication of global poverty "morally compelling."[2] Such indifference to the needs of the global poor flouts the central tenet of (moral) cosmopolitanism, which holds that "every human being has a global stature as ultimate unit of moral concern,"[3] which is usually interpreted as saying that responsibility and distributive justice do not end at national borders. Indeed, cosmopolitan writing in recent decades has been marked by a deep concern for the plight of the world's poor and by arguments that we have a greater responsibility for them than we generally recognize.

Despite moral cosmopolitanism's imputed concern for the world's poor and the heavy demands this would presumably place on us, cosmopolitans nevertheless establish or enable a limit to the self's responsibility for the global poor. Cosmopolitanism's restriction of the self's responsibility for the poor contrasts with Emmanuel Levinas's view that the self has a bottomless and inescapable responsibility for the other, a responsibility that stems from the self's deep questioning of the impact of its freedom on others. According to Levinas, moral progress and the achievement of a greater justice are founded on the self-questioning and infinite responsibility brought about by our catching sight of the "face" of the other. A Levinasian perspective assists us in bringing to the fore a number of closely related implications of cosmopolitanism's restriction of the self's responsibility for others. First, because cosmopolitans speak from a moral high ground, their permitting of a restriction of the self's responsibility for the other lends legitimacy to such a turn away from the other and the creation of a sphere of rightful indifference to the demands of the other. Second, if even a moral outlook as demanding as cosmopolitanism allows indifference to the global poor, then it should come as little surprise that we are able to maintain a good conscience amid the preventable dying of the world's poor. Third, although cosmopolitanism has established a reputation for the seemingly heavy moral demands it would place on us, it should be recognized that cosmopolitanism is perhaps not quite as demanding as we are led to believe, particularly if one considers the variety of ways to establish some freedom from responsibility for the other on offer in cosmopolitan theory. Fourth, for Levinas, responsibility for the other stems from the self's awakening to the injustice and "violence" that permanently attend its freedom. However, the cosmopolitan restriction of responsibility for the other amounts to the maintaining of a domain in which the self may regard itself as rightfully and unproblematically free, thus forestalling a self-questioning, ethical awakening. Fifth, as a better justice is built upon the self's open-ended concern for the other, the cosmopolitan establishment of

some sphere of indifference to the other constrains the achievement of the more just and caring global order to which cosmopolitans aspire. Finally, the presence of cosmopolitanism's strong aspiration to a more just world order alongside elements that frustrate this ambition suggest a tension at the heart of this body of thought.

My disagreement is not with cosmopolitanism's desire for a more just world order. My criticism is also not aimed at cosmopolitan thought insofar as it operates at the national or global level of analysis. Instead, my concern is with how cosmopolitans extend and limit responsibility at the interpersonal level and the implications thereof. By following Levinas's view that the aspiration to a better justice stems from the self's open-ended responsibility for the other, it becomes possible to see that cosmopolitanism's restriction of this interpersonal responsibility pulls against the achievement of a more caring and just global order. While cosmopolitanism's global-level ambitions—global distributive justice, the democratization of international institutions, etc.—are worthy of support, its widespread restriction of responsibility for the other should be given up. Instead, a politics constantly informed by "ethics," an attitude of constant self-questioning, and, concomitantly, open-ended responsibility for the other person is more appropriate for an aspiration toward a just global order.

What is attractive about Levinas's work is that it, by implication, condemns our indifference to the global poor without equivocation and that it gives us the tools to expose previously unsuspected areas that permit such indifference, for example, within cosmopolitanism. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to defend Levinas against his critics[4]—hopefully the presentation of his ideas below will be persuasive enough—it is necessary to address one concern. Using Levinas's notion of infinite responsibility to criticize cosmopolitanism for its more limited concern for the other might strike some as a rather simpleminded ploy, so it should be noted that a Levinasian ethics is not as farfetched as it is sometimes made out to be, for two reasons. First, while Levinas understands an ethical life as a permanent openness toward and a preoccupation with the plight of the other, Levinas nevertheless recognizes that the self is constantly pulled back toward a concern for itself. After all, "one can exchange everything between beings except existing"; I am "riveted" to myself.[5] Secondly, and more germane to this article, Levinas allows the self to *provisionally* limit its responsibility for the other, which Levinas enables by introducing a "third" next to the other. The third represents the multitude who also look "at me in the eyes of the other."[6] As the third is also an other for whom the self is infinitely responsible, it is necessary for the self to limit its responsibility toward one other so as to respond to numerous others (the "third"). The presence of the third marks the beginning

of equality as the self divides its responsibility, and of politics as competition emerges over how equality should be interpreted and responsibility should be apportioned. Importantly, the equal treatment that ensues in this political society also entails a more equal distribution of responsibility, thus creating room for the self to be concerned with his own plight. Levinas acknowledges that equality in its various guises is a worthy goal, but where he parts company with cosmopolitan theorists is through his view that the ethical relation between self and other—a relation of open-ended responsibility—is irreducible. In other words, despite the presence of the third and the equality (in its various guises) between myself and others this suggests, every person is at the same time a singular being whose *face* commands me to an asymmetrical and limitless responsibility for him; "I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me."[7] So, while Levinas allows the self to be drawn away from its responsibility for the other in mass society, the permanent presence of the other as other means that my self-regarding freedom is always tentative, my good conscience always compromised, and my responsibility always unfinished. In cosmopolitanism, by contrast, my freedom is asserted more strongly, the line between responsibility and indifference is drawn more firmly, and the burden of responsibility is cast off more freely.

This article consists of four further sections. The first demonstrates some of the ways in which a number of prominent cosmopolitan thinkers limit the self's responsibility for the other. The second presents a Levinasian critique of the autonomous self created by cosmopolitanism's restriction of responsibility for the other and traces how this putting in question of the free self moves toward a life of infinite responsibility for the other. The third section considers how a relation of infinite responsibility for the other is affected by the presence of numerous others for whom the self can clearly not simultaneously be infinitely responsible. In the fourth section, it is argued that cosmopolitanism needs to be constantly informed by the ethical relation with the other, while some practical examples of what such an ethical politics entail will also be considered.

Cosmopolitanism's Restriction of Responsibility

While political philosophers have always disagreed over the degree to which freedom should be limited—over the substance of equality and over the extent of one's responsibility for others—there has been little dispute that there ought to be a limit to my responsibility for others and what they may legitimately demand of me. The restriction of

these demands and responsibilities, or letting them spill over into the domain of supererogation, points to an arena where the subject may enjoy its freedom with a clear conscience, justified in living beyond the reproach and demands of the other. Cosmopolitans conform to this pattern in political philosophy as they enable or establish a limit to the self's responsibility for others, despite the generosity, moral concern, and exhortations that we take up considerable and increased responsibility toward the world's poor, that pervade their writing. Through a discussion of the work of a number of prominent cosmopolitan authors, this section indicates a variety of ways in which cosmopolitans limit the self's responsibility for others and to establish the pervasiveness of this trend in cosmopolitanism.

Thomas Pogge's writing is marked by a deep concern for the global poor, a relentless exposure of factors that contribute to and sustain global poverty, and deep dismay at our indifference to global injustice. Pogge's distinction between *interactional* and *institutional* cosmopolitanism, and his preference for the latter, is a central and distinctive feature of his approach. For interactional cosmopolitans, the responsibility for securing the human rights of others is direct, interpersonal, and lies with persons or groups of persons. Institutional cosmopolitans, by contrast, hold that such responsibility is indirect, impersonal, and should most appropriately be assigned to institutions, that is, the social framework that regulates and guides human interaction.[8] Although Pogge regards institutional and interactional cosmopolitanism as potentially supplementary, he does not resolve this matter; instead he privileges the institutional view, since, for him, it "leads to a much stronger and more plausible overall morality."[9] According to Pogge, institutional cosmopolitanism holds the benefit of not having to demand any "notoriously controversial" positive duties toward the world's starving poor, but merely requires that we do not participate in institutions that yield such starvation "without making reasonable efforts to aid its victims and promote institutional reform."[10] As various national and global institutions combine to yield economic consequences of genocidal magnitude, it is incumbent on those of us who live under those governments that hold most sway in maintaining the global economic order to influence our governments to shape a global economic order that is less harmful to the poor.[11] However, by pushing responsibility for others onto institutions, Pogge creates considerable space in which to be free from responsibility for others. Furthermore, by demanding only "reasonable efforts," defined as "as much of an effort, aimed at protecting the victims of injustice or at institutional reform, as would suffice to eradicate the harms, if others followed suit," Pogge explicitly limits the self's responsibility for the other.[12]

Pogge classifies Henry Shue and David Luban as interactional cosmopolitans.[13] Saying nothing of institutions, Luban defines human rights as "the demands of all of humanity on all of humanity."[14] Similarly, for Shue, "to have a right is to be in a position to make demands of others."[15] People enjoy human rights irrespective of the institutions under which they find themselves. According to Shue, we have a duty to create institutions where they do not exist in order to protect the rights of others.[16] The stringency of Luban's cosmopolitanism emerges in his claim that a human right is a right "whose beneficiaries are all humans and *whose obligors are all humans in a position to effect the right*."[17] The italicization indicates where the potential for evading one's responsibility appears in Luban's position. By leaving the effecting of the rights of others up to those in a position to do so, Luban provides the subject with an escape from responsibility for others, for, is it not usually possible to justifiably claim that one is *not* in a position to effect the human rights of others? Is it not always possible to resort to some spurious argument to defend one's failure to promote and protect the rights of others, even though it is conceivable that, with the exception of a few extreme cases, one is also always able to promote another person's human rights? Shue makes possible a similar evasion of responsibility for the human rights of others by describing a right as "a justified demand that *some* other people make some arrangements so that one will still be able to enjoy the substance of the right even if . . . it is not within one's power to arrange on one's own to enjoy the substance of the right."[18] Elsewhere Shue states "that the *relevant* other people have a duty to create, if they do not exist, or, if they do, to preserve effective institutions for the enjoyment of what people have rights to enjoy."[19] By not indicating who the relevant persons are, Shue enables the claim that one is not the relevant person to secure the rights of others and therefore not responsible. The problem rests not so much with the size of the sphere outside of responsibility that is permitted by Luban and Shue's vagueness, but that such a sphere is indeed made possible.

Charles Beitz's influential book, *Political Theory and International Relations,* was written in the heady days that followed the publication of Rawls's masterpiece, *A Theory of Justice.*[20] Rawls's influence is visible in Beitz's approach as well as in his emphasis on distributive justice. But to see where Beitz parts ways with Rawls, briefly recall the basics of Rawls's argument in *A Theory of Justice.* Rawls uses a thought experiment in which members of a hypothetical autarkic community are required to choose fundamental principles of justice from behind a "veil of ignorance"—that is, without knowing vital elements of their identity, such as their economic situation, their talents, or their conceptions of

the good.[21] Rawls argues that deliberation behind a veil of ignorance would yield two principles of justice. The first principle holds that "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all" and enjoys priority over the second principle (the "difference principle") whereby socioeconomic inequalities should be arranged to maximize the benefit to the worst-off.[22] Beitz's major disagreement with Rawls concerns the appropriate scope of the difference principle, which Rawls confines to a national community. Beitz, by contrast, argues that some measure of global distributive justice ought to apply to rectify the uneven and undeserved distribution of natural resources among states. Beitz's global "resource distribution principle" would function like a limited difference principle, ensuring a distribution of natural resources sufficient for resource-poor societies to support just social institutions and human rights.[23] Beitz also presents a second argument for globalizing the scope of distributive justice, subsuming issues of natural resource distribution under its broader remit. Simply stated, global economic interdependence yields benefits and burdens that would not have come about if all states were autarkic, therefore principles of distributive justice ought to apply at a global level to specify a fair distribution of these benefits and burdens of social cooperation.[24]

What is cause for concern is that Beitz, in his desire for *Political Theory and International Relations* "to be continuous with Rawls's own enterprise," has included various other aspects of Rawls's approach that provide the self with distance from its responsibility for the poor, even though Beitz's reworking of the difference principle will yield greater duties to the poor.[25] While the priority of the liberty principle over the difference principle is the most important way in which the freedom of the self is given precedence over responsibilities to the other, the self's responsibility for the other is also limited in other ways.[26] For example, Rawls allows us to refuse "supererogatory actions"; a category of actions that would hold very good consequences for the other but would require too great a risk or sacrifice from the subject.[27] Further, the duty of mutual aid, a type of natural duty, would be chosen in the original position. However, the reason for doing so is a self-interested one: "The primary value of the principle is not measured by the help we actually receive but rather by the sense of confidence and trust in other men's good intentions and the knowledge that they are there if we need them."[28] Finally, the principle of reciprocity, which obtains when the distribution of benefits and burdens is mutually acceptable, is fundamental to Rawls and Beitz's conceptions of justice. On this view, justice entails quid pro quo, whereas,

for Levinas, justice derives from the asymmetrical responsibility of the self for the other, a relation in which is one is responsible irrespective of whether the other reciprocates.

Against a view of *justice as mutual advantage,* an arrangement in which people cooperate because the benefits of social cooperation exceed those of constant conflict and in which the outcomes of justice reflect the relations of power between social agents, Brian Barry advances a view of *justice as impartiality.*[29] Barry favors such an approach to justice partly because an understanding of justice as the distribution of the spoils of social cooperation undercuts the claims for justice from those who are so economically marginal that they cannot be seen as contributing to whatever there is to distribute.[30] Behind Barry's preference for understanding justice as impartiality lies the claim that "there has to be some reason for behaving justly that is not reducible to even a sophisticated and indirect pursuit of self-interest," as well as the desire to justify ourselves to others.[31] If we take the defensibility of our actions seriously and forego appealing to force to justify our actions, then impartially just principles would be those that others in a similar position "could not reasonably reject."[32] A particular headache for Barry is specifying how partial we are permitted to be toward those with whom we have special affective and political relationships (that is, permitted by reasonable persons affected by our partiality), because at some point our commitments to those close to us clash with the interests of outsiders. Barry's response to this problem is to use a Scanlonian method to have people decide "just the right amount" of partiality after having considered everyone's perspective equally. Regardless of the vagueness of stipulating just the right amount of partiality and the difficulties of such a decisionmaking process, what Barry arrives at, or at least aspires to, is a limit to what outsiders may legitimately expect of the self. After fulfilling one's obligations to outsiders as stipulated by an impartial agreement, one is granted a domain within which one may feel justified in *not* concerning itself with the plight of outsiders. Elsewhere, Barry is more explicit about the limits to our responsibility: He acknowledges that "there is no firm criterion for the amount of sacrifice required to relieve distress," but maintains that "there are limits to what people can be required to sacrifice."[33]

In *The Moral Demands of Affluence,* Garrett Cullity defends the placing of moderate demands on those of us living in "a bubble of privilege, floating on a deep pool of human misery."[34] Although Cullity's moderate demands are significant enough to make most of us uncomfortable, he leaves us enough room to pursue personal projects and devote time to our special relationships, and further deems it acceptable to not spend "a lot of time worrying about whether this

is right."[35] While Cullity's position is in keeping with cosmopolitanism's fencing off of an area of indifference to the other, it nevertheless remains instructive to consider how Cullity goes about it, particularly because he embraces two elements, a duty of beneficence and the lifesaving analogy, which at first glance would seem to lead to a more demanding position than he defends. According to Cullity, it appears as though the lifesaving analogy and a duty of beneficence lead to the "Extreme Demand," whereby

> I am morally required to keep contributing my time and money to aid agencies (or to some other comparably important cause), until either (a) there are no longer any lives to be saved (or comparable important goals achieved) by those agencies, or (b) contributing my share of the cost of our collectively saving one further life (or doing something comparably important) would itself be a large enough sacrifice to excuse my refusing to contribute.[36]

However, the Extreme Demand is so demanding that is doubtful whether anyone has actually managed to meet it, and therefore the more appropriate conclusion to draw "is not that it is wrong not to meet the Extreme Demand; but rather, that it is wrong not to get as close to meeting the Extreme Demand as you productively can."[37] Although the Extreme Demand, even in such qualified form, allows so little room for nonaltruistic pursuits that we are unlikely to think it true, it is with an eye on the nonaltruistic pursuits of the needy that the Extreme Demand comes unstuck.[38] The Extreme Demand holds that "it is *wrong* to lead a non-altruistically-focused life."[39] However, part of the reason why we should assist the poor is not only to allow them to live longer, but also to live more fulfilling lives, which will most likely include some nonaltruistic pursuits, which, in the terms of the Extreme Demand, means that we are helping the poor to get what is wrong to have. As it is clearly not wrong to facilitate the nonaltruistic concerns of other people, such as reuniting a family separated by civil war or giving a poor child a scholarship to study art, the Extreme Demand should be rejected. The legitimacy of the poor leading nonaltruistically focused lives opens the door for the nonpoor to do the same.[40] While there is a vast array of nonaltruistically focused goals I am required to help others attain, others are similarly required to help me attain these goals. Moreover, "if others are required to help me get something, it cannot be wrong for me to get it for myself."[41] This means that although it would be "morally wrong" to not make monetary sacrifices to help the poor if these sacrifices would have little impact on my pursuit of life-enhancing goods, I am allowed considerable freedom from responsibility for others.[42]

Cullity's book is intended as a refutation of the more demanding versions of cosmopolitanism, of which Peter Singer's utilitarian position is the prime example and indeed a lurking presence behind much of Cullity's book. Despite its high demands, even Singer's utilitarian cosmopolitanism preserves for the subject some corner of legitimate indifference to the needs of the other. In his famous article, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," Singer argues that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening [e.g., famine], without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it."[43] Everyone is obliged to adhere to this principle, irrespective of what others do.[44] So, when confronted with a choice between buying another pair of trousers and donating the money to famine relief, we are to give the money to famine relief, without being able to claim the status of charity, generosity, or supererogation for our action. For Singer, it would clearly be "wrong" not to give the money to the famine relief.[45] The limit of our obligations toward others is reached at the "level of marginal utility—that is, the level at which, by giving more, I would cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift," presuming that this level can indeed be calculated.[46] Despite the selflessness and moral demandingness of Singer's position, the marginal utility threshold nonetheless marks a point where the subject is relieved of its responsibility for others and permitted a sphere of autonomy.

I have thus far paid very little attention to the various types of cosmopolitanism, in part because the lines that separate the different cosmopolitan approaches are not always that clear; is Pogge, for example, best described as a liberal, contractarian, institutional, or human rights cosmopolitan?[47] Despite these misgivings, it is nevertheless possible to identify a strain of cosmopolitanism in which the use of dialogue to decide just arrangements is emphasized. The influence of discourse ethics and the debate over whether to understand justice in terms of redistribution or recognition is particularly visible in the writing of so-called "dialogic cosmopolitans," represented here by Andrew Linklater and Richard Shapcott. Dialogic cosmopolitans steer the debate away from liberal and utilitarian cosmopolitanism's preoccupation with distributive justice and rights toward a stronger focus on respect for difference. In contrast to liberal and utilitarian cosmopolitanism's stripping of persons of their individuating features, isolating them from groups with which they identify, and treating them as essentially similar, all for the sake of deriving universal principles from an impartial perspective, dialogical cosmopolitans demonstrate greater sensitivity to the social, political, and moral webs in which we are situated and to which our identities are deeply linked.[48] Insofar as universal principles are necessary, dialogic cosmopolitans hold that these should be derived

from agreements reached through open and unconstrained dialogue in which difference is not regarded as an obstacle to agreement. Be that as it may, as it stands, dialogic cosmopolitanism also does not bridge those elements in liberal and utilitarian cosmopolitanism that perpetuate our indifference to the global poor. However, read through a Levinasian lens, dialogic cosmopolitanism's emphasis on difference harbors the potential to elicit greater concern for the global poor other, a matter to which we will return in the concluding section.

Although Linklater and Shapcott's dialogical cosmopolitanism professes a constant openness to otherness through dialogue, this openness does not extend to a constant and unlimited responsibility for others. In Shapcott's case, the refusal of a permanent and asymmetrical responsibility for the other is made explicit through his insistence on equality and reciprocity between self and other. Against David Campbell's Levinas-inspired understanding of intersubjectivity in which the other is placed *at a height,* Shapcott argues,

> there remains a need for caution in relation to Levinas's ethics for the following reason. There is a danger that placing the other at a height is not a relationship of equality as such. In this scenario the other's needs come before those of the self and the other is somehow seen to be more important or to have a superior demand. The question that can only be raised here is what is there in this encounter for the needs of the "self" and for the other's responsibility for the self. For ethics of radical interdependence to realise a fully equal relationship it would seem that this responsibility must necessarily be reciprocal. Campbell does not employ Levinas's work in order to pursue a theory of community or justice and, as such, equality is not the foundational value of his ethics. However, as this [Shapcott's] enquiry is concerned with the idea of formulating an account of community that does justice to difference, the notion of equality is essential.[49]

In *The Transformation of Political Community,* Andrew Linklater declares his goal as the "triple transformation of political community to secure greater respect for cultural differences, stronger commitments to the reduction of material inequalities and significant advances in universality,"[50] even though he pays minimal attention to the distributive aspects of this transformation and instead focuses on the "prospects for achieving progress towards higher levels of universality and difference in the modern world."[51] More specifically, most of Linklater's efforts are directed at justifying and describing the potential for political community, which is still predominantly national in scope, to become a conduit, rather than be an obstacle, toward a universal moral community in which the normative validity of particular acts are decided by all

those affected through a process of open and unrestricted dialogue.[52] But, even though I have not come across an explicit suspension of the self's responsibility for the other in Linklater's writing, by confining his proposed permanent moral watchfulness to checking for obstacles to open discourse in a dialogical community,[53] rather than understanding this permanent vigilance in a wider sense as a responsibility for others beyond the principles and agreements reached in a dialogical community, Linklater creates some space away from responsibility for the other. In other words, in Linklater's framework, once the views of those who stand to be affected by our actions have been listened to in an open dialogical situation, one need not pay attention to the further needs of the other. Furthermore, although Linklater does not give much content to the normative principles that are to govern our (transnational) interaction, the achievement of his aspiration toward universal consensus nevertheless corresponds to the "moment of justice" in Levinas, that is, the equal curtailment and distribution of responsibility for numerous others in the presence of the third, which opens up for the subject some freedom to be for itself.

This section has considered a variety of ways in which prominent cosmopolitan theorists limit or enable a limit of the self's responsibility for the other. These included the shifting of responsibility onto institutions; requiring only that rather undefined "reasonable efforts" be made or that rather unspecified persons take responsibility; citing my special relationships with specific persons to justify a restriction of responsibility for persons outside this circle; defending the subject's right to pursue personal projects and other life-enhancing goods; and simply calculating or asserting a point where responsibility for the other stops. With an eye on the next section, it might be helpful to recall MacCullum's view that all conceptions of freedom have a triadic form: They make reference to an agent, what the agent is free from, and what the agent is free to do or to become, or, "X is (is not) free from Y to do (not do, become, not become) Z."[54] The focus of this section was on the Y aspect of freedom in cosmopolitan writing (the subject's freedom *from* responsibility for the other), while the next section will consider the Z aspect of the self's freedom. It is through a problematization of the performative aspect of the subject's freedom that its claim to a legitimate curtailment of responsibility for the other is undermined.

Levinas's Critique of the Autonomous Subject

Despite recognizing a considerable degree of responsibility toward others, cosmopolitans nevertheless create a sphere in which the subject is

relieved of its responsibility for others and where it is seemingly justified in enjoying the freedom created by this restriction of responsibility. Levinas sees the dominant tradition in political philosophy as having achieved consensus that social life is made possible by a limitation of freedom and by the acceptance of a certain degree of responsibility for others.[55] However, the prevailing tradition is one in which the subject's right to freedom, not to mention its right to be, is not questioned or renounced.[56] Moreover, in this tradition, the freedom of the *subject* remains and is maintained as a principal goal and concern, while the possibility that the life and freedom of the other are more important than that of the subject is not even entertained. Viewed as central and viewing itself as central, the subject regards the other in instrumental terms, instrumental to its security, interests, and freedom. With the egological subject at the center of all questioning and undertaking, the other is dominated, objectified, utilized, reduced and chained to a concept, rendered intelligible, and continuously disciplined to conform to the concept by which he is known. What overflows the bounds of the concept of the other is discarded, suppressed, or ignored. This "scandal of alterity," the failure to contain the other in a concept, "presupposes the tranquil identity of the same, a freedom sure of itself which is exercised without scruples, and to whom the foreigner brings only constraint and limitation."[57]

Insofar as I, the subject, have dominated the other through my egoistic pursuits, I have not noticed his "face." In Levinas, the face of the other suggests, first, the irreducible uniqueness of the other person, ultimately resistant to comprehension, representation, categorisation and containment in a conceptual framework—"the face breaks the system";[58] second, an immediacy between the other and myself, a relationship "without the mediation of any principle or ideality";[59] third, the other's vulnerability and defenselessness—a "resistance of what has no resistance";[60] and fourth, an ethical command against indifference to the other, against letting "the other die alone; that is to say, to be answerable for the life of the other, or else risk becoming the accomplice of that death."[61] The other as face does not confront me with a freedom similar to and as arbitrary as my own, but opposes me with a resistance that is ethical—the face awakens me to my domination of the other and arrests my egoism.[62] "To approach the other is to put into question my freedom, my spontaneity as a living being, my emprise over the things, this freedom of a 'moving force,' this impetuosity of the current to which everything is permitted."[63] More radically still, to be confronted by the nakedness of the other's face is a "crisis of being . . . because I begin to ask myself if my being is justified, if the *Da* of my *Dasein* is not already the usurpation of somebody else's place."[64] It is a crisis of being because the subject recognizes that, through the mere act of existence, it is implicated in the death

of the other.[65] If so implicated, how could the self ever hope to justify its right to be?[66]

The subject, the usurper of the place of the other, is rehabilitated by assuming an asymmetrical and infinite responsibility for the other.[67] For Levinas, the affirmation of the subject occurs via the other and lies in the subject's ability to negate itself, to give, to be good, "emptying itself of its being" in responsibility and concern for the other.[68] Responsibility for the other is *asymmetrical* because "at the outset I hardly care what the other is with respect to me, that is his own business; for me, he is above all the one I am responsible for."[69] Responsibility for the other is *limitless* in two senses: first, responsibility entails a constant resistance to the centripetal concern with one's own usurping and consuming existence;[70] and second, assuming responsibility for the other opens up into an ever-increasing responsibility as I find myself implicated in situations and problems that do not stem from something I have done. Levinas writes that as I increasingly "divest myself, under the traumatic effect of persecution, of my freedom as a constituted, wilful, imperialist subject, the more I discover myself to be responsible; the more just I am, the more guilty I am."[71] Strange as it may seem, persecution by the other is the foundation of solidarity with the other.[72] Responsibility and concern for the other, and therefore for the world that surrounds him, drive our aspiration for a more just and humane order.[73]

The ethical relation with the other is a permanent dimension of intersubjectivity; responsibility comes from a "time immemorial," a "pluperfect past," because I was born into a world in which the other was already present. The subject finds itself responsible in situations that were not of its choosing or the result of its actions, accused for failing to meet its responsibility, persecuted by the other. There is no escape. Since the self is always in the presence of the other, the self is the one who, "before all decision, is elected to bear all the responsibility for the World . . . a reversal of being 'persevering in his being'— which begins in [him]."[74] In contrast to the *activity* of the autonomous subject, to be responsible for the other is "to catch sight of an extreme passivity," a subjectivity infused with what the self has no control over.[75] The permanence of the ethical relation between the subject and the other means that the freedom of the subject is compromised from the outset: The ethical relation is a "movement [in which] my freedom does not have the last word."[76]

Hesitant Freedom, Permanent Responsibility

Levinas's critique of the imperialist subject and his insistence upon an infinite responsibility for the other that precedes the subject's freedom

might create the impression that he has foreclosed the possibility of speaking about freedom in its more usual senses (e.g., in terms of independence or self-centered pursuits) and that he as denied the pursuit of freedom as a legitimate goal for the self. In this regard, it is important to note that the relation of infinite responsibility for the other refers to the interpersonal relation between self and other. By introducing the notion of the "third," Levinas is able to address matters related to the presence of more than one other and to mass society, and to explain how space for the self to be free opens up. In the presence of the third, who has always been present, I am confronted by another other who is also a face and thus also commands my infinite responsibility.[77] The third is another other to me, but he is also an other to the other. I am not to commit myself to one other at the expense of all others. In order to be just, I have to limit my responsibility to the specific other and divide it among numerous others[78]— "in the very name of the absolute obligation towards one's fellow man, a certain abandonment of the absolute allegiance he calls forth is necessary."[79]

The limitation of responsibility in the presence of the third indicates the beginning of equality between others, as well as the beginning of politics as conflict arises over the substance of equality. Moreover, the limitation of the self's responsibility for the other in the presence of the third opens up for the self a provisional freedom to be for itself.[80] In the presence of the third, that is, in a society of equal citizens, concern with *my* lot also acquires legitimacy. Yet we seem to have run into a contradiction. On the one hand Levinas says that I am infinitely responsible for the other (the interpersonal ethical relation), while on the other hand he allows for a limit to my responsibility in the presence of the third (the impersonal political relation).[81] This tension cannot be resolved as the other person is both the other and the third to me; "the face is both the neighbour and the face of faces, visage and visibility."[82] Every person I come across is both a general and equal other with whom I stand in a political relation, as well as a specific other who summons me to responsibility in the ethical relation.[83] When faced by the other, I can respond *politically,* seeing the other as my equal, restricting my responsibility to him, insisting on reciprocity and equality between us, and asserting my rights against his; or, I can respond *ethically,* by being concerned and assuming responsibility for him beyond what is required by our political equality and reciprocity. Do I relate to the other ethically or politically? I am constantly faced with this choice. Both a political and an ethical response to the other enjoy legitimacy, although, from a Levinasian perspective, a political response to the other does not enjoy it fully, as the self's responsibility for the other is always unfinished. Admittedly, we generally do not behave as though we are

infinitely responsible for others and the prevailing mode our interaction with others in mass society cannot but be political. Nevertheless, Levinas's aim should be understood as trying to undermine the view of the subject that underlies and sees as legitimate a political response to the other—a view that holds the subject as central, sovereign, independent, and origin of everything—by infusing subjectivity with an inescapable and unlimited responsibility that renders autonomous subjectivity permanently compromised, an aim that Levinas expresses as "try[ing] to articulate the break-up of a fate that reigns in essence."[84]

A further implication of the presence of the third and the necessary limitation of our responsibility for the specific other is that we have to ask about and establish an arrangement of justice that will best realize our responsibility for a plurality of persons, to which cosmopolitans have a characteristic set of answers, as do authors of a more communitarian bent. More specifically, it becomes necessary, first, to categorize, describe, compare, and judge people and their needs—to "compare the incomparable"[85]—for example, as the "global poor" or as "we"; second, to seek objective and general principles of justice and standards of judgment; and third, to think about and establish the institutional arrangements through which our responsibility for others can best be achieved. The generality, objectivity, systemization, objectification, comparison, and bureaucratic decision-making required by justice amount to the suppression and discarding of the otherness of the other, an effacement as it were. Moreover, justice and its institutions always fall short of meeting our infinite responsibility for the other.

The necessary suppression of the other's otherness in the quest for general institutional and theoretical designs is tolerable as long as this otherness is not lost sight of, for it is the otherness of the other, his face, that reminds us of our unfinished responsibility for him and of the incompleteness of justice. The face provokes and inspires progress toward a more humane and just order. That said, Levinas warns that in the realm of the political there is the constant danger that the ethical relation with the other be lost from view, even in the well-intentioned and necessary aspiration toward rational, impersonal, and objective political institutions. When politics and the maintenance of order begin to justify themselves, rather than drawing their justification from ethics, we run the risk of "inhumanity," an abandoning of "the world to useless suffering."[86] So for the sake of the other, we should guard against the alienation inherent to the political order. For Levinas, justice

> is not a natural and anonymous legality governing the human masses,
> from which is derived a technique of social equilibrium, placing in

> harmony the antagonistic and blind forces through transitory cru-
> elties and violence, a State delivered over to its own necessities that
> it is impossible to justify.[87]

Rather, justice arises at least in part out of the subject's ethical re-
sponsibility toward more than one other.[88] Beneath the equality of
persons in the political relation lies the asymmetry between the self
and the other of the ethical relationship,[89] indeed "responsibility for
the neighbour is precisely what goes beyond the legal and obliges be-
yond contracts."[90] It is goodness, as responsibility for the other, "dis-
rupting the general economy of the real and standing in sharp contrast
with the perseverance of entities persisting in their being" that im-
proves justice, even though, in the objective order of justice, the good-
ness of responsibility tends to be regarded and discarded as an
aberration in the system of justice—gratuitous, supererogatory.[91] Still,
justice and its institutions should, at a minimum, "always be held in
check by the initial interpersonal relation."[92]

   This section has recognized the predominance and even the ten-
tative legitimacy of the political relation between self and other, a re-
lation of equality and each-person-for-himself. However, a sole focus
on the political relation is incomplete as it overlooks the irreducible
ethical relation between the self and the other, as identified by Lev-
inas. An acknowledgment of the ethical relation, a relation of infinite
responsibility for the other, permanently puts into question claims
that a political response to the other is legitimate. Even though cos-
mopolitans take up a considerable amount of responsibility for the
other, the cosmopolitan restriction of responsibility means that a po-
litical response to the other ultimately prevails. This is problematic
for it maintains an autonomous, atomistic self and thus undermines
the likelihood that the self will sober up and "fear for all the violence
and murder [its] existing, despite its intentional and conscious inno-
cence, can bring about."[93] Moreover, by opting for a political rather
than an ethical response to the other, cosmopolitans, who write with
considerable moral authority, both justify a restriction of responsibil-
ity and help the subject maintain its good conscience, despite the ob-
vious and continued need of the other. Ultimately, the restriction of
responsibility for the other pulls against the more just global order
cosmopolitans so desperately seek, because the desire for a better jus-
tice stems from my ethical relation with the other, the responsible self
seeks a better justice for the sake of the other. Although the face-to-
face relation is interrupted and put in danger by the presence of the
third and the resultant predominance of the political relation, our eth-
ical responsibility for the other needs to find expression through poli-
tics for there to be a more humane justice.

Conclusion:
Toward an Ethical Politics

While a more ethical polity has been defined in various ways by Levinas's commentators,[94] very little has been said about how to imbue the political realm with the ethical in practice.[95] Recall that according to Levinas we are reminded of our unfinished responsibility by the face of the other, which combines the singularity of the other person with an ethical command. It therefore seems that in order to achieve a less indifferent world one of the tasks before us is to confront the world with the face of the other, to awaken people to the ethical command that issues from the other. In Levinas's more dramatic language, what is required is a "denuding of the skin exposed to wounds and outrage," so as to yield "a suffering for the suffering of the other."[96]

However, we are immediately confronted with the problem that by definition the face of the other cannot be represented.[97] While granting that all representations of the other suppress its otherness, Levinas's approach should at this point make room for taking the qualitative differences of our representations of others into account, and for representations that are more suggestive of the other's face—representations of the other in a greater complexity—to be used for political purposes. While there are a few instances of Levinas asserting the importance of representing the other in a greater fullness, I have not come across evidence of him proposing this as a political strategy.[98] An emphasis on the complexity of the other as a political strategy is in line with the work of the most significant exponent of Levinas's ideas in International Relations, David Campbell's argument for a "refiguration of politics," in the form of a "struggle for— or on behalf of—alterity rather than a struggle to efface, erase, or eradicate alterity."[99]

By expressing the task of ethical politics in terms of presenting a fuller and more nuanced representation of the other, a Levinasian approach finds common ground with political philosophers who argue that by exposing people to narratives about the lives of others they are more likely to feel concern for them (e.g., Martha Nussbaum, Richard Rorty, and Edward Said), as well as with political philosophers who advocate a politics that aimed at the recognition of difference (e.g., William Connolly, Chantal Mouffe, Charles Taylor, and Iris Young). More importantly, these two groups of political philosophers make numerous practical suggestions on how to convey the other in a greater complexity, suggestions that can be drawn upon to serve Levinasian purposes, in whose writing we find no such politically practical suggestions. One could, for example, draw on Nussbaum's argument for

an enlarged multicultural component in university education, a proposal that would require a stronger focus on the arts, and on literature in particular, as well as the study of languages, cultures, and religions that students find foreign.[100] Rorty has also noted the capacity of the arts, and even television programs, to draw attention to the lives of those we tend to overlook, particularly to the ways in which we have been cruel to or neglectful of them.[101] In addition, Rorty notes that legal scholars, social scientists, and journalists are especially well placed and equipped to act as "connoisseurs" and articulators of diversity.[102] Among those who emphasize justice to difference, Young proposes "consciousness raising" (defining and drawing attention to the oppression experienced by some groups), Mouffe advocates the fracturing of homogenous identities and a political invigoration of these freshly articulated differences, while Connolly seeks a constant disturbance and contestation of "dogmatic" and seemingly normal identities so as to increase "the number of positive identities."[103] These strategies have typically been employed in local- or national-level political struggles. However, they can also be used to struggle on behalf of those who live outside our national borders. Indeed, the achievement of the more just global order to which cosmopolitans aspire requires that we are increasingly exposed to the nuances of the lives of the world's poor.

It has been argued that despite the moral concern for the world's poor that cosmopolitan thought exhibits and seeks to inspire in the rest of us, the writings of some influential cosmopolitan authors contain elements that strain against greater concern for the world's poor, and, more worryingly still, can be said to entrench and even engender indifference toward the world's poor. These unfortunate tendencies in cosmopolitanism can be put down to losing sight of the ethical relation with the other in the presence of numerous others. While cosmopolitan theory remains necessary for trying to solve philosophical and practical problems about how to best and most appropriately realize our responsibility for numerous others at the global level, cosmopolitanism needs to be informed and corrected by the ethical relation between self and other, to, at a minimum, upset our continued good conscience, but also to attain greater global justice. Levinasian ethics does not purport to provide answers about the most appropriate arrangement and content of our responsibility for people near and far, but does insist that the poor stranger in a foreign country should be considered and brought to the fore as a face, for it is the ethical intimacy between the other person and myself that inspires a better justice. By using political practices that bring to the fore the complexity of the other or that emphasize her difference, thereby better suggesting the face of the other, a world that cosmopolitans themselves seek,

a world in which fewer of us would turn away from the millions who are slipping toward preventable poverty-related deaths, is more likely to come about.

Notes

1. Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), p. 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 169.

4. For example, David Wood, "Some Questions for My Levinasian Friends," in Eric Nelson, Antje Kapust, and Kent Still, eds., *Addressing Levinas* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 152–169.

5. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 42; Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 79.

6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 213.

7. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 101.

8. Pogge, note 1, p. 170.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., pp. 172, 170.

11. Thomas Pogge, "Reply to the Critics: Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties," *Ethics and International Affairs* 19 (2005), pp. 78–83.

12. Pogge, note 1, p. 136.

13. Ibid., p. 249.

14. David Luban, "Just War and Human Rights," in Charles Beitz et al., eds., *International Ethics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 195–216, at p. 209.

15. Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and US Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 13.

16. For institutional cosmopolitans, rights follow institutions, and not the other way around. Concerning the right to food, O'Neill writes that "without one or other determinate institutional structure, these supposed economic rights amount to rhetoric rather than entitlement," Onara O'Neill, *Bounds of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 125.

17. Luban, note 14, p. 209, emphasis added.

18. Shue, note 15, p. 16, emphasis added.

19. Ibid., p. 17, emphasis added.

20. Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Charles Beitz, "Reflections," *Review of International Studies,* 31 (2005): 409–412; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

21. Rawls, note 20, pp. 102–168.

22. Ibid., p. 166.

23. Beitz, *Political Theory,* note 20, pp. 136–143.

24. Ibid., pp. 143–153.

25. Beitz, "Reflections," note 20, p. 412.

26. Rawls, note 20, p. 266.

27. Ibid., pp. 100, 385.

28. Ibid., p. 298.

29. Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

30. Ibid., pp. 46, 50.

31. Brian Barry, *Theories of Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 7, 285.

32. Thomas Scanlon quoted in ibid., p. 284.

33. Brian Barry, "Humanity and Justice in Global Perspective," in Robert Goodin and Philip Petitt, eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 525–540, at pp. 528, 526.

34. Gareth Cullity, *The Moral Demands of Affluence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 2.

35. Ibid., p. viii.

36. Ibid., pp. 78–79.

37. Ibid., pp. 80–81.

38. Ibid., p. 88.

39. Ibid., p. 137, emphasis in original.

40. Ibid., pp. 135–137, 148.

41. Ibid., p. 148.

42. Ibid., p. 186.

43. Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," in Beitz, et al., note 14, pp. 247–261, at p. 249.

44. Ibid., p. 250.

45. Ibid., p. 253.

46. Ibid., p. 259.

47. For some attempts to classify cosmopolitan approaches to justice, see Pogge, note 1, pp. 168–177; Kok-Chor Tan, *Justice Without Borders: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Patriotism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 40–61; Simon Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 102–147.

48. Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 9–13, 34–42.

49. Ibid., pp. 104–105.

50. Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), p. 3.

51. Ibid., pp. 4–5.

52. Ibid., p. 92.

53. Ibid., p. 99.

54. Gerald MacCullum, "Negative and positive freedom" *Philosophical Review* 76 (1967): 312–334, at p. 314.

55. Rawls, note 20, p. 266.

56. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, pp. 302–304; Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other* (London: Athlone Press, 1998), p. 190; Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 164–167.

57. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 203.

58. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 34.

59. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 81.

60. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 199.

61. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 148.

62. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 171.

63. Ibid., p. 303.

64. Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader,* Sean Hand, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 85.

65. Ibid., p. 86.

66. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 144.

67. Ibid., p. 58.

68. Ibid., p. 59, emphasis removed.

69. Ibid., p. 105.

70. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, pp. 244–245.

71. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1989), p. 112.

72. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 82.

73. Ibid., p. 116.

74. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 60.

75. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 47.

76. Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 58.

77. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 213.

78. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 128.

79. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 203.

80. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 128.

81. William Simmons, "The Third: Levinas's Theoretical Move from Anarchical Ethics to the Realm of Justice and Politics," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 25 (1999): 83–104, at p. 94.

82. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 160.

83. Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1999), pp. 231–234; Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 158.

84. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 8.

85. Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Kearney, "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas," in Richard A. Cohen, ed., *Face to Face with Levinas* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), pp. 13-33, at p. 21.

86. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 99.

87. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 169.

88. This is not to deny that the need for justice also arises from the need for social order, protection, and punishment. As Levinas notes, the suppression of violence requires "both the hierarchy taught by Athens and the abstract and slightly anarchical ethical individualism taught by Jerusalem," ibid., p. 24.

89. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 214.

90. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 142.

91. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 157.

92. Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity,* note 7, p. 90.

93. Levinas, *Entre Nous,* note 56, p. 130.

94. The different views among Levinas's interpreters of what an ethical polity entails include Critchley's conception of Levinas's ethics as "the disruption of totalising politics," which he later expanded to "the anarchic moment of democratic dissensus articulated around the experience of the ethical demand," Critchley, *Ethics of Destruction,* note 83, p. 221; Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 130. Drabinski, in turn, views a more ethical polity as one in which there is a nonreciprocal redistribution of political power and wealth to the powerless and the poor, while Campbell, argues for a "deterritorialisation

of responsibility," John Drabinski, "The Possibility of an Ethical Politics," *Philosophy and Social Criticism,* 26 (2000): 49–73; John Drabinksi, "Wealth and Justice in a U-topian Context," in Nelson, et al., note 4, pp. 185–198; David Campbell, "The Deterritorialization of Responsibility: Levinas, Derrida, and Ethics after the End of Philosophy," *Alternatives* 19, no. 4 (1996): 455–484. As a final example, Burggraeve stresses "small goodnesses," acts of unreciprocated and unexpected kindness toward and for the sake of the other, acts that do not find their origin in a system of morality or a particular political order, but that nevertheless remain necessary to preserve the interhuman, which is put in danger by the impersonality of justice, politics, instrumental reason, and the state. Roger Burggraeve, *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love: Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), pp. 165–179.

95. A partial exception to this charge has been Critchley's work. Recently, he expressed his aim as providing an "ethical orientation" to underpin a politics able to address the glaring injustices of the present age, Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding,* note 94, p. 90. Things look even more promising when he describes the purpose of the final chapter as providing "an argument that is both descriptive and normative as to how such a politics might be conceived" (p. 90). Critchley thinks of democracy as disruptive of the smothering order the state imposes on us, a "material drive of social being that calls the established order to account . . . in order to better attenuate for its malicious effects" (p. 117). To pry open space for political contestation, to resist the current order, and to call it to account, it is necessary to articulate new political subjectivities in terms of which political struggles can be waged. Critchley presents "the indigenous" as one such political subjectivity, citing the Chiapas uprising and the ongoing struggles of Australian Aborigines. He also views the antiglobalization and anti-Bush/Republican/War in Iraq rallies of recent years as containing "the ethical energy for a remotivation of politics and future democratic organisation" (p. 113). However, these examples of ethical interventions in the political remain retrospective. As for what should be done, Critchley's proposal is for a type of ethical anarchism, a calling into question of the current order for the sake of the other, of which the only practical example he offers is satire, which, by Critchley's own admission, is unlikely to yield major results (p. 124).

96. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 146.

97. Derrida famously criticized Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* for its use of representational language to speak about what allegedly cannot be represented. Levinas responded by drawing a distinction between the "saying" and the "said," thereby, in Derrida's words, "giv[ing] himself the right to speak . . . in a language resigned to its own failure," Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 116. The saying refers to the nonlinguistic, ethical proximity to the other, whereas the said refers to representational, ontological language. The said is in service of the saying, yet the saying also needs the said, for although the language, concepts, and representations of the said are not adequate for expressing the intimacy of the ethical relation, the said is nevertheless necessary to speak to, about, with, and for the other and in order to have justice. While the generality of language betrays and fails the alterity of the other and the exceptionality of the ethical relation, it is possible to unsay the violence and inadequacy of the said by drawing attention to the ambiguity of language and to the impossibility of closing a system of thought, and by being skeptical.

98. To give two examples: Levinas claims that emphasizing our common humanity to evoke sympathy with the other has the opposite effect; it is "a levelling of the idea of fraternity," a negation of the simultaneity of my being in an ethical and a political relation with the other, Levinas, *Totality and Infinity,* note 6, p. 214. Elsewhere, Levinas asserts that the betrayal of the other in the said should be reduced, which can be interpreted as expressing a preference for an order in which the other is represented and held in a greater complexity. Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* note 56, p. 107.

99. David Campbell, "Why Fight? Humanitarianism, Principles, and Post-structuralism," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 27 (1998): 497–521, at p. 513.

100. Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 145–146.

101. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xvi.

102. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 206.

103. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); p. 152; Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 2005); William Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 98, 155.