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Anti-cosmopolitanism

Introduction

This chapter examines what I call anti-cosmopolitanism in international ethical thought. From the Athenian generals of the Peloponnesian War to G. W. F. Hegel, twentieth-century realists and communitarians such as Alasdair Maclntyre, Michael Walzer and John Rawls, anti-cosmopolitans have sought to depict the moral realm as being fundamentally different from that argued for by cosmopolitanism. Anti-cosmopolitan positions share an account of morality that is sceptical towards substantive universalism and global egalitarianism. It should be noted that I am making no claim for a single anti-cosmopolitan tradition. Instead, anti-cosmopolitanism is a stance that has been present in a number of different traditions at different times. It is at best a group of arguments, all of which have been employed by a number of different perspectives. Rather than any particular ideology or common project, what unites this diverse group is rejection of cosmopolitanism and substantive moral universalism in favour of local or contextual morality. Anti-cosmopolitans make both positive claims about the nature of morality and negative claims about cosmopolitanism that are used to defend significant, but not absolute, restrictions of human loyalties and to give moral priority to less-than-universal communities. Because anti-cosmopolitans emphasize contextual origins of community and ethics they reject cosmopolitan universalism and claim that actual particularistic community,

such as nationality, overrides any abstract or imagined bonds between members of the human species.

At the core of anti-cosmopolitanism is the claim that morality is always local, and therefore that cosmopolitanism is both impossible (impractical) and undesirable, in particular because of:

a the international insecurity in the international state of nature;
b the existence of profound cultural and normative pluralism which entails the lack of universal agreement about the 'good' or the 'right';
c any attempt to act in or realize universal values would be an unjustified imposition of one account of 'the good society' upon others; and
d a world state based on universalism would be a source of violence, domination and tyranny.

In addition, Simon Caney identifies six conceptual and three normative arguments against universalism:

> **Universalism is (1) flawed because it is committed to the idea of a common human nature; (2) too abstract and decontextualized to have relevance; (3) unable to provide an adequate account of moral motivation; (4) false to the experience of moral reflection; (5) unattainable because moral argument can take place only within historical traditions; and (6) vitiated by the existence of profound moral disagreement. (2005: 39)**

These claims will be discussed in the sections below.

This chapter focuses on the two most common and robust expressions of anti-cosmopolitanism: realism and pluralism. Realism argues that the circumstances of international life preclude the possibility of cosmopolitan ethics or a cosmopolitan transformation because, within this setting, states are morally obliged to pursue their national interest over the common (cosmopolitan) good. For pluralists, the constraints on our moral commitments result from the absence of shared global understandings comparable to the ethical consensus present in the domestic realm of the nation-state. Common to both these anti-cosmopolitan positions is what Chris Brown identifies as a communitarian understanding of the origins of the nature of morality and ethics (see Brown 1992). Both realism and pluralism draw upon the idea that moral norms are cultural rather than transcendental and therefore that morality is essentially communal rather than global in nature. For this reason, this chapter begins with a discussion of the communitarian ideas that are common to most anti-cosmopolitan arguments.

Communitarianism

At the heart of the disagreement between the cosmopolitans and anti-cosmopolitans is a distinct moral epistemology and ontology of each tradition (Cochran 1999). As we have seen, cosmopolitanism, especially liberal cosmopolitanism, has most often been grounded in certain claims about the nature of human agency and the capacity for disinterested rationality, or, in the case of Kant himself, humanity's capacity to recognize universal transcendental reason. In contrast, communitarians made claims in both ontological and epistemological realms: individuals are formed by their culture and can only come to have moral knowledge as a consequence of inhabiting a culture. According to communitarians, morality is derived from, and only has meaning in, the specific - what Michael Walzer (1994) calls 'thick' - cultures to which we belong. Moral life begins 'at home', so to speak, in the various historical, cultural and political communities that we inhabit. Communitarianism is 'contextualist' because it argues that moral standards can only belong to the specific groups from which they emerged. The anti-cosmopolitan position takes this communitarian argument and turns it into a rejection of cosmopolitanism. Contexts place limits on universalism and foreclose the possibility of a moral point of view as such.

According to Brown (1992), the origins of modern communitarian epistemology and ontology can be found in the work of the German philosophers Herder and Hegel. While few contemporary anti-cosmopolitans present even a passing resemblance to either Herder or Hegel, they have provided inspiration and influence for anti-cosmopolitanism in general. Herder was a critic of Kant's emphasis on a pre-social or even asocial individual. According to Brown, Herder provides the basis for thinking of the national community as an organic entity, and as the social source of good and of identity. Herder was the first to emphasize the way in which culture and individual identity are intertwined. Individuals' identities are formed in the context of a shared culture or by language, history and traditions. Herder argued that 'the individual was not prior to culture . . . but shaped by it' (1992: 59). Herder is significant for today's debates because of his focus on the contextual individual. Herder's emphasis on the cultural origins of individuality also flows through to the epistemological level. From Herder's position, the Kantian emphasis on a transcendent individual reason is fundamentally in error.

Herder's preferred form of political community was a plurality of de-centred communities, which he called 'anarcho-pluralist' (Brown

1992). In contrast, Hegel was a statist. Hegel argued that the state was the most perfect form of human community and that it is only in states that people can fulfil their own individuality while reconciling it with the individuality of others. For Hegel, the sovereign state was the only setting in which people could achieve their individuality and their freedom because it was the only community within which people had reflectively constructed their identity, or in which people were capable of ruling themselves according to reason.

Statists claim that 'Social tradition within the state is the framework which founds and enables ethical discourse' (Cochran 1996: 13). The implication of this is that only when everyone inhabits their own particular state can men *(sic)* be free. Hegel then seeks to reconcile universality and particularity in the state, which he saw as the culmination of the process of history. According to Linklater:

> **For Hegel an account of the development of human powers must analyse the emergence and evolutions of societies which are based upon rational, critical thinking. The development of human freedom is exhibited in man's increasingly rational control of his self and his environment. . . The culmination of this process in modern history is the sovereign state. Within this community, within a community of rational law-makers, humans realize the triumph of thought over nature, and express those capacities . . . which are specific to human subjects. (1990a: 147)**

States could do this, not because they were organic communities in the Herderian sense but because they were rational communities built upon historical, not transcendent, rationality. That is a rationality developed in and of history. For this reason, David Boucher (1998) argues that communitarianism does not adequately describe Hegelian thought, which he refers to as simply the tradition of historical reason. Nonetheless, the conclusion to be drawn from Hegel's account is that the less than universal association known as the sovereign state is and ought to be the focus of individual life and ethics. Between the two of them, Herder and Hegel seem to capture the essence of modern anti-cosmopolitanism as an argument in which cultural and communal sources of moral knowledge and individual identity are married to a belief that the state is the best representative of the community.

While contemporary anti-cosmopolitans draw on the traditions of Herder and Hegel, their more immediate influence is the debate between liberalism and communitarianism which emerged in response to John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (see Avineri and De Shalit 1992). The essential argument here was that Rawlsian liberalism misunderstood the nature of the moral realm and moral argument, and was premised on a de-contextualized understanding of individualism.

David Miller (2002) contrasts communitarian or contextual justice with universal or cosmopolitan justice as a way of indicating the limit of universalism. For Miller, the aim of universalism 'is to discover principles of justice that can and should guide our judgment and our behaviour in all circumstances . . . the basic principles of justice are invariant... it tells us what justice *is*' (2002: 7). Miller argues that no universalist account has ever succeeded in convincing everyone (universal justification) or in establishing itself as the principal account of justice. As a result, communitarians assert that different cultures have their own ethics and it is impossible to claim, as cosmopolitans do, access to one single account of morality. Instead there remains a plurality of accounts of justice in the world. This is not just some accident or the fault of poor articulation, but is instead the result of the nature of justice itself. There is no single meaning of justice and therefore no single account of justice. Therefore, all justice is contextual. The communitarian claim is that moral knowledge is ultimately relative to the particular historical communities to which we belong. Morality is a cultural artefact and different standards of morality, different understandings of right and wrong, prevail in different cultures.

For anti-cosmopolitans, the presence of significant cultural diversity, and thus of significantly different accounts of the nature of justice, mean that in practice there is no consensus on the nature of justice. Because human beings only achieve moral knowledge in concrete historical circumstances we cannot speak in terms of a transcendental universal morality that is above history and culture, in the way that cosmopolitans do. Because there is no single global culture or community of all of humanity, with a shared history or culture, there is no cultural artefact that is coterminous with the entire species. Moral communities, Walzer argues:

> **have members and memories, members with memories not only of their own but also of their common life. Humanity by contrast, has members but no memory, so it has no history and no culture, no customary practices, no familiar life-ways, no festival, no shared understanding of social goods. (1994: 8)**

Moral duties, therefore, exist only in the context of a society that can share these cultural artefacts. We simply cannot have duties to those we have no shared 'social contract' with, and whose values we do not share and with whom we do not identify. In other words, there is no universal context for global justice, only local or particular ones. As Walzer explains, 'our common humanity will never make us members of a single universal tribe. The crucial commonality of the human race is particularism: we participate, all of us, in thick cultures

that are our own' (1994: 83). The lack of these shared understandings both prevents the application of cosmopolitan moral code and at the same time indicates why people will not identify with cosmopolitanism. People identify with their own communities and this provides them with the moral motivation to do good. In contrast, we cannot identify with humanity sufficiently to motivate us to act in its name or in the cause of distant strangers (see Kymlicka 2001; Calhoun 2003). Our membership of humanity is at best attenuated, imprecise and morally secondary.

Additionally, if morality is context-dependent and can only be decided within a culture/community, then attempts to propound universal conceptions of justice come up against the barrier of cultural difference. Communitarians, according to Thompson (1992: 22), argue that 'if individuals are constituted wholly or in part by the social relations of their communities, or if their goals, their ethical judgements and their sense of justice are inextricably bound up with community life, then why should they accept the criteria or evaluations of cosmopolitans?' The communitarian critique implies that, given that knowledge is particular and contextual, there will be no way of knowing or judging between the many contextual definitions of the good and establishing which is the correct or best ethical framework. In other words, with a vast diversity of moral cosmologies it is neither possible nor desirable to decide which is the right one, or to judge between them.

This argument is sometimes accompanied by a supporting claim that contextual knowledge is necessarily incommensurable (see Brown 1992). That is, not only is it true that there is no consensus on basic values due to cultural pluralism, but such a consensus is impossible because cultures are not translatable. It is impossible, for instance, to think simultaneously as both a modern secularist and a traditional Islamic scholar. The two cosmologies are irreconcilable. This means that not only is no consensus existent today, but none is possible in the future. The only means by which it might become possible would be through the triumph or victory of one culture and the destruction or assimilation of all the others. And this is precisely the threat that communitarians identify in cosmopolitan universalism.

The critique of liberal cosmopolitanism

The most common critique of cosmopolitanism is that it is hostile to the 'local' or national community as a result of its determination to be

impartial. While there are a number of sources of this criticism, ultimately it can be traced back to a rejection of both the cosmopolitan understanding of 'the moral point of view' and of its methodological individualism. The most important of these criticisms is that the individuals depicted by cosmopolitanism are not humans as such but liberal individuals, the product of a specific liberal interpretation. Cosmopolitan arguments rest on three assumptions:

1 That we can identify an objective account of human agency that is uninfected by its particular origins.
2 That it has been done.
3 Further, that such an account can generate a universal account of the right.

Rather than reflecting universal human qualities, liberal accounts rest on culturally specific assumptions about certain human characteristics As a result, it is questionable whether the qualities that liberals ascribe to all humans as universal are in fact so. If they are not, then it would seem that the cosmopolitan project falls at the first hurdle.

The most obvious first objection here is to the Kantian appeal to rationality. From the communitarian position, the emphasis on rationality as the uniting feature of humanity is simply not empirically justified. Reason and rationality take many forms, depending on the culture of the individual. In other words, humanity has little or no capacity to be guided by a universal reason because, simply put, there is no such reason. Reason is the product of particular cultures and circumstances, a historical product, and not transcendent in the Kantian sense. Hegel's account of the historical development of reason is present in this claim.

More specifically, communitarianism argues that disembodied abstract reason has no ethical authority because it cannot ground itself outside a specific Western tradition of thought. Cosmopolitanism does not sufficiently recognize that its abstract, idealized, supposedly impartial, principal standpoint is, in fact, the product of a particular history, context and culture, and not an impartial one. Cosmopolitanism relies upon an assumption that liberal theories of justice are determinate and final, that they are indeed universal. However, there is good reason to think that they cannot be unproblematically universalized or that they may not be acceptable to those outside the liberal realm. Communitarians ask '[w]here do these "external" criteria get their authority?' (Thompson 1992: 22). The answer, of course, is that they are authoritative only within liberalism, not globally. Ultimately, the claim is that it is not possible to

draw any substantive conclusions about universal human qualities beyond the most general, and that the type of conclusion we might draw from such an account leads to an altogether different account of justice from that portrayed by cosmopolitans (see Miller 2007).

Rawls's 'theory of justice' was the spur for the development of 'communitarianism' in its modern form. Many communitarian arguments began as a critique of Rawls's domestic liberalism, and also as a critique of his account of the nature of justice. The principal criticism levelled at Rawls was that his account relied upon too high a level of abstraction and an account of individuals that did not recognize the extent to which individual choices were the results of socialization. Rawlsian accounts are particularly prone to criticism at this level because they rely so heavily on very specific accounts of what an individual would choose in order to build their fiction of a global social contract. Much of contemporary anti-cosmopolitanism is a response to the development of Rawlsian accounts of cosmopolitanism as global justice. The issue of global distributive justice, especially when understood in terms of Rawlsian justice and constitution of 'basic institution', will almost necessarily lead to an account of a globally just society modelled on liberal if not Rawlsian principles.

Communitarians and feminists argue that liberal cosmopolitans depict the individual as some way acultural (Benhabib 1992). The feminist criticism of Rawlsianism is that the liberal model is less universalizable than liberals care to admit. Benhabib (1992: 53) argues, 'Universalistic moral theories in the Western tradition from Hobbes to Rawls are substitutionalist, [they] . . . identify the experiences of a specific group of subjects as the paradigmatic case of the human as such. These subjects are invariably white, male, adults who are propertied or at least professional.' In Rawls's case, this individual is situated behind a 'veil of ignorance'. The individual in liberal approaches is an ideally rational actor and we can model such an actor and use it as the basis for our theories, even if we can't actually find one in the real world.

For cosmopolitans, an abstracted and idealized account of the individual is used to construct and justify rules that everyone ought to be guided by. To be universally impartial, the cosmopolitan position must abstract from the particularity of agents and replace them with a generalized, and, therefore, universal, conception of the individual by reducing them to the abstract, reasoning, dispassionate (male) subject. Rawls's approach requires abstraction of the individual away from their social context and 'reduces the (actual) plurality of moral subjects to one (abstract) subjectivity' (Walzer 1983: 5). For communitarian critics of Rawls, this conception is flawed because it

robs the individual of all the traits that make them individuals, or of the traits that make them identifiable as humans. The individual so modelled is not in fact universal and therefore capable of impartiality, but is rather a product of a particular culture and, usually, gender. As Walzer notes in his argument against Rawls:

> **the question most likely to arise in the minds of members of a political community is not, 'What would rational individuals choose under universalizing conditions of such and such a sort?' But rather, 'What would individuals like us choose, who are situated as we are, who share a culture and are determined to go on sharing it?' (1983: 5)**

In other words, the individual becomes so far removed from any real human that what that individual may or may not choose makes no sense, and therefore the edifice upon which such a concept is built collapses.

Likewise, according to Iris Marion Young (1990), the ideal of impartiality obscures the origins of the cosmopolitan account. No vantage point is completely impartial and all positions are situated in some sort of context. There is no 'non-perspectival' perspective. As Young (1990: 104) argues: '|i|t is impossible to adopt an unsituated moral point of view, and if a point is situated, then it cannot be universal, it cannot stand apart from and understand all points of view.' To be impartial, the cosmopolitan position must abstract from the specific identity of real people and replace them with a generalized conception of 'the agent'. The cosmopolitan commitment to impartiality with regard to different conceptions of the good life is itself an articulation of a particular conception of the good life. If this is the case, then it might follow that the basis for cosmopolitan universalism is less secure than it may seem.

A related claim is Rawls's own argument against the cosmopolitan interpretation of his work. The theory of justice is based upon an assumption about certain values, or the reflective equilibrium of values common to liberal, and particularly American, society. From this viewpoint, it is an account of justice for liberal societies. There is no such basic reflective equilibrium in the international realm (Rawls 1999).

The fundamental claim of anti-cosmopolitanism is that it is impossible or at least highly difficult to identify a single human nature that can form the basis of a 'thick' universal credo. Human beings differ vastly according to their cultural and historical origins. Their preferences, values and basic understandings of life and life's purposes are so vastly different that identifying any single quality to provide the basis for a substantive or robust moral universalism is impossible.

Substantive accounts of universalism, global justice or the substantive content of universal human rights are not possible or are extremely limited in scope (see Miller 2007, for instance). Therefore, we must reject the idea of a single universal morality as a cultural product with no global legitimacy. It is impossible to realize the cosmopolitan fantasy of a disembodying universal reason because both the epistemological and the ontological prerequisites are missing.

What is required is a different understanding of justice that takes different social contexts into account and does without the possibility of making statements about what everybody ought to do. Having identified the communitarian core of the anti-cosmopolitan tradition, the next task is to discuss how this translates into ethical practice and what it means for the cosmopolitan project. That is, what type of ethical options are we left with if we accept the communitarian premises, and do they indeed effectively undermine the goal of cosmopolitanism?

Anti-cosmopolitan ethics

If we reject the possibility of a universal moral realm, then compatriots must take priority, sometimes to the exclusion of outsiders. The communitarian argument about the source of morality is one which supports giving moral *priority* not to the species but to the 'community', the nation and the state, because nation or communal boundaries are of *primary* moral significance. That is to say: we owe more, and sometimes a lot more, to our fellow nationals than we do to outsiders. This means that we may have very few, if any, obligations to the human species as a whole.

As an example, communitarian reasoning favours national distributive schemes and not global ones (see chapter 7). It supports a practice of moral favouritism towards insiders (compatriots) over outsiders, limiting obligations to non-compatriots, and when universal and national values come into conflict, the universal should mostly come second (see Erskine 2002: 28). Any obligations the rich may have to the poor, or that any one person may have to anyone else, are limited by the boundaries of the political community of the nation-state. This observation provides the basis for the anti-cosmopolitan position that we should not seek to develop a world state or substantive human community because that would be an injustice to the diversity of human ways of being in the world. There is little or no obligation to construct a global order based on principles which

might distribute wealth from the rich to the poor because there is no basis for a global redistribution of wealth, and such redistribution schemes can occur only within societies not across them (see Miller 2007, for a good treatment of this view; also chapter 7).

Likewise, the extent to which universal human rights can be enforced by the international community is extremely limited. If we remember the three relationships of obligations introduced at the start of the book, communitarian premises lead anti-cosmopolitans to favour minimal negative duties between political communities. "What 'they' do to each other is generally beyond 'us' to judge, both because we inhabit different ethical traditions and because what everybody owes to everybody else is limited almost exclusively to rules about coexistence and non-interference.

The communitarian underpinnings of anti-cosmopolitanism find expression in two forms: (1) 'realism' (Gvosdev 2005; Erskine 2002); and (2) pluralism (Bull 1967) which itself takes several forms. Both require us to think of ethics differently from how cosmopolitanism presents it.

Realism

Realism has dominated thinking about international politics for at least half a century. Most commentaries on realism, and indeed most discussion within contemporary realism, focus on the dynamics of interstate relations, with little or no systemic thought given to ethical issues. However, at the core of the realist concern with power is a powerful ethical moral critique concerning the relationship between politics and morality, and the possibility of the transformation of political community. In the international realm, according to realists, ethics are necessarily *consequential* and *statist.* Realist ethics are a statist (and communitarian) ethics because they are directed towards maintaining and protecting the state or national community. Realist ethics are consequentialist because ethical actions are judged according to how well they serve this end and not according to how they correlate with some abstract account of 'right' or the universal community. While few contemporary or classical realists refer to or classify themselves as communitarians, their arguments nonetheless rest on some shared assumptions. Not all communitarians are realists. Most realists are communitarians in at least a sociological if not a normative sense. Realism provides strong arguments in favour of compatriot priority and against cosmopolitanism (see Linklater

1990c), including a recognition of the normative pluralism characterizing the international realm and a scepticism towards progressivist accounts of international life.

In its earlier forms, especially in the work of Hans Morgenthau (1948/1960) and E. H. Carr (1939), the two dominant figures of early twentieth-century realism, it was as much a political philosophy as a 'method' of study. As such, ethics and normative issues were central to its definition. This is most obvious in its critique of Idealism. According to Carr and Morgenthau, Idealists made the mistake of putting the common good ahead of national interest by incorporating universal values into their foreign policy goals.

Realism identifies the arena of international relations as a competition for power between separate sovereign states. States in anarchy recognize no common good. Classical realists argued that this condition meant that human beings, being what they are, self-interested, will seek to achieve their own advantage, sometimes to the cost of others. States not only would but should preserve themselves, by increasing their own welfare and security without considering the needs of others. Realists identify this as the main obstacle to the realization of idealist ends such as global peace.

Under these conditions, the statesman *(sic)* must be prepared to follow a Machiavellian practice and do whatever it takes to win. Incorporating universal morality into foreign policy or relations with other states is a bad idea, because it is not applicable and is dangerous in the international realm which is one of necessity. As Morgenthau claimed 'a foreign policy guided by universal moral principles . . . is under contemporary conditions . . . a policy of national suicide' (1952: 10). Realists also claim that the lack of universal values adds to the dynamics of anarchy, but, even if there were such values, anarchy would prevent states from acting in accordance with them. For instance, if all the states were liberal or Christian or Muslim, anarchy would still overwhelm any altruistic motives they might have towards each other.

For this reason, realists put themselves at odds with what they see as the dominant moralist strains of US foreign policy.[1] Realism is critical of the tendency of US foreign policy to marry ideology with interest. States, especially great powers, too often equate their values with universal values, and their interests with their values. Realists believe that such statements are usually either a cynical mask or a self-interested delusion; 'The appeal to moral principles in the international sphere has no concrete universal meaning . . . it will be nothing but the reflection of the moral preconceptions of a particular nation' (Morgenthau 1952: 10). Morality in international affairs is

at best window dressing, for appearances only, or, worse, a form of hubris accompanying an over-inflated sense of a state's power. For these reasons, many people have characterized realist ethics as Machiavellian and amoral at best. However, it is possible to identify a moral/ethical core to realism that undermines or qualifies realist advocacy of realpolitik.

Ethics of responsibility

The realist tradition is united above all by pessimism about the nature of the international realm. Many observers have consequently argued that realism is dominated by moral scepticism per se. At its heart, it is sceptical about any moral dimension of politics. However, many realists often argue that underlying this toughness is a different and more pragmatic morality, the ethics of responsibility. An ethics of responsibility is an ethics that looks to the consequences of actions, and to their effects. This has usually been interpreted as meaning two things: (1) a simple means-ends pragmatism (incorrectly characterized as prudence), in which the statesperson's responsibility is to achieve the national interest with whatever means are available; and (2) a responsibility above all to one's own state. In other words, the first duty of a statesperson is to ensure survival and security of one's own state/people in the uncertain conditions of international anarchy. Realists proclaim such self-interested ethics as virtuous (see Kennan 1986). To do otherwise would be to ignore the leader's responsibility to the lives and interests of their own community.

The most famous example of realist ethics was given by Thucydides in his history of the Peloponnesian War. The Athenians, who have delivered an ultimatum to the small island-state of Melos, along the lines of surrender or be destroyed, claim that in international politics the 'powerful do what they can and the weak do what they must'. That is, morality does not constrain powerful states or help weak ones. Powerful states will do what they can get away with and weak states must submit to this. In the case of the Peloponnesian War, the Melians did not surrender and were invaded and massacred, and the women and children were sold into slavery. The question the realists pose here is how ethical or moral was it for the Melian leaders to resist the reality they faced by appealing to principles of justice? The morally responsible decision would have been to accept their defeat and avoid the subsequent slavery and genocide carried out against their people. Thus, self-help is a moral duty and not just a practical necessity.

Realists, therefore, advise states to focus on material and strategic outcomes rather than the more conventional understanding of the morality of their actions. For instance, a realist like Henry Kissinger might advise bombing a neutral state such as Laos if it will serve the military goals of defeating the enemy of North Vietnam. Alternatively, a realist may also encourage having friendly relations with and support for governments with poor human rights records, such as Chile under the military rule of Augusto Pinochet, or arguably Pakistan under Musharraf, in order to secure an advantage against a military foe, such as the USSR or al-Qaeda. Thus, in dealing with states that practice human rights abuses, a statesperson must decide whether the human rights of foreigners outweigh the interests of even just one of their own citizens. The logic of realist thought suggests that the interests of one domestic citizen outweighs the human rights of foreigners. This means that not only do we tolerate but we also befriend 'bad' states, so long as we continue to gain from the relationship.

Only when there is no significant cost to oneself should a state be concerned with the domestic affairs of another state. John Mearsheimer, an 'offensive' realist, argues that only when there is no strategic interest at risk would it be advisable to intervene in, say, Rwanda to stop a genocide (Mearsheimer 2001). However, there is little from within realist logic to generate a policy of intervention for moral rather than strategic reasons. Strictly speaking, aid should only be given to another state when it is a strategic asset.

The logic of realism also means that we cannot be too concerned about any suffering or harm we might inflict upon other states, whether by commission or omission, as long as our own state is benefitting. If our interests outweigh the harm we do others, and they almost always do, then we must privilege our interests (see also Kennan 1986). Indeed, this is the argument of Madeleine Albright, former US Secretary of State under the Clinton administration. When asked on the US *60 Minutes,* 'We have heard that half a million children have died (as a result of economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War) . . ., is the price worth it?', Albright responded, 'I think that is a very hard choice,. . . the price is worth it' *(60 Minutes* 5 December 1996). In this context, a realist might argue that the sanctions against Iraq were justified and 'worth it' as they prevented Saddam Hussein from developing and using weapons of mass destruction, kept his regime weak, and preserved international stability and the national security of Iraq's enemies. This is a good end for the US and Iraq's enemies and, according to the realist argument, the fact that it brought about huge suffering to the people of Iraq is

a regrettable but necessary consequence if it serves the greater good of the US national interest. (From a Kantian perspective, Albright is clearly acting immorally because the price she refers to concerns the lives of others as a means to an end that entails punishing the Iraqi president and achieving US national interests.)

However, realists often confound expectations when it comes to their view of war as a tool of policy. While realists argue that a state must always be ready to use war, so long as other states also remain prepared to do so, they will often counsel caution in relation to specific wars. Realists advise against ideologically driven wars of conquest. Realists such as Morgenthau spoke out against the Vietnam War, because they saw it as unnecessary and imprudent, as this did not and could not strengthen the position of the US in the international realm. So, while countering and containing Soviet influence was a concern for realists during the Cold War, they argued that the threat was not ideological but geopolitical. One version of realist thinking made its way into US foreign policy under the influence of Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State in the Nixon administration. Kissinger's policy of détente with China and the Soviet Union was premised on an understanding that China could be used to counter the USSR ('my enemy's enemy is my friend') and the recognition that the USSR could be viewed as a state with its own security interests, rather than an ideological foe bent on the destruction of the US. Likewise, in the months preceding the US invasion of Iraq in April 2003, the most consistent critics of US policy were realists such as John Mearsheimer who counselled that the strategy of containment via sanctions and the inspection regime had worked, and that Iraq presented no real threat to US vital national interests (Mearsheimer and Walt 2003). Most realists are sceptical about the Bush administration's aims of spreading democracy in the Middle East and the administration's claim that 'American values are universal values' (Lieven and Hulsman 2006). In this sense, the war was unnecessary from a realist point of view. The Iraq War was imprudent because the likely negative consequences outweighed the positives, and the war was not necessary for US survival. The point here is not that the realists are pacifist, but that they evaluate policy primarily in terms of the national interest and with an ethics of prudence.

For realists, the primary moral virtue for good statecraft is that of prudence, which involves the development of wisdom and knowledge about what is possible and what is not and, more importantly, about what are the best means for achieving one's ends. Morgenthau (1960: 10) states 'there can be no political morality without prudence, that is, without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly

moral action'. Prudence involves the weighing of the consequences of alternative political action. While the ultimate purpose, to pursue national interest, may be clear, what this means in particular contexts is a matter of judgement. In substantive terms, prudence may require a statesperson to make horrible decisions or decisions which go against common-sense morality, but the decision can be justified if made for the right reasons and with the right consequences of responsibility. The most obvious example here would be the universal moral law forbidding murder. Most people see murder as wrong and yet for a statesperson murder, in the form of warfare, is an acceptable and sometimes necessary tool for achieving a state's goal of security. In this sense, realists accept what is immoral in domestic life is acceptable and sometimes laudable in political life. While the critics say this can slip into opportunism, justifying almost any actions on ethical grounds, realists maintain that statesmen have a duty to their own people first and that ignoring these realities would be a dereliction of that duty.[2]

However, contrary to common belief, prudence does not mean a purely unprincipled or purely instrumental account of judgement and action in the sense that 'what will help me meet my aims most efficiently' is prudent. Rather, according to Murray (1996) and also Lieven and Hulsman (2006), prudence for Morgenthau, at least, refers to a process whereby the moral, or universal law, is mediated through the concrete practical here and now. A prudent realist might therefore ask whether there were also not other means of 'containing' Iraq and whether the suffering of the Iraqi people was not the best means of achieving the US ends. The weapons inspections regime may have been enough to prevent or at least seriously hamper Iraqi capacities. In this case, a realist may have seen the suffering of the Iraqi people as unnecessary. Realists may also have added that there may have been negative consequences for the US as a result of resentment against this policy. That is, Morgenthau would not necessarily condone the suffering of others if he understood that suffering to be out of balance or too great a violation of the moral law. For instance, Morgenthau argued that genocide was not a tool available to states within a realist morality. Thus, any pursuit of national interest can only be responsible if it also takes humanity into account. This understanding is clear in realism's continued opposition to 'thick' moral universalism or idealism. Such idealism is irresponsible not only because it damages the national interest, but because it is harmful to others who have legitimate interests of their own. Likewise, hubris and empire are not only dangerous to the nation-state but to the stability of the system as a whole.

Nonetheless, underlying realist ethics, especially for Morgenthau, is a profound sense of not only the political realm but also the human condition as essentially tragic. Tragedy is not used in the weak or commonplace sense that the TV news refers to the loss of a life as tragic, but rather in the classical sense, as depicted in the Greek plays or the classics, and in the work of Shakespeare (Lebow 2003). A tragedy here refers to a situation in which, no matter what choice you make, a bad consequence will occur. There is a sense here that politics, despite the best efforts of people, remains beyond human control. Realism identifies the international realm as tragic because it sees human beings as imperfect and imperfectible. We cannot entirely conquer our own nature and we can never have complete knowledge of the social world and the outcomes of our actions. Sometimes there is no option of a 'moral' or good choice. Only a choice between the lesser of two evils (if you are lucky) remains. For instance, the decision to drop an atomic bomb on Japan was, from one perspective at least, a tragic one - either risk losing lots of American lives taking the Japanese mainland, or kill more than 100,000 civilians in order to bring the war to a quick end. This is tragic in the sense that both alternatives were horrible but there was no escaping the decision to choose one of the alternatives. The notion of the security dilemma indicates this sense of tragedy very well. No matter which choice is made, security is not assured - you either have an arms race or a war. This means that we are constantly placed in situations where we have to assess which is the least bad action to take. Realist ethics, then, are an attempt to think about how to act well morally under these circumstances. They are an ethics of the least bad rather than a morality which seeks to articulate an absolute conception of the good.

Conclusions

Realism can be said to be communitarian and anti-cosmopolitan because it takes the nation-state as a given and argues for the ethical primacy of the national or state community. This is both a pragmatic and principled position. This position is pragmatic because realists aim to take the world as it is. It is principled because realist ethics are the best ethics available in terms of the reality of the world. Realists are also communitarians because the effect of adopting realist principles is to give primacy to the particular rather than universal, and because realists routinely express sympathy for the plurality of communities. While it is sometimes necessary to override other states'

interests, realists argue that it is generally a good thing that no state is able to do so all the time and impose its own account of universality. While never fully theorized in realist thought, this concern for diversity is almost always present. As Murray (1996: 101) notes, for Morgenthau, 'ultimately toleration and the acknowledgment of the right of the other to pursue an alternative conception of the good are asserted as fundamental moral necessities'.

Realists are vulnerable to the observation that not every choice faced by states is between survival and destruction. The realist objection that the state of nature determines the state's ethical choices only applies in instances in which state survival is at risk, or where following a particular ethical policy would place the state at real risk of dissolution, or leave a population open to real harm.

However, for many states, and in particular the wealthiest states, such conditions exist only intermittently and are often restricted to certain issues. Given that most of the time states do not face life-threatening consequences to themselves if they choose to act ethically, the realist argument against international ethics only holds under certain extreme circumstances (see Beitz 1979 and Moellendorf 2002). Though it is true that most states face choices that will have consequences that affect their interests, these consequences do not normally affect a state's ability to exist or survive. Many decisions, rather, are between advantage or disadvantage. It does not stand to reason that seeking advantage allows the statesperson to opt out of conventional morality in the same way that survival might. The context is similar for individuals and their ethical choices. Ethics is about considering individual costs and benefits, and determining at what point one's own interests should take priority over the interests of others and vice versa.

The central ethical question that emerges from realist analyses of the nature of international politics is whether it is ethically irresponsible for the realist statesperson to direct foreign policy towards transforming the logic of the international system, so that the logic of realpolitik is less or no longer pervasive. The arguments above suggest that realism directs foreign policy towards managing the status quo rather than transforming the international environment. However, it is worth noting that both Morgenthau and Carr suggested that human survival will require overcoming the logic of anarchy, and the replacement or supplementation of the idea of state sovereignty (see Morgenthau 1949; Carr 1939).

While realism is consistent with nationalism, realists themselves are often opposed to nationalism, both as an ethical stance and because of its pernicious effects, many preferring to use the term patriotism

I i. v. n -iful Hulsman 2006). Morgenthau (1949) and Carr (1939) **m particular both** made statements to suggest they did not view the **national state** as the ultimate form of political community. Indeed, **these** theorists saw nationalism as a negative development which **would** contribute to international disorder, precisely because it exacerbated 'centrifugal' tendencies already present in anarchy. National survival may rest on the possibility of pursuing piecemeal and gradual reform of the international order in a cosmopolitan direction. Morgenthau's comments in his chapters on international morality and the concluding pages of *Politics Among Nations* (1948/1960) suggest that ultimately human well-being can only be served by the creation of a cosmopolitan world-society or world-state. A realist ethics of responsibility could be understood as aiming for the latter because pursuit of the national interest should always occur within the framework of the good of humanity. Such an argument has recently been made by Lieven and Hulsman (2006). However, it is not clear that these types of claim are either inherent in realism or simply reflect the limitations of realism as a complete political philosophy (on the latter, see Carr 1939).

In conclusion, while realism is often associated with realpolitik and the narrow pursuit of national interest, it is also concerned with the creation of a stable international order. Such an order is a prerequisite for the security and stability of the communities which make it up. As Gvosdev argues, 'realism's emphasis on making the world's nations . . . stakeholders in a stable and predictable international order intersects with the communitarian interest in constructing a viable global architecture' (2005: 1593; see also Wesley 2005). However, the ethics associated with this are perhaps more fully developed in the pluralist idea of an international society, which is addressed in the next section.

Pluralism: ethics of coexistence

Because communitarians value community and diversity, they recognize that the many ways in which individuals are formed in different cultures is a good thing in itself. Therefore, they argue that the best ethics is one which preserves diversity over homogeneity. This view lends itself to the idea of pluralism. Pluralists contrast the universalism of cosmopolitan visions with the idea of a heterogeneous world, in which each community pursues their own conceptions of the good life. Such a world is the world envisioned and defended by pluralist