

**COSMOPOLITANISM VS. TERRORISM?  
DISCOURSES OF ETHICAL POSSIBILITY BEFORE,  
AND AFTER 7/7**

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Cosmopolitanism vs. Terrorism? Discourses of Ethical Possibility Before, and After 7/7.  
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**Abstract:**

The article provides a critical analysis of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and terrorism, via the question of response. Using 9/11 and 7/7 as key moments in the evolution of this relationship, the paper asks: How does cosmopolitanism respond to terrorism? What limits does this response contain? How might we go beyond such limits? It is argued that cosmopolitan responses to terrorism provide an important, but limited, (and sometimes *limiting*), alternative to mainstream discourses on terror. After 9/11 the possibility for cosmopolitan thinking 'beyond' the mainstream view was articulated by a range of authors, including Archibugi, Habermas, Held and Linklater. A brief survey suggests that defending international law, constructing international institutions and alleviating global poverty were seen as good responses, in the context of divisive mainstream politics. However, by engaging a case study of the Make Poverty History campaign, the paper argues that when cosmopolitan ideas were cemented in practice, the distinctiveness of a cosmopolitan response faded. This point was brought into sharp relief by a number of moralising responses to 7/7. Straightforward dichotomies between 'barbaric terrorists' and 'civilised cosmopolitans' served to construct cosmopolitanism as a coherent, and united, global community. Available tactics, for this 'community', were reduced to more-of-the-same – more aid, more global democracy - and assertions of a moral equivalence between Bush and 'Terror', such that 'you are either with cosmopolitans, or, you are with the War on Terror.' In light of these ethical closures, and drawing from the arguments of Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, the paper identifies some cursory ways in which cosmopolitans might think beyond such limits, to (continue to) articulate an imaginative and engaged approach to global ethics.

**Keywords:** Cosmopolitanism; Global Ethics; Make Poverty History; Terrorism

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

July 2005 in the UK started with a *strongly positive feel*. On 6 July London won the competition to host the 2012 Olympic Games. A few days earlier the Live 8 concerts had sent an unprecedentedly powerful message to world leaders about poverty in Africa. On 7 July, G8 leaders were meeting in Gleneagles.

(Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, p. 2. Emphasis added.)

The ‘strongly positive feel’, that accompanied the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign to lobby the G8, was clearly interrupted by the events of 7/7. But was this interruption just an unfortunate circumstance? Or can more be read into it? In a recent article, Andrew Linklater remarks that MPH provides a clear sign that *cosmopolitanism* ‘has become central to the political imagination’ in the 21st Century.<sup>2</sup> On July 7th, in the wake of a series of bomb attacks in London, Tony Blair left Gleneagles to be present in London. He held a brief press conference, stating that “[j]ust as it is reasonably clear that this is a terrorist attack, or a series of terrorist attacks, it is also reasonably clear that it is *designed and aimed to coincide with the opening of the G8*.”<sup>3</sup>

Using 7/7 and, indeed, 9/11 as pivotal moments, the paper interrogates an evolving relationship between cosmopolitanism and terrorism, via the question of response. How does cosmopolitanism respond to terrorism? What limits does this response contain? How might we go beyond such limits?<sup>4</sup> Far from being mere

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<sup>1</sup> For helpful comments and critiques on previous articulations of this argument the author thanks Dan Bulley, Angharad Closs Stephens, Jenny Edkins, Jack Holland, the IPE Working Group at Warwick University, Robert Fine, Matt McDonald, Nick Vaughan-Williams, Lena Rethel and Will Smith. Two anonymous reviewers and the Editors provided invaluable guidance for the development of the argument. Any faults belong to the author.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Linklater, ‘Distant suffering and Cosmopolitan Obligations’, *International Politics*, 44, no. 1 (2007): 19.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Blair, ‘PMs Statement on the London explosions’, Gleneagles, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2005, <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page7853.asp> Emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Within the confines of this paper, it is cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan responses to ‘terrorism’ that are at issue. This does not ignore the equally problematic question of what is ‘terrorism’. Indeed, it may even speak to that question via analysis of the constitutive frame provided by the cosmopolitan response. However, the main target remains the ethical conversation as it developed before and after 7/7.

circumstance, it is argued, the events of 7/7 provide a fulcrum for a discussion of the possibility and *limits* of global ethics, in contested political circumstances.

The discussion and argument proceed in 4 sections. Section 1 provides a working definition of cosmopolitanism. Against the traditional view of cosmopolitanism as an available paradigm in the toolkit of IR theory, which is more or less ‘realistic’, cosmopolitanism is here understood as an embedded way of thinking and acting in the world.<sup>5</sup> Section 2 picks up this idea of cosmopolitanism as a socially embedded ‘practice’ to analyse the responses of specific cosmopolitan authors to the events of 9/11. A brief survey suggests that, for cosmopolitans, international law, democratic international institutions and the alleviation of global poverty form the best response, or strategy, in the context of divisive mainstream discourses.<sup>6</sup> Section 3 then moves to an analysis of the Make Poverty History campaign, as a practical embodiment of cosmopolitan ideas, which can illustrate the possibilities and *limits* of cosmopolitan thinking in political context.

When the London bombings happened, the primary response made by Blair and echoed by campaigners, was that the terrorist attacks were an attack on the G8 reformers, *indeed an attack on cosmopolitanism*. There was an immediate and general lament that the bombers should do it ‘today of all days’, when MPH and the G8 were actually trying to address the issue of global poverty. But, it is argued, such moralising had the ironic effect of setting up a dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and terrorism. Straightforward oppositions between ‘barbaric terrorists’, and ‘civilised cosmopolitans’ served to construct cosmopolitanism as a *coherent and united*, global community. Available tactics were reduced to ‘more of the same’ – more aid, more global democracy - and assertions of ‘moral equivalence’ between Bush and ‘Terror’, such that ‘you are either with cosmopolitans or you are with the War on Terror.’ Finally, Section 4 suggests some ways of thinking beyond such a dichotomy, in order to retain the potential for critical openness in cosmopolitan ethics.

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<sup>5</sup> See also Will Smith, ‘Anticipating a Cosmopolitan Future: The Case of Humanitarian Military Intervention’, *International Politics* 44, no. 1(2007) : 72-89.

<sup>6</sup> In particular see Jurgen Habermas, ‘Fundamentalism and Terror – A dialogue with Jurgen Habermas’, in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 25-43.; see also Daniele Archibugi, ‘Terrorism and Cosmopolitanism’, SSRC Working Paper (2001), [http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/archibugi\\_text\\_only.htm](http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/archibugi_text_only.htm).

## 1. Cosmopolitanism as an embedded way of thinking and acting in the world

Before proceeding with the discussion of cosmopolitan responses to terrorism, it is perhaps necessary to clearly define the subject at issue. Most students of IR come into contact with cosmopolitanism as a paradigmatic approach to IR, perhaps a chapter in an introductory text on world politics, a binary opponent of ‘communitarianism’, or as an emergent post-Cold War agenda of global democracy.<sup>7</sup> While each of these encounters has merit, the effect is to ‘set up’ cosmopolitanism, as a collection of coherent ideas and values which may, or may not have relevance *for* IR, and the common questions of IR, most pertinently: sovereignty, and the relationship between order and justice. In this section, a different view is elaborated. Instead of taking IR as the prime referent, it is argued that cosmopolitanism can be explored on its own terms, as a resurgent body of thought that is articulated and contested by particular thinkers, and which is influential upon political actors and institutions. This approach clears a path to the study of cosmopolitan ethics as a vital and creative resource, for thinking about global ethics in general, as well as in the more particular context of terrorism, in subsequent sections.

### Cosmopolitanism

Broadly speaking cosmopolitanism “refers to the consciousness of being a citizen of the world, whatever other affiliations we may have”.<sup>8</sup> Cosmopolitanism claims a long theoretical lineage stretching back through Christian Theology, Kantian critical theory and on to present day articulations of global democracy.<sup>9</sup> As such, it has developed in a number of interesting, if not always congruent directions.

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, and Beyond* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999); C. Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); M. Cochran, *Normative Theory and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

<sup>8</sup> R. Fine, ‘Cosmopolitanism: A Social Science Research Agenda’, in *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory*, ed. G. Delanty (London: Sage, 2005), 243.

<sup>9</sup> James Brassett and Dan Bulley, ‘Ethics in World Politics: Cosmopolitanism and Beyond?’, *International Politics* 44, no. 1 (2007): 1-18; P. Cheah, and B. Robbins, (eds.) *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling*

A common distinction made, is between moral cosmopolitanism, which is concerned with the expansion of the scope of ethical concern, and political cosmopolitanism, which is concerned with envisaging institutions that might better organise world society.<sup>10</sup> But the two sides often cross over to make cosmopolitanism a fertile and adaptable ethical tradition. For instance, there are few moral cosmopolitans who have not at some stage made a political intervention and, vice versa, it is difficult to conceive of a political cosmopolitan who did not have occasion to reflect on the moral underpinnings of their agenda.

Historically, cosmopolitan ideas have been associated with grand projects like the construction of a world federation of republican states,<sup>11</sup> and even the possibility of creating a world state. In more contemporary articulations cosmopolitans have celebrated the historical evolution of norms against harm,<sup>12</sup> human rights,<sup>13</sup> as well as the institutions and practices of liberal democracy.<sup>14</sup> In particular, some cosmopolitan thinkers have developed a sophisticated ethical praxis which addresses how norms of citizenship, liberty and autonomy can be fostered in a changing global context.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, a number of distinct models, including *cosmopolitan democracy*, *post-*

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*beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); S. Vertovec and R. Cohen, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Charles R. Beitz, 'International Liberalism and Distributive Justice: A Survey of Recent Thought', *World Politics* 51 no. 2(1999): 287.

<sup>11</sup> I. Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (trans. M. Campbell Smith), ed. A. Robert Caponigri (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1948).

<sup>12</sup> A. Linklater, 'The Problem of Harm in World Politics: Implications for the Sociology of States-Systems', *International Affairs* 78, no. 2 (2002): 319-38; See also J. Bohman, 'Republican Cosmopolitanism', *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3(2004): 336-352.

<sup>13</sup> T. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); R. Rorty, 'Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality' in *Truth and Progress: Philosophical Papers Volume 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> D. Archibugi and D. Held eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy: an Agenda for a New World Order*. (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); D. Archibugi, D. Held and M. Kohler, *Re-imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); D. Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> J. Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, trans. Max Pensky, (Cambridge Mass: Polity Press, 2001); A. Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: ethical foundations of the post-Westphalian era* (Oxford: Polity, 1998).

*Westphalian order, republican cosmopolitanism*, as well as a purported ‘*cosmopolitanization*’ of the world, have been articulated.<sup>16</sup>

With such a broad range of ideas and potential applications, it is perhaps hard to define what cosmopolitanism actually is. Moreover, cosmopolitans actually *diverge* on certain issues, for instance, over whether the use of force can be justified to achieve their ends.<sup>17</sup> Some have advocated the legal entrenchment of democracy,<sup>18</sup> while others have sought to locate democracy in a more creative realm of ongoing dialogue and deliberation.<sup>19</sup> On top of this, there is, of course, an ongoing debate about how, if at all, ‘justice’ can be extended beyond state borders.<sup>20</sup>

In the face of such plurality, this article works with an understanding of cosmopolitanism as *an embedded way of thinking and acting in the world*. Rather than tying cosmopolitanism to any one agenda, it is perhaps better viewed as broad ‘research agenda’ whose proponents are motivated by certain common ideas.<sup>21</sup> These ideas might be that of the world citizen, human rights, the avoidance of harm, or global democracy each possibly leading in starkly different directions. But it is argued that they share a basic concern that the scope of ethical concern should not be limited by parochial boundaries. This view draws on the British social theorist Robert Fine, who seeks to de-

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<sup>16</sup> D. Archibugi, and D. Held, eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy: an Agenda for a New World Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); A. Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: ethical foundations of the post-Westphalian era* (Oxford: Polity, 1998); J. Bohman, ‘Republican Cosmopolitanism’, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2005): 336-352.; U. Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Compare, for instance, D. Archibugi, D. (2004) ‘Cosmopolitan Guidelines for Humanitarian Intervention’, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 29, no. 1 (2004): 1-22. with Will Smith, ‘Anticipating a Cosmopolitan Future: The Case of Humanitarian Military Intervention’, *International Politics* 44, no. 1 (2007): 72-89. Also consider the way that left internationalist hawks like Bush, Elshain, and Blair have drawn on cosmopolitan tropes like ‘freedom’, ‘human rights’, and ‘justice’ to justify particular actions.

<sup>18</sup> D. Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> J. Bohman, ‘International regimes and democratic governance: political equality and influence in global institutions’, *International Affairs* 75, no.3 (1999): 499-513. See also M. Cochran, ‘A democratic Critique of Cosmopolitan Democracy: Pragmatism from the Bottom-Up’, *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no.4 (2002): 517-548.

<sup>20</sup> Simon Caney, *Justice Beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).; T. Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).; John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> R. Fine, ‘Cosmopolitanism: A Social Science Research Agenda’, in *Handbook of Contemporary European Social Theory*, ed. G. Delanty (London: Sage, 2005).

centre cosmopolitanism from its doctrinal elements and pursue the important role of cosmopolitan thinking in the academy and beyond.<sup>22</sup>

On this view, cosmopolitanism is not something that can be dismissed, as either unlikely, or the product of particular ‘interests’ - a common strategy for materialist critics of cosmopolitanism in IR.<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is as an embedded way of thinking that influences the academy, policy, and policy makers, in different degrees and with *varying* amounts of ethical appeal. Rendered thus, the critical question becomes one of engaging with the possibilities of cosmopolitan thought, while retaining a healthy sensitivity to its limits. As Fine critically surmises, even though there are faults and dilemmas in cosmopolitanism, this should not detract from an appreciation of the importance and impact of *cosmopolitans* and their ideas:

In one case they begin by asking specific questions on important matters, for example, the prevention and punishment of genocide, and end with the utopian project of overcoming the structures of wealth and power associated with the modern system of nation states. In another, their project appears liberal or even conservative, designed to make fine adjustments to international institutions in the hope that all will then be well with the world. Sometimes they look utopian and liberal at the same time: constructing a new world order and expressing the phenomenology of a privileged class whose experience of global mobility is a far cry from that of stateless refugees. Yet for all the defects of the new cosmopolitanism *as a doctrine*, I would conclude by saying that today cosmopolitan thinking plays an indispensable part in the social sciences and that this makes it all the more urgent, as it were, to take the ‘ism’ out of the cosmopolitan.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, a key task for thinking through the ethical possibilities and limits of cosmopolitanism, and a cosmopolitan response to terrorism, will be to address the political interventions of specific cosmopolitan authors, and the political influence of cosmopolitan ideas. This detracts from the paradigmatic aspects of cosmopolitanism and

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<sup>22</sup> Quintessentially, see Robert Fine, ‘Taking the ‘Ism’ out of Cosmopolitanism: An Essay in Reconstruction’, *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 4 (2003): 451–470.

<sup>23</sup> For an extremely sophisticated version of this argument, see B. Jahn, ‘Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs’, *International Organization* 59, (2005): 177-207.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Fine, ‘Taking the ‘Ism’ out of Cosmopolitanism: An Essay in Reconstruction’, *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no.4 (2003): 466.



focuses attention upon the individual reflections of particular thinkers.<sup>25</sup> Attention is focused towards the influence of cosmopolitan ideas and discourses in contemporary political practices, e.g. via human rights law, global civil society, the EU, etc.

In this way, we might move closer to a ‘live’ understanding of cosmopolitan ethics, as an ongoing and fallible political practice, rather than as a more or less accurate, more or less likely, paradigm of IR. Indeed, as Rob Walker suggests,

If cosmopolitanism is a name to be given to an openness to connections, to a sense that we all participate in various patterns of both commonality and diversity that are not and cannot be fixed by the lines inscribed by modern subjectivities, and that also insists on recognizing the radically uneven developments and sites in which people struggle to act in the world, then there is much to be said for it. [...] **I prefer to underline its status as a question, and a practice, rather than a given...**<sup>26</sup>

The next section will therefore address the specific interventions of Archibugi, Habermas, Held and Linklater, on providing a distinctive cosmopolitan response to 9/11, before considering how interventions by other authors contribute to our understanding of the *limits* of cosmopolitan thinking in this context. Understood as a ‘question and a practice’ much can arguably be learned about the capacity for cosmopolitanism to provide a critical and distinctive response to terrorism from this discussion.

## **2. Cosmopolitanism in a Time of Terror: ethical responses to 9/11**

The violent acts of September 11 and the war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban are unique in raising profound questions about how modern societies should deal with many diverse forms of suffering. Modern societies face the challenge of ensuring that efforts to protect innocent civilians from terrorist attacks do not damage the moral ideal of freeing all human beings from unnecessary suffering.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> As Will Smith (Ibid.: 86) argues, “It is in and through the judgements of politically engaged sympathisers like Habermas that cosmopolitanism appears not just as a distant and somewhat abstract political ideal, but as an embedded way of thinking about the world and in the world.”

<sup>26</sup> R. B. J. Walker, ‘Polis, cosmopolis, politics, Alternatives’, *Global, Local, Political* 28, no.2 (2003): 284-285. Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Linklater, ‘Unnecessary Suffering’, in *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*, eds. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 303.

In sharp distinction to the essentialising rhetoric that typified the mainstream responses to 9/11 - e.g. 'with us or against us'; capture Bin Laden 'dead or alive' 'the axis of evil', etc. - the cosmopolitan response to 9/11 has been marked by an emphasis on understanding, learning, and a set of efforts aimed at avoiding the future production of terrorism.

As this section details, for authors like Archibugi and Habermas, the emphasis should lie with international institutions, international laws to extend citizenship rights, participatory democracy and the redistribution of wealth on a global scale. However, this view is contrasted with contemporaneous interventions by Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida, on the possibility of a cosmopolitan response. Their emphasis on the limits of such agendas raises questions about our ability to know what 'terrorism' 'is'; how the exclusionary logics of sovereignty that pervade global governance, can be resisted; and how the logics of our response may contain the viral seeds of 'autoimmunity'.<sup>28</sup>

### Cosmopolitan Responses to 9/11

In moments of crisis, it is not sufficient to oppose. It is also necessary to make concrete proposals to weaken terrorism. Which is what the cosmopolitan perspective puts forward.<sup>29</sup>

In a bullish paper, written soon after 9/11, Daniele Archibugi set out what he termed the "simple ethical principle" that underpins a cosmopolitan response to terrorism: "it is necessary to give equal value to human life, irrespective of whether an individual belongs to 'our' or to 'another' political and social community."<sup>30</sup> In times of war when such principles are forgotten, he argued that the deployment of certain basic agendas could help to "equalize the value of our lives with the value of the lives of others."<sup>31</sup> These are to moderate 'methods of conflict', to support 'democratic participation', to impose 'financial controls' on terrorist capital, to move from a 'law of arms to the arms of law', to support 'peace in Palestine', and to bolster the 'United Nations'.

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<sup>28</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: a Dialogue with Jacques Derrida', in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003): 85-136.

<sup>29</sup> Daniele Archibugi, 'Terrorism and Cosmopolitanism', SSRC Working Paper (2001): 5  
[http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/archibugi\\_text\\_only.htm](http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/archibugi_text_only.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Archibugi, 'Terrorism and Cosmopolitanism', 5.

<sup>31</sup> Archibugi, 'Terrorism and Cosmopolitanism', 5.

The hope is, for Archibugi, that by recognizing the *value* of the individual lives of all, including terrorists, or at least the areas and communities where terrorists might be constructed, then the production of future ‘enemies/threats’ will be lessened. Democratic participation, it is supposed, will involve disaffected peoples in debates about world politics in a way that a global war on terror could not possibly hope to achieve. Closing down terrorist financing will stem the activities of terrorist networks and the extension of cosmopolitan law via institutions like the International Criminal Court would take the tinge of American unilateralism out of the west’s response to 9/11.

This faith in the power of cosmopolitan law chimes with the response of Jurgen Habermas to the post-9/11 insecurity discourse. Speaking just a few months after 9/11, he goes beyond the axiomatic assertion that law is the answer to contemplate the political strategies that may be required. He identifies the “clever, albeit fragile, coalition against terrorism brought together by the US government” that “might, in the most favorable case, be able to advance the transition from classical international law to a cosmopolitan order.”<sup>32</sup> However, he continues by lamenting the fact that the European powers have failed to support any such possibilities, preferring to distance themselves from, rather than engage with, the US. Finally, as with many contemporary cosmopolitan arguments, the specter of globalisation is never far away from analysis. Habermas argues that

“[w]ithout the political taming of an unbounded capitalism, the devastating stratification of the world will remain intractable. The disparities in the dynamic of world economic development would have to at least be balanced out regarding their most destructive consequences – the deprivation and misery of complete regions and continents comes to mind. This does not merely concern the discrimination toward, the humiliation or, or the offense to other cultures. The so-called “clash of civilizations” is often the veil masking the vital material interests of the West...”<sup>33</sup>

Habermas was far from alone in this understanding of the ills of globalisation. His concern for the “the discrimination toward, the humiliation of, or the offense to other

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<sup>32</sup> Habermas, ‘Fundamentalism and Terror – A dialogue with Jurgen Habermas’, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Habermas, ‘Fundamentalism and Terror – A dialogue with Jurgen Habermas’, 36.

cultures” was ever present in the Leftist discourses, where a mix of poverty and Palestine was often invoked to explain the emergence of terrorism. An appropriate cosmopolitan response is therefore, arguably, to re-distribute wealth on a global scale. Indeed, Archibugi argues that

“...Europe has to rediscover the pride of guiding the world through a period as difficult as the present one; not only by hunting down the terrorists but also by promoting economic development plans in the Third World with programs analogous to the Marshall Plan, in half a century’s time the whole world – our American brothers first and foremost – would surely be grateful to us.”<sup>34</sup>

This possibility was echoed by David Held, who argued that,

“Cosmopolitan multilateralization cannot be built on the American model of geopolitics and international engagement, especially as conceived by the Republican right after 9/11, which constitutes a new form of global unilateralism. The European social experiment – pursued on the model of social democratic values and the noble experiment in collaborative governance: the EU – points a way forward.”<sup>35</sup>

### The Limits of Response

This brief summary of cosmopolitan responses to the terrorist attacks in New York serves to highlight two important tenets of the response.

1. Cosmopolitans are concerned to mark out an alternative response to that of the mainstream, US, media response.
2. Cosmopolitans are deeply concerned with how to prevent the production of future terrorist atrocities. This can be done via a combination of cosmopolitan law, participatory democracy and global justice (usually read as the re-distribution of wealth to poor countries).

In essence, there is a credible attempt to first understand the causes of terrorism, the ‘discrimination’, ‘humiliation’ and ‘unnecessary suffering’ that inhibits opportunities for freedom and causes resentment in the world, and second, to suggest mechanisms to

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<sup>34</sup> Archibugi, ‘Terrorism and Cosmopolitanism’, 8.

<sup>35</sup> David Held, ‘Globalization After 9/11’, 8. [www.polity.co.uk/GLOBAL/pdf/After%209.pdf](http://www.polity.co.uk/GLOBAL/pdf/After%209.pdf)

counteract them. For these reasons, there is a confident suggestion that cosmopolitanism is itself an important resource to draw from. As David Held quipped, “Globalization without cosmopolitanism could fail.”<sup>36</sup>

However, for writers in a long tradition of thought that may be termed post-structural, it is the ethics *of* ethics that must be first placed in question. Post-structural writers are skeptical of the way in which ethical responses are often guided by the use of abstract principles that may become cemented in a political program.<sup>37</sup> On this view, cosmopolitan responses to 9/11, while laudable, may risk closing the political moment where we might question the subjectivities and rationalities that make suffering possible. As Rob Walker argues, for these reasons “cosmopolitanism must be read as a constitutive aspect of the problems that many of those attracted to cosmopolitanism seek to address.”<sup>38</sup> In line with the definition of cosmopolitanism outlined in Section 1, therefore, such arguments are of crucial significance for thinking through the possibilities and limits of a cosmopolitan response to terrorism.

In *Precarious Life* Judith Butler suggests that the potential for an ethical response to 9/11, to terrorism, and to suffering is curtailed by the monopolisation of the legitimate meaning of 9/11 in public discourse.<sup>39</sup> The very possibility of questioning the mainstream narrative of the attacks is cut off by logics like ‘with us or against us’. Even the profusion of critical and conspiracy theory type responses that typified the post 9/11 period confirmed the centrality and self-obsession of the US with its place at the centre of the world. Deeper understandings, mourning for the loss of life, mourning for the other and the possibility of even recognising the suffering of others are often curtailed. Butler therefore places a ‘politics of mourning’ at the forefront of her analysis.

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<sup>36</sup> David Held, ‘Globalization After 9/11’, 9.

<sup>37</sup> For instance, at his most categorical, Nietzsche suggests that ‘...we stand in need of a critique of moral values, the value of these values itself should first of all be called into question. This requires a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances of their growth, development and displacement (morality as consequence, symptom mask [...] illness, misunderstanding: *but also morality as cause, cure, stimulant, inhibition, poison*’<sup>37</sup> F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 8. Emphasis added.

<sup>38</sup> Walker ‘Polis, Cosmopolis, Politics’, 268.

<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: New York: Verso, 2004).

While popular debates have made hay about the theoretical oppositions between post-structural and approaches to ethics like cosmopolitanism, at the level of substance there is much to be gained from engagement.<sup>40</sup> Such arguments can be seen as congruent with, *and even a prerequisite to*, thinking the possibilities for global ethics. For instance, no disavowal of the cosmopolitan response is made. Rather, elements and logics that might inhibit a proper working through of cosmopolitan ambitions are brought into question and, on one interpretation, enlarging “our understanding of what the cosmopolitan project still must grapple with.”<sup>41</sup>

While Butler is perhaps less explicit about the way her arguments speak to broader cosmopolitan debates on global ethics, Jacques Derrida was direct in his engagement. In cosmopolitan fashion, he states that “in the first place” and “as imperfect as they may be...international institutions should be respected in their deliberations...” if only as a temper on the “serious failings of “Western” states” in their commitment to international agreements.<sup>42</sup> However, he argues that, when seeking to embed cosmopolitan norms via institutions and law: “Reflection (of what I would call a “deconstructive” type) should...without diminishing or destroying these axioms and principles, question and refound them, endlessly refine and universalize them.”<sup>43</sup> He continued:

I’m not unaware of the apparently utopic character of the horizon I’m sketching out here, that of an international institution of law and an international court of justice with their own autonomous force. Though I do not hold law to be the last word on ethics, politics or anything else, though this unity of force and law [...] is not only *utopic* but *aporetic* (since it implies that beyond the sovereignty of the nation-state, indeed beyond democratic sovereignty – whose ontotheological foundations must be deconstructed – we would nonetheless be reconstituting a new figure, though not necessarily state-related, of universal sovereignty, of absolute

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<sup>40</sup> Much of this apparent opposition was read into the ‘debates’ between Habermas and Foucault, and between their followers. However, with the passage of time and migration across disciplines, there is an emergent sense that, while probably not reconcilable, the ideas of post-structural authors and cosmopolitans, or critical theorists, can at least get past the ‘narcissism of small differences’ to develop a healthy conversation. For a discussion see James Brassett and Dan Bulley ‘Ethics in World Politics: Cosmopolitanism and Beyond?’, *International Politics* 44, no. 1 (2007): 1-18.

<sup>41</sup> Angela McRobbie, ‘Vulnerability, violence and (cosmopolitan) ethics: Butler’s *Precarious Life*’, *The British Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (2006): 70.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: a Dialogue with Jacques Derrida’, 114.

<sup>43</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: a Dialogue with Jacques Derrida’, 114.

law with an effective autonomous force at its disposal), I continue to believe that it is faith in the possibility of this impossible and, in truth undecidable thing from the point of view of knowledge, science and conscience that must govern our decisions.<sup>44</sup>

While post-structural authors critique the straightforward response of cosmopolitans to terrorism then, they do leave open the possibility for engagement. For Butler, consideration of ‘our’ ‘own’ vulnerability might be a ‘point of identification’, a route to recognising the vulnerability to suffering of others. For Derrida, “faith in the possibility of this impossible” program of cosmopolitan law is the difficult, aporetic, impulse that must guide responses. However, having mapped a range of ethical responses to 9/11, it becomes clear that the debate works at a level of abstraction which might question its practical worth. The next section will therefore shift focus to the Make Poverty History campaign, as an embedded cosmopolitan practice that entered into a strong circumstantial and discursive relation with 7/7.

### **3. Terror in a Time of Cosmopolitanism: 7/7 as the ‘other’ of Gleneagles**

If many of the ethical discourses before 7/7 can be read as cosmopolitan responses to terrorism, the confluence of events surrounding the G8 and the Make Poverty History campaign mark out the events in London as the incidence of ‘Terror in a Time of Cosmopolitanism.’

This section first suggests that the confluence of the Make Poverty History campaign with British support for the UN’s Millennium Development goals is an embedded example of the kind of cosmopolitan reforms to which Section 1 alluded. It then addresses some of the discursive maneuvers which underpinned cosmopolitan responses to 7/7. Briefly stated, campaigners from within global civil society, leftist sympathisers in the media and reformist politicians all chimed with the lament that the 7/7 bombers would disrupt the very processes aimed at making a better world for ‘them’.

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<sup>44</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: a Dialogue with Jacques Derrida’, 115.

What is at stake, in this assessment, is the capacity of cosmopolitan ethical discourses to translate into a meaningful alternative to those of the mainstream. In a powerful critique of the national response, Angharad Closs Stephens argues that “[p]eople were asked to choose: either they were with the British people, and the British government representing “our way of life”, or they were with the people who acted through terrorism.”<sup>45</sup> The argument below suggests that this dichotomy was (re-)enacted at the global level via the depiction of cosmopolitanism as a united and defiant community. Read through this lens, the cosmopolitan response to 7/7 collapses into ‘*either* you believe that a combination of cosmopolitan law, participatory democracy and global justice is the only way to prevent the production of terrorism, *or*, you accept and perpetuate the terms of the global war on terror’. You are either with ‘our’ cosmopolitan values or against them. In this sense the critical edge of cosmopolitanism – as a credible alternative to the mainstream discourse of response – is severely blunted.

### Make Poverty History

If Britain can't turn its values into action against extreme, stupid poverty...if this rich country with the reins in its hands, can't lead other countries along this path to equality, then the critics tomorrow will be right... [...]. Listen, this is a real moment coming up, this could be real history, this could be something that your children, your children's children, that our whole generation, will be remembered for at the beginning of the century....<sup>46</sup>

After 9/11, it was perhaps possible to expect a move away from cosmopolitan politics. While the post-Cold War period saw numerous instances of cosmopolitan political practice – e.g. humanitarian interventions, a raft of EU political and economic treaties, the development of discussions about an international criminal court, etc. – it could be fairly assumed that the dominance of the War on Terror narrative, might relegate cosmopolitanism to the status of philosophical oddity. Indeed, many of the ethical

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<sup>45</sup> Angharad Closs Stephens, ““7 Million Londoners, 1 London” National and Urban Ideas of National Community in the Aftermath of the 7<sup>th</sup> July Bombings in London”, Paper for the 2007 ISA Conference, Chicago, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Bono, speaking at the Labour Party Conference, 2004, Cit. Nicky Gumbel, *Make Poverty History: trade justice, drop the debt, more and better aid*, (London: Alpha International, 2005): 17.



responses to terrorism considered in Section 2 mark themselves out as *alternatives* to ‘mainstream politics’. However, this would ignore the prevalence of the cosmopolitan outlook in bodies like the UN and agents within the still burgeoning global civil society, which intersect over questions of global development. Indeed, precisely in line with Archibugi’s call for a global ‘Marshall Plan’, cosmopolitan justice became hugely popular (and indeed populist) in the post-9/11 period.<sup>47</sup> In short, discourses of ethical possibility before 7/7 were very positive.

Much of the popularity of cosmopolitan idea(s), before 7/7 at least, rested in campaigns related to the achievement of the UNs Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000, commits the states to 1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger 2) Achieve universal primary education 3) Promote gender equality and empower women 4) Reduce child mortality 5) Improve maternal health 6) Combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases 7) Ensure environmental sustainability and 8) Develop a global partnership for development.<sup>48</sup>

Numerous strategies have been outlined for how to achieve such laudable ambitions by various dates, but Make Poverty History was a central initiative. MPH describes itself as the “biggest ever anti-poverty movement” that comprises hundreds of NGOs, faith groups, charities and other groups sympathetic to the achievement of the MDGs.<sup>49</sup> Its key proposals for achieving the MDGs included 1) trade justice (and a direct call on the UK Government to change EU trade policies and Europe’s push to have some of the poorest nations on the planet sign up to grossly unfair trade deals), 2) debt cancellation, and 3) more and better aid.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> This evident in the burgeoning literature on global justice, e.g. Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: cosmopolitan responsibilities and reforms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), the continued success of the World Social Forum ‘movement’ and the galvanising role of the UN Millennium Development goals.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/#>

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/>

<sup>50</sup> See <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/>; see also Nicky Gumbel, *Make Poverty History* (London: Alpha International, 2005).

The importance of MPH for this discussion is twofold. Firstly, its key aims clearly ally with the cosmopolitan ambition to build cosmopolitan law, participatory democracy and global justice. The campaign's three pronged agenda for trade justice, debt cancellation, and improved aid, described by Lenny Henry as a "magic cocktail" for reform, is ostensibly a temper to global neo-liberalism that was, crucially, acceptable, or at least speak-able, in multilateral circles.<sup>51</sup> Easy critiques that the campaign was mere rhetoric, or too similar to Blair and Brown were common to the more radical left and within global civil society. But, again, such arguments ignore the way in which such campaign successes develop cosmopolitanism as an embedded way of thinking and acting in the world.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, in a related point, the Make Poverty History campaign was *very effective* at achieving global publicity. Couched in broadly understandable terms, the campaign was welcomed by G8 leaders and by the UK leadership in particular. It reached a massive global audience with an avowedly updated and more sophisticated message on development than the charity discourses of Live Aid: "We're not asking for your money, we're asking for your voice"<sup>53</sup>

Read in campaign strategic terms then, MPH had a clear cosmopolitan platform, a direct route into the Multilateral decision making room of the G8 and a massive popular constituency sympathetic to, and increasingly aware of, the global governance of development. However, the London Bombings changed the environment. As Ann Pettifor suggests:

The Leeds bombers provided world leaders with momentary relief from their responsibilities shocked economic justice campaigners – in particular the many millions that thanks to Make Poverty History had joined for the first time – and pushed major issues off the media's agenda.<sup>54</sup>

### 7/7: a Cosmopolitan Response?

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<sup>51</sup> Lenny Henry campaign film, downloadable at <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/>

<sup>52</sup> William Smith, 'Anticipating a Cosmopolitan Future: The Case of Humanitarian Intervention', *International Politics* 44, no.1 (2007): 72-89.

<sup>53</sup> The US One campaign film, downloadable at <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/>

<sup>54</sup> Ann Pettifor, 'Gleneagles, 7/7 and Africa', via Open Democracy.net, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-terrorism/g8\\_3708.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-terrorism/g8_3708.jsp)

The shock that accompanies terrorist attacks was compounded in the British media by the swift reversal of mood. The ‘strongly positive feel’ in Britain<sup>55</sup> gave way to a general recognition that the long expected terrorist attack on the UK had arrived. Likewise, the discourses of ethical possibility which have been building positively prior to 7/7 quickly faded from being a central point of focus for the media to a laconic ‘might have been’. Tony Blair was quick to speak:

It is particularly barbaric that this has happened on a day when people are meeting to try to help the problems of poverty in Africa, and the long term problems of climate change and the environment. Just as it is reasonably clear that this is a terrorist attack, or a series of terrorist attacks, it is also reasonably clear that it is designed and aimed to coincide with the opening of the G8.

Blair’s maneuver quickly ‘others’ the bombers by constructing the terrorists as ‘barbaric’. It laments the fact that such barbarism should attack civilization on the day when it is trying “to help the problems of poverty in Africa”. This enforces a dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and terrorism by suggesting that the attacks were “clearly aimed to coincide with the opening of the G8”. While this narrative suggesting that the bombings were an attack on the G8 was quickly superseded in the media by the narrative that the bombings were an attack on British values, it continued to play amongst activists within global civil society. In a trenchant critique, Ann Pettifor echoed and extended the dichotomy:

With one murderous act, the Leeds bombers, aided and abetted by their leaders in al-Qaida, helped strengthen the forces that have attacked peaceful and innocent Muslim communities; undermined civil liberties in the United Kingdom and the United States; and pushed and maintained imperial forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine.<sup>56</sup>

The critical tone suggests that the bombers have strengthened the War on Terror logic of the UK-US axis. The violence is therefore self defeating as it will perpetuate the cycle of violence towards ‘innocent Muslim communities’ and, moreover, that

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<sup>55</sup> Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, Ordered by the House of commons to be printed 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006, (London: The Stationary Office, 2006): 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ann Pettifor, ‘Gleneagles, 7/7 and Africa’, via Open Democracy.net, [http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-terrorism/g8\\_3708.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-terrorism/g8_3708.jsp)

civilisation will probably stop being so civilised via a curtailment of civil liberties. Pettifor extends the dichotomy between 7/7 and Make Poverty History, between terrorism and cosmopolitanism, by re-affirming the point that the attacks actually harm Muslims:

At the same time their violent attack on innocent people immediately weakened the millions mobilised around Make Poverty History, and fighting to defend the interests and environments of the world's poor, including vast Muslim communities in countries like Nigeria, Indonesia and Bangladesh.<sup>57</sup>

This move is interesting because it not only affirms the dichotomy, but it also creates a clear hierarchy. While it is clear that the London Bombings distracted attention away from the campaign, something understandably disappointing to any campaigner, there is a vitriolic tone in the construction: 'you stopped us helping you'. The implication is that despite anger at losing the campaign, Cosmopolitans can content themselves in the knowledge that that they have done all they can to help 'vast Muslims communities'. Thus a clear conditionality emerges in this representation of cosmopolitanism vs. terrorism. Whereas the cosmopolitan responses identified in Section 2 were intent on reducing the scope for the production of future terrorism, there is an emergent explanation: you are either with the cosmopolitans or against them, i.e. against yourselves. Indeed, Pettifor suggests that Bush and Blair were probably "relieved" that the bombers acted to take poverty off the global political agenda.<sup>58</sup>

Of course, these dichotomies barbarism-civilisation, terrorism-cosmopolitanism, were contested by sympathetic commentators. Poly Toynbee took the idea as an opportunity to re-affirm the aims of the Make Poverty History campaign:

How barbaric, Tony Blair rightly said, that the terrorists should strike just as the G8 at least strives to do better on Africa and climate change. Yes indeed. But then barbarism is in the eye of the beholder and every act of war is justified in the warped minds of its perpetrators. Barbaric might also be 30,000 children a day dying in Africa while a mere 25,000 US cotton farmers keep their trade-denying subsidies. Or Bangladesh soon to be

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<sup>57</sup> Ann Pettifor, 'Gleneagles, 7/7 and Africa'.

<sup>58</sup> Ann Pettifor, 'Gleneagles, 7/7 and Africa'.

washed away in global-warming floods. Or arms sold to those who will force them upon child soldiers, or any number of worldwide atrocities.<sup>59</sup>

While ostensibly challenging the dichotomy however, this argument plays to an old leftist problematic, often selectively invoked, of moral equivalence. Instead of undermining the dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and terrorism/barbarism, the moral equivalence argument re-affirms it from a different angle. The cosmopolitan impulse is affirmed as opposition to both terrorism *and* the forces that support global poverty. Simply stated, *'you are with us or you are with logic of the War on Terror.'*

#### **4. A Cosmopolitan Resistance to Cosmopolitanism?**

In such moralising responses to 7/7, the cosmopolitan program began to display its limits, running in dichotomous circles around the very 'thing', which we might expect cosmopolitans to articulate an alternative response, to. In essence, cosmopolitanism was able to provide little more, by way of a response, than the mainstream discourses themselves. The implications of this argument are twofold. Firstly, we need to interrogate how cosmopolitan arguments succumb to a program: what elements of the Make Poverty History campaign entrench a technology of ethics, such that global ethics itself becomes de-politicised and frozen to instrumental and institutional bargaining? Secondly, we need to build on this by thinking about how cosmopolitans could respond to terror differently. This, no doubt, is a tougher question that requires an ongoing engagement with the political actors involved. Ultimately, what might cosmopolitans draw from the Make Poverty History campaign and the responses to 7/7?

This final section will address these questions via an interrogation of the central planks of the MPH campaign: trade justice, debt cancellation and aid. While the campaign was not initially designed to respond to terrorism, its resonance with cosmopolitan ideas and the speed with which mainstream discourses fell back on the moral superiority of MPH, is a signal that re-thinking the foundations of such campaigns may be one route to developing upon the possibilities and limits for thinking global

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<sup>59</sup> Poly Toynbee, 'Let the Olympics be a Memorial', *The Guardian*, Friday July 8th, 2005.

ethical responses to terror, indeed for thinking global ethics *per se*. Returning to Fine's idea of taking the '-ism' out of cosmopolitanism, we need to resist the more programmatic elements of MPH. But, such resistance moves beyond a straightforward questioning of the onto-political foundations of cosmopolitanism, important though this is. It will require ongoing, perhaps endless, engagement with - *and through* - the cosmopolitan practices and actors themselves. As Robert Fine argues,

Cosmopolitanism must be able to draw upon the resource of the political actors capable of making complex and informed judgements on urgent questions of public deliberation. In its more determinate mode cosmopolitan judgement may involve the application of cosmopolitan values to political activity and in its more reflective mode it may involve the creation of cosmopolitan value through political activity. **Either way, it entails grappling with ambivalence.**<sup>60</sup>

Herein lies the distinctive contribution of this argument. Numerous excellent critiques of the cosmopolitan approach exist, hailing from critical, post-structural and/or post-imperial quarters.<sup>61</sup> But, as this final section details, an engaged reading of the line between cosmopolitan and post-structural ethics suggests, not only the critique and deconstruction of those 'totalising' elements of cosmopolitanism – (an epistemic universalism that might foster blindness to difference, a reification of modern artefacts like citizenship, the state, the market, etc.) - but also, a recognition of, and *negotiation with*, the potentially creative ambiguities of such ambivalence.<sup>62</sup>

What follows then, is first a critique of cosmopolitanism, as a 'technology' of global ethics, but second, the identification of possible moments of resistance, *from a cosmopolitan perspective*. In line with Section 1, the emphasis is upon achieving a 'live' understanding of cosmopolitanism, as 'an embedded way of thinking and acting in the

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Fine 'Cosmopolitanism and violence: difficulties of Judgement', *British Journal of Sociology* 57, no.1 (2006): 63. Emphasis added.

<sup>61</sup> B. Jahn, 'Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs', 177-207.; Heikki Patomaki, 'Problems of Democratizing Global Governance: Time, Space and the Emancipatory Process', *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no.3 (2003): 347-346.  
Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Beyond a Cosmopolitan Ideal: The Politics of Singularity', *International Politics* 44, no. 1 (2006): 107-124.

<sup>62</sup> J. Brassett and D. Bulley, 'Ethics in World Politics: Cosmopolitanism and Beyond?', 1-18.; Dan Bulley 'Negotiating ethics: Campbell, ontology and hospitality', *Review of International Studies* 32, no.4 (2006): 645-663.

world', in Walkers terms, 'a question and a practice' that is infinitely questionable, capable of new imaginaries.

### Cosmopolitanism as Technology

“...when a responsibility is exercised in the order of the possible, it simply follows a direction and elaborates a program. It makes of action the applied consequence, the simple application of a knowledge or know-how. *It makes of ethics and politics a technology.*”<sup>63</sup>

The more programmatic elements of Make Poverty History were entrenched in a rationality of global development ethics. In *Whose Hunger?* Jenny Edkins argues that “[m]odernity’s desire or hunger for philosophical certainty, the sovereign subject, and the bounded society translates into processes that depoliticize and technologize.”<sup>64</sup> In particular, famine, poverty and other issues surrounding the meta-narrative of development are portrayed as ‘social emergencies’, ‘crises’, as large societal question marks to be ‘answered’. All that is supposedly required is the political will of the powerful. But, Edkins argues,

...far from being a problem that could be solved if only the technical procedures were improved, famine is a product of power relations. It is not a question of finding better early warning systems, more participatory development projects or faster methods of delivering relief. Nor is it a question of seeking deeper, more structural causes of famines, nor its complexities. Famine is a product of violence. Even where war is not implicated directly, the state enforces laws of property that can lead to some people’s starvation. Aid processes and interventions to which technical concepts of famine give rise are practices that reproduce particular political and international power relations.<sup>65</sup>

Such ambiguities are clearly evident in the central pillars of the Make Poverty History campaign. Firstly, MPH aligned with the campaign for ‘trade justice’, calling for an end to agricultural subsidies. However, MPH has since criticised the stand-off which has

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<sup>63</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading. Reflections on Today’s Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992): 42. Emphasis added.

<sup>64</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 156.

<sup>65</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid*, 156.

emerged over the issue of how far developing markets should open their own markets in exchange for cutting subsidies.<sup>66</sup> But what is meant by trade justice? Or rather, can modified trade relations really be understood to embody grand ethical terms like justice at all?<sup>67</sup>

For instance, it could be argued, that emerging discourses of global trade justice have produced a set of limits. The ethical line which is emerging from those trade negotiators and NGOs who posit the normative benefits of reducing agricultural subsidies,<sup>68</sup> and even those ‘South-ist’ campaigners who argue for the legal protection of local production and supply chains,<sup>69</sup> can be seen as constructing a limit to the way in which we can think about global trade justice. Neither approach questions the logic of mass food production, nor do they address other hierarchies of power like human domination of the environment, gender and or class hierarchies.<sup>70</sup> Thus, the construction of a large, singular campaign that apparently express the limit of global trade justice may actually be set detrimentally low.

Equally with the second plank in the campaign platform, debt cancellation, there are significant questions over the distinctiveness of the proposal. The principle of a debt write-off actually does very little to question either logic of debt or the idea of a universal

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/trade/>

<sup>67</sup> See for instance Matthew Watson, ‘Towards a Polanyian Perspective on Fair Trade: Market-Bound Economic Agents and the Act of Ethical Consumption’, *Global Society* 20, no.4 (2006): 435-451.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/trade/>

<sup>69</sup> For an excellent discussion, see Dwijen Rangnekar, (2004) *Demanding stronger protection for geographical indications: The relationship between local knowledge, information and reputation*, UNU-INTECH Discussion Paper, Maastricht No. 2004-11 (2004).

<sup>70</sup> Indeed, this position was partially recognised by Peter Mandelson: “Trade justice cannot be equated with a big bang agricultural liberalisation, and with it, a race to the bottom for EU agriculture – and a free market mayhem that would gravely damage the interests of some of the poorest countries in the world. World Bank research is sometimes cited to support the argument that the greatest benefits the Doha Round offers for developing countries will come from freer farm trade and, overwhelmingly, from lower tariffs.” However, this apparently moderate view is still a precursor to the equation of export trade from the South with, at least, a version of justice: “The CAP’s critics should also not forget that the EU has already granted completely free, 100% access to all products from the least developed nations, and for most of the exports of other developing countries as well. The EU is by far the largest importer of food from developing countries. We take in much more than all the other OECD countries put together – the US, Canada, Japan, Australia included – both in volume and on a per capita basis. And of course, the EU is by far the largest aid donor to Africa.” Peter Mandelson, ‘EU Agriculture and the World Trade Talks’ Speech to the NFU Annual Conference, Birmingham, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2005.



capitalist route to ‘development’. Quite the reverse is the case, in fact when one considers that most debt write-offs are underpinned by the need to secure future debt repayments for private sector actors, as well as a set of conditionalities regarding the neo-liberal reforms of ‘beneficiary’ states.<sup>71</sup>

Finally, the principle of ‘more and better aid’ in the MPH campaign was underpinned by a number of proposals that may construct a set of limits for thinking global ethics. In particular, the emphasis on Tobin Tax<sup>72</sup> in the campaign can be heavily criticised. While the Tobin Tax is seen by many as an embodiment of global justice, through its capacity to calm financial markets, and provide vast revenues for redistribution,<sup>73</sup> a number of ambiguities can be identified.

Firstly, the Tobin Tax is a moderate, small tax, imposed on currency transactions. Therefore, while it seeks to calm financial speculation, it ironically feeds off of such activity: it therefore re-ifies a certain level of global capital mobility. Secondly, building from this point, the Tobin Tax provides a cash-based approach to global justice, where large amounts of money are collected in the ‘North’ and handed to the ‘South’, thus implying a problematic financial universalism. On this view, the Tobin Tax acts to construct the financial system as a singular, unitary whole, which ‘we’ must react to, failing to explore alternatives that may arise in partially, or non-developed financial systems.<sup>74</sup>

### Moments of Resistance

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<sup>71</sup> I am grateful to Lena Rehtel for discussion and advice on this subject. See also Lena Rehtel, ‘Developing Islamic Capital Markets: reifying the status quo of global finance’, paper for the CSGR Conference, *Pathways to Legitimacy? The Future of Global and Regional Governance*, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> September, (2007).

<sup>72</sup> Stamp Out Poverty Briefing, (2005) Campaigning for stamp duty on currency Transactions. via <http://www.stampoutpoverty.org/?lid=9816>

<sup>73</sup> One proponent, Heikki Patomaki has sought to connect the Tobin Tax proposal, directly, with the political theory of justice: “Justice as fairness would dictate, as a bare minimum, that, if someone accepts the benefits of a practice, he should not refuse to do his part in maintaining it. The current system of individual profits, socialised risks, fails to meet even this minimalist criterion of justice. The Tobin tax is a way to make participants pay their fair share in maintaining the global financial system.” (2001: xix).

<sup>74</sup> For further discussion of these ideas, see James Brassett, ‘Deliberative and Pragmatic Approaches to the Tobin Tax Campaign’ GARNET Working Paper 07/06 (2006); See also James Brassett, *Global Justice/Global Democracy: A Critical Analysis of the UK Campaign for the Tobin Tax*. (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2007).

In this sense, the cosmopolitan program elaborated by the Make Poverty History campaign served to entrench the idea of cosmopolitanism as a straightforward technology. This entrenchment meant that the step towards other-ing terrorism after the London bombings was a straightforward manoeuvre drawn from the repertoire of a perceived ‘united community’ of global cosmopolitans. The capacity to think differently, to open the spaces to the kinds of ‘limits’ and ‘ambiguities’ of responses to, indeed, *the very know-ability of*, terrorism was radically curtailed. What follows is a cursory and limited attempt to address the possibility for thinking differently. Again the strength of the critique of cosmopolitanism outlined may imply a move to forget the possibility of cosmopolitanism or of a cosmopolitan response. However, with Derrida, “it is faith in the possibility of this impossible and, in truth undecidable thing [...] that must govern our decisions.”<sup>75</sup>

Again, perhaps in line with this, Robert Fine suggests that,

Cosmopolitanism is not a fixed idea – which is why it may be preferable to substitute the term cosmopolitan outlook for cosmopolitanism – but rather an ongoing and incomplete research project marked by a refusal to wash over the extremes of human behaviour or be engulfed by them.<sup>76</sup>

It is this possibility, a refusal to be engulfed by terrorism, a refusal to be engulfed by extreme poverty, which could be productively explored and developed through such questions as: *How do we resist?* Edkins argues that,

If humanitarianism is technologized, intervention is no longer a question of responsibility and political decisioning but the application of a new system of international law to a case. Any challenge would have to come from a charismatic figure like Bob Geldof who can constitute (briefly) an opposing regime of truth.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides: a Dialogue with Jacques Derrida’, 115.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Fine ‘Cosmopolitanism and violence: difficulties of Judgement’, *British Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (2006): 51.

<sup>77</sup> Jenny Edkins, *Whose Hunger? Concepts of Famine, Practices of Aid*, 159.

On one level this argument is slightly peculiar. Geldof in both his Live Aid and Live 8 manifestations is a man bound up with a fairly straightforward answer to poverty, i.e. *throw money at it*. However, this ignores the political moment that such figures create. Geldof's interventions clearly bring an emotional tone to the subject. Moreover, he clearly articulates the problem(s) in a way that translates to larger and more variegated audiences than existing structures of development can reach.<sup>78</sup>

If we think more particularly about Live-8, it can be argued that a key contribution of the campaigns and concerts was to introduce a larger audience to the idea that there is in fact something called the G8, whose decision making processes have a credible impact on the lives of millions. From the point of view of global ethics, this expansion of the scope of the global political sphere is surely a condition of thinking possible alternatives. The conversation that emerges from within this sphere may obviously proceed in limited and problematic directions. But from a cosmopolitan outlook its expansion and engagement is to be commended.

Beyond such interventions though there needs to be more imaginative engagement. For instance, in the wake of the London Bombings about the best response that could be articulated was a 'more of the same' remedy. As Toynbee argued:

George Bush is the one person who could and should have felt beholden to give a good response to this disaster, in support of his ally. But with typical inadequacy it was beyond his imaginative grasp to be extra magnanimous either to Blair or to the world in his offers on climate change, aid and trade. What a fine contrast it would have made to the bombers if this had

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<sup>78</sup> This idea may be considered as quite alien to post-structural ethics? That, after all the effort to de-construct and 're-politicise' the ethical, particularly in its more universal epistemic and procedural guises, we might then endorse the similarly universal interventions of someone like Geldof. Indeed, the return of the universal is an interesting question in post-structural ethics, which can be read in recent Edkins endorsements of International Criminal Laws against famine, Derrida's engagements with cosmopolitan global governance, and say, Vivienne Jabri's attempt to reformulate Habermasian discourse ethics (e.g. Jacques Derrida, 'Discourse Ethics, Democratic Practice, and the Possibility of Inter-Cultural Understanding', in *Democracy and International Relations*, ed. H. Smith (London and New York: Macmillan, 2000)). Thus acknowledged, the argument of this paper should not be read as overlooking such tensions. Rather, it is to animate similar tensions identified in cosmopolitanism. Equally, such tensions can, and perhaps should, be explored in post-structural ethics.

redoubled the west's determination to do the right thing. It would not be giving in to terrorism, but denying it the oxygen of justification.<sup>79</sup>

On the one hand, such interventions risk fetish-ising the idea that terrorism is caused by poverty. This was never the argument of cosmopolitan theorists considered in Section 2. On the other hand, it re-produces the mantra that cosmopolitan global justice is about exporting a universal conception of development and values.

Problems involved with a universal ontology of global ethics include the reification of a problem (poverty) and a respondent (*we cosmopolitans*) risking a concomitant marginalisation of alternative possible futures. For instance, Marieke De Goede argues that this is a problem with many discussions of the cosmopolitan reform of globalisation and global finance, more specifically. As she attests, the “assumption that re-regulation of financial markets on a global scale and through state co-operation is the *only* viable response to liberalized finance is flawed, for three reasons”.<sup>80</sup> First, such regulation has the effect of de-politicising financial economic practices by marking out a realm of ‘normal finance’ beyond politics. Second, attempts to regulate global finance typically seek to avoid crisis thus constructing non-crisis periods as ‘normal’. Third, there is a ‘degree of defeatism’ in such a large blueprint for global reform. The act of resisting a monolith like the ‘globalisation’ or ‘global governance’ reifies that very idea and reduces possibilities for ‘effective’ resistance.

In this sense, agendas for the ‘reform of global capitalism’ must, in some way, internalise the logics of global capitalism, and equally, it might be argued, democratisation of the institutions of global governance usually involves the re-articulation of norms of sovereignty.<sup>81</sup> Instead, a more critical ontology of ‘the global’ is

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<sup>79</sup> Poly Toynbee, ‘Let the Olympics be a Memorial’.

<sup>80</sup> Marieke De Goede, *Virtue, Fortune and Faith: A Genealogy of Finance*, (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) 147.

<sup>81</sup> J. Brassett, and F. Merke, ‘Just Deconstruction? Derrida and Global Ethics’ in *Confronting Globalization: Humanity Justice and the Renewal of Politics* ed. P. Hayden, and C. Ojeili (Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005): 50-67; N. Vaughan-Williams, ‘Beyond a Cosmopolitan Ideal: the Politics of Singularity’, *International Politics* 44, no. 1 (2007): 107-124.

perhaps required.<sup>82</sup> If cosmopolitanism was to adopt a spatially sophisticated and multi-dimensional social ontology of globalisation, new possibilities for engagement and interaction might be thought.<sup>83</sup> Importantly, this multi-level understanding does not rehearse the universal fallacy – how do we respond to global poverty? Instead, it permits multiple questions concerned with the project to build alternative and more ethical futures. For example, a significant point of resistance to MPH arose over precisely this issue. Numerous Southern campaigners organised to question the notion of ‘the global’ at the heart of the campaign, suggesting that it masked an exclusively Northern constituency. As John Gaventa and Marj Mayo recount:

While on the one hand the northern citizens expressed their solidarity for the poverty of citizens in other parts of the world, through attempting to influence the powerful leaders of the G8 through mass mobilisation, a number of southern civil society groups increasingly expressed their concerns about representation, as symbolized in the slogan, ‘not about us without us.’<sup>84</sup>

The call for greater cross linkages and involvement of local groups in the affairs of global development is one way, moderate and long-term, in which cosmopolitanism may learn about its limits in, and through, practice.

Finally, we might return to the ‘politics of mourning’ suggested by Judith Butler. If cosmopolitanism, read through the Make Poverty History campaign, has a ‘resource’ for responding to terrorism, then it is the abject awareness of, and concern with, death. Unfortunately, however, the representations of death in the campaign were machine like. The death statistic, ‘30,000 people a day’, became like a mantra.

One of the key images of the US Live 8 concert was that of the actor Will Smith, clicking his fingers every second to mark the death of another person living in poverty. Again, while we might feel that the basic promotion of awareness on such issues is a

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<sup>82</sup> See for instance, Nisha Shah ‘Cosmopolitanizing and decosmopolitanizing globalization: Metaphorical re-description and transformations of political community’, *Globalizations* 3, no. 3 (2006): 393-411.

<sup>83</sup> Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: a Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>84</sup> John Gaventa with Marj Mayo, ‘Not about us without us’: Linking Local and Global citizen Advocacy’ A research proposal. Working Group on citizenship and Engagement in a Globalised World. January 2006.

necessary first step to building a truly global ethics, there is a sense in which the singularity of each death is effaced. Just as cosmopolitanism began to self-identify as a coherent we-community, so there was a risk that a ‘they’, the wretched statistics, was also emerging. This is unfortunate primarily because it empties the signified of political agency, the political agency that might be required to engage with cosmopolitan ethics. Instead then, a politics of mourning should be conducted in more intimate terms. As Judith Butler suggests:

To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself.

[...]

...this can be a point of departure for a new understanding if the narcissistic preoccupation of melancholia can be moved into a consideration of the vulnerability of others. Then we might critically evaluate and oppose the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, and thus certain human lives are more grievable than others.<sup>85</sup>

This is not a panacea for the ills of globalisation, or even for the more totalising elements of cosmopolitanism. But, it does represent one credible resistance that breathes life into the broad cosmopolitan desire to de-limit the scope of ethical concern. This speaks directly to the more specific intentions of the cosmopolitans looked at in Section 2: to first understand the causes of terrorism, the ‘discrimination’, ‘humiliation’ and ‘unnecessary suffering’ that inhibits opportunities for freedom and causes resentment in the world.

### **Conclusion: politicising the limit of cosmopolitan ethics**

In summary, the paper engaged the cosmopolitan response to terrorism. After first defining cosmopolitanism, as an embedded way of thinking and acting in the world, the discussion turned to the interventions of specific cosmopolitan authors on the subject of

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<sup>85</sup> Judith Butler, *Prekarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence*, 30. Indeed, and in deference to the plurality of the campaign, precisely this approach was taken by Miss Dynamite in her Live-8 performance. In a public address, she asked the audience to think about what the implications of tens of thousands of people dying in London would be, asking them to imagine their friends and families as possible members of the large statistics under discussion.

9/11. A desire to prevent the future production of terrorism by understanding the causes of suffering led to a contingent advocacy of international law, participatory global institutions and initiatives to alleviate global poverty. However, when cemented in the practice of the MPH campaign, this apparently open and progressive set of cosmopolitan idea(l)s began to lose its distinctiveness. Especially, when confronted with the 7/7 bombings, a set of discursive manoeuvres emerged that saw sympathetic politicians, campaigners and journalists alike, lamenting the bombings as an attack on MPH & the G8, *an attack on cosmopolitanism*.

Straightforward dichotomies between ‘barbaric terrorists’ and ‘civilised cosmopolitans’ served to construct cosmopolitanism as a coherent, and united, ‘global’ community. In this context, the paper developed a critique of the central pillars of the Make Poverty History campaign. The aim was to suggest ways in which a cosmopolitan global ethics might be thought differently, less as a program and more as an embedded way of thinking and acting, at once a question and a practice.

What is provided here, no doubt, fails to exhaust the range of critiques that might be levelled against cosmopolitanism, in general, or the Make Poverty History campaign, in particular.<sup>86</sup> There are those who would surely, and quite persuasively, tie the history of cosmopolitan ethics, particularly the liberal kind, to the history of imperial domination, and hence infer a far deeper, causal relation between cosmopolitanism and terrorism, i.e. cosmopolitan ethics are part of the apparatus of imperialism, an apology for its excesses and moral buttress for its procedures. The contingent, yet sympathetic critique of cosmopolitanism provided here, is unlikely to persuade such critics. But it does, at least, provide mechanisms to resist and reform cosmopolitan ambitions, in a way, which might speak to the concerns of such critics.

Theory is practice and, as such, no amount of theoretical critique and positioning, however laudable, will reduce the responsibility to *engage* with influential theoretical

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<sup>86</sup> For instance, see Anthony Payne, ‘Blair, Brown and the Gleneagles agenda: making poverty history, or confronting the global politics of unequal development?’, *International Affairs* 82, no. 5 (2006): 917-935. More broadly see David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

practices, in the here and now. The move to address cosmopolitan ethics is therefore, ultimately, a pragmatic choice, based on the influence which such discourses have in the contemporary world.<sup>87</sup>

Politicising the limit(s) of cosmopolitan ethics, in the way suggested here, involves a contingent approval of what is ‘useful’ in the vocabulary of cosmopolitanism. It speaks to the need to understand suffering, and vulnerability, as infinitely larger than the inner directed morbidity of bomb fallout. It outlines credible and practicable material agendas to ameliorate such suffering and give voice/inclusion to the ‘others’ of global ethics. Furthermore, it does this in a language which large western, liberal audiences can understand and believe in. In ‘essentially contested’ political circumstances, cosmopolitan ethics may provide a necessary, but insufficient, response to terrorism and to global ethics.

However, sensitivity to, *and a capacity to resist*, the limits of such vocabularies is also required. As argued, cosmopolitanism can succumb to a program and it can fall back on assertions of community, in light of challenges to this program. Viewed critically, a modernist and universalistic episteme can foster blindness to difference; a reification of modern artefacts like citizenship, the state, the global market, etc. may close down the possibility of thinking ethics differently. But viewed positively, the very identification of such limits, suggests the possibility of resistance; *and for good cosmopolitan reasons*. The ‘global’ may be pluralised to allow alternative levels for thinking about cosmopolitan proposals, engaging the ‘small’, Southern political agents that cosmopolitans claim to speak for. The idea of suffering might be addressed in more intimate terms as well, less as a grand, overwhelming statistic, and more through grief, empathy and vulnerability.

Importantly, when understood as an embedded way of thinking and acting in the world, ‘a question and a practice’, cosmopolitan ethics does not appear philosophically aloof, or as a liberal apology. Instead, ongoing attempts to articulate alternative possible futures by cosmopolitans, combined with a well judged appreciation of the ambivalences

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<sup>87</sup> See also James Brassett and Dan Bulley ‘Ethics in World Politics: Cosmopolitanism and Beyond?’ 1-18



they construct, can be seen as a creative ethical resource for engaging with contested political circumstances. It will not solve all problems, but it does suggest the possibility of understanding problems in a way that fosters, rather than inhibits, creative engagement.

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