

## Global Responsibility and the Enhancement of Life

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*This article advances a conception of global ethics in terms of the centrality of responsibility to the moral life and also the moral good of the enhancement of life. In contrast to some forms of global ethics, the article also seeks to warrant the use of religious sources in developing such an ethics. Specifically, the article seeks to demonstrate the greater adequacy of a global ethics of responsibility for the enhancement of life against rival conceptions developed in terms of Human Rights discourse or the so-called Capabilities Approach. The article ends with a conception of 'conscience' as the mode of human moral being and the experience of religious transcendence within the domains of human social and historical life. From this idea, conscience is specified a human right and capacity to determine the humane use of religious resources and also the norm for the rejection of inhumane expressions of religion within global ethics.*

### Introduction

There are many different understandings of globalization ranging from economic ones to those that emphasize cultural patterns, global media forces, and the emergence of the so-called post-secular age. These different descriptions of our time highlight diverse challenges facing people around the world. It is obvious that forms of consumption, production, banking, and travel have global impacts that challenge traditional and contemporary forms of economic ethics. The same is true of climate change, the global spread of disease, and religiously motivated terrorism, issues now confronting those who work on environmental and religious ethics. In a more general sense, we live 'in the time of many worlds', that is, we live in a globalized, shared time in which people live at the intersections of many determinate domains of meaning and value or 'worlds'.<sup>1</sup> Since the forms of globalization affect how power is globally distributed, it has become indispensable that we develop principles of global justice.

These factors of our age indicate in the starkest of terms the need for a 'global ethics'. Yet the very same forces seem to indicate the impossibility of developing that kind of ethics due to the wild diversity of normative outlooks around the global. Not

<sup>1</sup> William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In The Time of Many Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

surprisingly, in this situation there are also theologians and philosophers who advocate, contrary to universalist ethics, some form of communal or particularistic ethics. For them, the meaning and validity of moral norms and values are internal to the form of life found in some specific community. Membership is the key to moral understanding. Yet even those positions must show—and usually do show—how the moral outlook of a community, say the Christian churches, can and must respond in responsible ways to other communities. In sum, both universalist and particularistic forms of ethics seek to meet the challenges of the global age. It is also the case, as the philosopher Hans Jonas noted some years ago, that we are hampered by forms of ethics unable to address the challenges posed by the radical increase of human power in our time, and the ways in which that power threatens future generations.<sup>2</sup> How then are we to carry on the work of ethics, and, especially, reflection on global justice?

My reflections here enter this thicket of ethical problems at a basic level of reflection, specifically, the connection between conceptions of human well-being and the normative principles consistent with those conceptions. To that end, I want to contrast my position on these interlocking topics with two other dominant forms of global ethics, namely, Human Rights discourse and also the so-called Capabilities Approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.<sup>3</sup> I realize that engaging my topic in this way might seem far afield of the pressing challenges now bearing down on peoples around the world. I hope to show that is not the case. Likewise, due to the constraints of space, I will have to leave aside the insights and oversights of particularistic forms of ethics. Here, I want to keep the focus on global, cosmopolitan or universalist ethics.

Now, whatever the final judgment might be about the adequacy of my argument, it rests on two assumptions that I want to state at the outset since I cannot in this paper use the space to justify them. They are assumptions that are also shared by Human Rights discourse and the so-called Capabilities Approach. The first assumption is that human beings are embedded within wider systems of life and therefore the concern for social justice and human well-being cannot work against worries about climate change and ecological sustainability. Global justice must include ecological justice and commitments to sustainable development. Sen and Nussbaum are explicit about this connection; Human Rights discourse has developed throughout the years in ways to account for cultural, ecological, and social rights. Put otherwise, the days of unreflective anthropocentrism are surely now past at least among sensitive religious and non-religious thinkers. What would it benefit human beings to gain the whole world and to lose the earth? The connection between human well-being and a sustainable future is indicated in my concern for the enhancement of life, and that means not only human life. Yet while that is the case, I do share with the Capabilities Approach and Human Rights discourse a focus of the distinctly human ability to take responsibility for one's own and other forms of life, including future generations. There is, we might say, an anthropocentrism of responsibility rather than an anthropocentrism of value.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> The UN Declaration on Human Rights is available in many forms. For succinct statements of Sen's and Nussbaum's position, see Amartya Sen's, *Development as Freedom* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2000) and *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York, NY: W & W Norton, 2007), and Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2013).

The second and closely related operative assumption in this article seems to be under-theorized by Human Rights discourse and the Capabilities Approach. The assumption is that human beings make distinctive claims on us and that they thereby are the subjects of rights, exercise forms of freedom, and can live by the demands of responsibility in ways distinct if not separate from other living beings. While human beings are not utterly unique as living beings insofar as we participate in wider systems of life, we are, nonetheless, a distinctive form of living beings. It is human distinctiveness that is the real focus of my comparative argument in this paper and what that distinctiveness means for global justice. Why are claims about the distinctive moral standing of human beings eschewed by Human Rights advocates and also by the Capabilities Approach? Obviously, in one sense they are not. The concern, after all, is about 'human rights' and the focus for Sen and Nussbaum is on 'human capabilities'. Yet while that is no doubt true, it is also the case that both of these forms of thought avoid any connection to a comprehensive doctrine, as John Rawls dubbed it, about human nature and the good advanced on philosophical or religious grounds.<sup>4</sup> That is to say, the connection between human rights and capabilities, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, some idea of the good is intentionally under-theorized by these other approaches to global justice. The fact that these approaches eschew any strong or comprehensive claims about the human good thereby indicates the thesis I want to advance in the remainder of this paper. I hope to show how a theological perspective can and must contribute to reflection on global justice. Come what may, we need to make some claims about the moral meaning of our shared existence as human beings. However, part of my point is that Human Rights discourse and the Capabilities Approach should be seen as fellow travelers in this reflective journey in ethics rather than opposing moral stances that ought to be rejected wholesale. Put otherwise, like the Capabilities Approach and Human Rights, I aim to advance a global or cosmopolitan ethics, and I see these other forms of ethics as allies in the struggle for justice on the global scale.

Finally, I should also note at the outset that my tactic of reflection is a rather classical one. As the philosopher Susan Wolf has noted,

Aristotle is well known for his use of the endoxic method in defending moral and conceptual claims. That is, he takes the *endoxa*, 'the things which are accepted by everyone, or by most people, or the wise' as a starting point in his inquiries.<sup>5</sup>

St. Augustine, in texts like 'On the Morals of the Christian Church' and *The City of God*, adopts this method but gives it a crucial theological twist. That is, he begins by bracketing distinctly Christian claims and examines *endoxa* about the human good and justice, but as the argument proceeds he removes the brackets and shows the indispensable contribution Christian convictions make to the shared topic of inquiry. Human Rights discourse and the Capabilities Approach are, for the purpose of this paper, expressions of the *endoxa*, the widely accepted beliefs, about global justice with respect to which I want to make a theological contribution. In this way, this article is

<sup>4</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, [1993] 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 10.

meant not only to be about global justice and enhancing life, but also to enact a method for theological reflection on the topic.

Preliminary matters in hand, I want to turn next to give a brief account of beliefs about global justice emblematically expressed in Human Rights and the Capabilities Approach. That account will allow me in a second step of reflection to outline a conception of responsibility for the integrity of life. I conclude, at the end of the paper, with a response to the critics of any form of religious ethics. Again, we start with the *endoxa* about global justice.

### **Rights and Capabilities**

We are all aware of the basic outlines of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Originally crafted after World War II and its various atrocities, the idea was to clarify those claims inherent in human dignity that demand protection from State coercion and also claims to those things or goods consistent with human dignity. But as Lynn Hunt has argued in her book *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Human Rights articulate not only the ideals of the great Declarations of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, like the American 'Declaration of Independence' and the French 'Declaration of the Rights of Man', but also the spread of the sense of individuality in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and also empathy for persons expressed in the literature of the time. Repulsion over torture was a driving factor in the development of rights talk.<sup>6</sup> One has, then, a widening of the scope of moral standing to include all people but also a deepening of empathy for the victims of atrocities. While Hunt's case is persuasive, at least to me, we also know that there is little agreement in Human Rights discourse on basic philosophical or religious claims, including the nature and grounds of dignity.

Furthermore, Human Rights discourse has long been criticized as a vehicle of Western values, religious and secular. Especially worrisome for some traditions and societies has been the 'individualism' of Human Rights that could clash with a more communal or communitarian outlook found in many societies. It is also probably correct to see some form of political liberalism embedded in the 1948 Declaration, given its concerns to protect people from State power under something like John Stuart Mills' 'harm principle'. That is, freedom extends only so far as neither an individual nor a State inflicts unjustified harm on persons.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, as rights thought developed, other forms of 'rights' have been promulgated that are seen as more consistent with indigenous cultures and communal outlooks even while carrying on some loose form of political liberalism.

Additionally there have been longstanding criticisms of the very idea of human or natural rights ranging from Jeremy Bentham, who famously said that such rights were 'nonsense on stilts', to contemporary theorists and critics of liberalism like Alasdair

<sup>6</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York, NY: W&W Norton, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1859] 1991). Article 29 of the UN Declaration puts it like this: 'In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.'

MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas, just to name a few.<sup>8</sup> The critics of Human Rights often charge it with a 'possessive individualism', which elides concern for the common good and devolves too easily into protracted conflicts over peoples' different and competing rights. More pointed for our deliberations is Hannah Arendt's insight that for rights to matter at all, they must be enforced, and, yet, it is hard to imagine who or what could enforce all rights. Because of this political lacuna in rights talk, Arendt concluded that a human being is a creature with the 'right to have rights' but that the actual institution of those rights was a political question.<sup>9</sup>

My task here is not to engage in an analysis of specific human rights, the development of human rights regimes, or even to address the many criticisms of human rights made by philosophers and theologians. Those topics have been explored in detail by many thinkers. My point is simply that Human Rights discourse has advanced the work of global justice by specifying the specific claims or rights persons possess in virtue of their humanity against the powers that be and therefore protects the domain of freedom from untold and unwarranted intrusion. As the Preamble to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) puts it: 'recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.' The burden of argument thereby shifts to those who want to exclude some human beings from moral standing—a tactic we find in religious and state sponsored terrorism, the systematic rape of women and girls by ISIS, on-going regional conflicts, and the torture of political prisoners by countries, including the USA.

Of course, I have already noted that as rights talk has developed there has been the concern to expand ideas found in the UN Declaration to include communal and indigenous rights. This inclusion, it seems to me, can be rooted in Article 29 of the Declaration, which reads: 'Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.' Human Rights discourse articulates the complex relation between dignity, rights, and social life, on the one hand, with, on the other hand, freedom, justice, and peace as the expression of human dignity and with it social responsibility. In this respect, Human Rights discourse provides what Michael Walzer would call a 'thin' account of the requirements of global justice.<sup>10</sup> That 'thinness' is consistent with the form of political liberalism implicit in the Declaration. Yet in this respect, it has been admitted even by the critics of Human Rights discourse, that it has become the ethical *lingua franca* of the global age. It is a factor in the assessment of nations, the plight of failed states and internally displaced persons, terrorism and rape as well as instances of genocide. While often affirmed only in the breach, it is no doubt the case that human rights talk provides a necessary conceptual vehicle for expressing and backing struggles for justice and recognition around the world. This discourse expresses

<sup>8</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) and Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1968). Also see *Universalism vs Relativism: Making Moral Judgments in a Changing, Pluralistic, and Threatening World*, edited by Don S. Browning (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006) and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

and also reflexively reaffirms an ethical outlook inclusive of all human beings and therefore is a necessary instrument in conceiving of global justice. That is why I noted before that Human Rights discourse is a fellow traveler on the road to a truly global theological ethics.

It is also at this juncture, it seems to me, that the Capabilities Approach intervenes in the discussion of global ethics. It does so, if I understand correctly, for two reasons. The first reason for an intervention is internal to the UN Declaration itself. Recall that Article 29 of the Declaration notes that only in the community is 'the free and full development of his personality ... possible.' That is to say, not only are rights and duties socially embedded, but so too is the aim of personal development. Insofar as that is the case, then, in order properly to conceive and enact human rights, one needs some conception of human development. In this respect, one can specify the necessary link between Human Rights and the Capabilities Approach, since the task of the latter is precisely to examine and articulate what is entailed in human development. And here too are implied liberal values. Recall that Mill in his *On Liberty* argued that liberty or freedom is, in his words, 'to live one's own life in one's own way'. And, further, he conceived of human beings as 'progressive beings', creatures who can and ought to struggle to form and enhance their lives through the exercise of distinctive capacities. While the Capabilities Approach differs at points from Mill's liberalism, it is still the case that human development is understood in relation to capabilities necessary for a person to be an agent in her or his own life and the life of a community.

While the UN Declaration opens within its own lines of thought reflection on human development, advocates of the Capabilities Approach argue that their tactic is not simply a matter of filling out Human Rights discourse. There is, in a word, a second reason to intervene in the discussion of global justice. One difficulty with Human Rights discourse is its relative lack of suitable measurement of the exercise of human rights. That is to say, how is one to show that in a specific social, political, or economic situation, human rights have in fact supported the 'free and full development' of persons? Often, the respecting of rights are measured economically in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). An increase in a nation's GDP means that people can claim and assert their rights to a greater extent. Yet how are we sure that if GDP increases so too will peoples' rights to education, self-determination, opportunities for social participation and recognition, and also health care? Put differently, if political instruments are necessary to insure respect for basic rights, as Arendt noted, then it is clear that economic growth in terms of GDP does not in itself find political expression. Conventional economic means of measuring progress in human rights too easily ignore basic human needs required for the kinds of freedom and dignity that ground human rights and are also the aim of human development.

It is here, on my understanding, that the Capabilities Approach is linked to a larger debate among philosophers and theologians about basic goods and a naturalistic theory of ethics.<sup>11</sup> The idea is that whatever we mean by 'goodness' or 'flourishing' must be keyed to the fundamental needs or functions for a creature's well-being given the kind of creature it is. Thinkers differ on a list of basic goods, but most draw a distinction

<sup>11</sup> For other thinkers who advance some form of naturalism in ethics see, for instance, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgely, James M. Gustafson, Lisa Cahill, Germain Grisez, Don Browning, John Finnis, and Jean Porter.

between *pre-moral basic goods*, that is, those goods which are not dependent on human choice, like having a body, and *moral basic goods* that do depend on choice, say, what we do with our bodies. The Capabilities Approach understands human development in terms of those goods needed for people to exercise their capabilities and therefore measures development not simply in terms of GDP, but, rather, in terms of access to resources needed to exercise capabilities. While Nussbaum and Sen differ in their lists of 'capabilities', just as 'basic goods' theorists differ on their lists of such goods, all sides of the argument agree that human freedom and development or flourishing require goods or capabilities human beings must fulfill in order to live a recognizably good human life. And that idea, so the argument goes, is also essential to any robust conception of social justice.

However, at this juncture a question arises about whether or not the Capabilities Approach and arguments about basic goods cross the line drawn by Rawls and thereby step into offering some 'comprehensive doctrine'. And if not, is the idea of a 'liberal naturalism', if I can name it such, a coherent idea or are liberalism and naturalism necessarily opposed because of political liberalism's restriction on comprehensive doctrines? Despite philosophical and religious differences, Nussbaum and others, including myself, think not; what I am calling 'liberal naturalism' is a coherent, if so far unnamed, moral and political outlook that is important, maybe crucial, for global justice. And that is because claims about capabilities or basic goods, as well as and before, are rooted in a humanistic commitment that in principle any liberal ought to endorse. Nussbaum, for instance, writes this in the preface to *Sex and Social Justice*:

The view developed here seeks justice for human beings as such, believing all human beings to be fundamentally equal in worth. It also holds that human beings have common resources and common problems wherever they live, and that their special dilemmas can best be seen as growing out of special circumstances, rather than out of nature or identity that is altogether unlike that of other humans.<sup>12</sup>

Now, if I am right that the Capabilities Approach is linked to but also advances Human Rights discourse by providing a robust conception of human development, then I can partially lift my self-imposed methodological brackets and step beyond the Capabilities Approach. And I do so not in terms of rights or capabilities, but with regard to a shared humanistic commitment that demands further reflection.

Admittedly, this next step in my argument might seem counter-intuitive to many people, including Nussbaum, given the strident sectarianism and anti-humanism of so much contemporary religious practice. Accordingly, I must turn to make sense of this claim about humanistic commitments and thereby also to clarify the theological contribution to an ethics of global responsibility.

### **Responsibility and the Enhancement of Life**

It has long been noted that fundamental patterns of moral and religious thought about life, often expressed metaphorically, connect reflection about human existence, social life,

<sup>12</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7.

and even claims about the universe. These patterns are usually deeply embedded in a culture and society; they constitute what has been called 'the social imaginary'.<sup>13</sup> However, it makes a difference, as W. Clark Gilpin has noted, whether a thinker begins with human existence or social life or metaphysics and the universe.<sup>14</sup> The critics of Human Rights—charging it with 'individualism'—often begin their reflection on the 'pattern of life' within the social life of some community whereas, as we have seen, Human Rights discourse and also the Capabilities Approach articulate a fundamental pattern by beginning with the human person and her or his rights and capabilities. Not surprisingly, some theologians and philosophers have sought to articulate the 'pattern of life' from a metaphysical beginning point.<sup>15</sup> The metaphysical gambit is cut off, so it would seem, if John Rawls' restriction on comprehensive doctrines within 'political liberalism' is accepted root and branch, as both Human Rights discourse and the Capabilities Approach seem to do.

Is that all that can be said for a humanistic viewpoint developed through what I have called 'liberal naturalism' in moral theory? In other words, is it the case that conceptions of the interrelations between self and society so important for the Capabilities Approach and Human Rights discourse can be sustained without any account, metaphorically articulated of course, of the moral space, the encompassing environment, of social and individual life?

Despite beginning with what human beings share and the development of capabilities along with rights needed for the development of individual's life in community, it is the case that some conception of the scope of the environment of life is to be found in both Human Rights discourse and the Capabilities Approach. What is at stake, we can say, is the extent of our relations that constitute the moral space, the background pattern, for our lives and the struggle for global justice. Nussbaum is especially clear on this point. In several works, she has insisted that human transcendence, that is, our distinctive ability or freedom to go beyond oneself and our needs in order to connect with others and their needs, is strictly and solely a 'lateral transcendence'. The only object or end of human transcendence is other human beings. These acts of lateral transcendence, she further argues, are suffused with emotion, imagination, freedom, and also our rational capabilities. The religions, on this account, misrepresent the object or term of transcendence identifying it, wrongly for her, with gods, heavenly beings, and the like. This religious misrepresentation is a dangerous threat to social justice because it means, Nussbaum contends, that religious people use other people as a mere means to a religious end. In other words, a religious conception of transcendence necessarily denies human dignity and persons as 'ends in themselves'. Given this fact, it is important to clip the wings of human transcendence, one might say,

<sup>13</sup> See Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) and David E. Klemm and William Schweiker, *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> W. Clark Gilpin, *Religion Around Emily Dickinson* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015). The attempt to specify heuristic patterns of thought is found among many American theologians ranging from the work of Jonathan Edwards in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to, in our time, H. Richard Niebuhr, James Gustafson, Sallie McFague, and, most recently, Kristine Culp.

<sup>15</sup> See Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Allen Lane, 1992) and Franklin I. Gamwell, *The Divine Good: Modern Moral Theory and the Necessity of God* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1990).

and restrict transcendence to our lateral relations to others, or what Charles Taylor has nicely called 'the immanent frame'.<sup>16</sup>

Now, I do not deny that too often religious people have demeaned the lives of others in both violent and non-violent ways. That religious people have so acted is a simple empirical fact. The danger that fact poses to social justice is also why I want to reclaim some form of religious humanism, what I have called, for a variety of reasons, 'theological humanism' as the standpoint from which to examine and articulate a 'pattern of life'. But precisely by insisting on the human as the beginning point for reflection on self-society-and-universe, that is, on a 'pattern of life', the question becomes whether human transcendence is always and only 'lateral transcendence'. The background assumption of claims about lateral transcendence would seem to be a form of naïve realism, that is, that what we sense and know empirically demarcates the scope and depth of reality. Obviously, that is not the case for the religions which, as the sociologist of religion Robert Bellah has argued, create other worlds that interact and shape and are shaped by the everyday world.<sup>17</sup> These 'other worlds', are, importantly, crucial to human evolution and human aspiration.<sup>18</sup> And Bellah goes so far as to claim that human beings can only endure certain periods of 'dreadful immanence' marked by loss and death. In order to meet the reality of death and to forge a future, human beings must move in, between, and among worlds. On a religious account, human beings have the ability to move in, between, and among multiple worlds through ritual, play, imagination, emotions, social encounters and the like. This is one reason why I have called our global age 'the time of many worlds'; we live among competing worlds. The point to note, then, is that religion is one form of cross-worldly movement and thereby is crucial to human evolution.

In order to answer Nussbaum's quite justified worry about the moral danger of 'religious transcendence' one must, I contend, develop a way to think about the relation between rights and capabilities as markers of human dignity where that dignity backs rights and funds human development. That is to say, if the idea of free human development opened discourse on Human Rights to revision in terms of the Capabilities Approach, then the question of human transcendence and its scope begs for theological reflection. Accordingly, I can now lift completely the methodological brackets on our inquiry and enter into theological reflection, but I do so, mindful of my fellow travelers, from a humanistic perspective.

At issue, I believe, is how one makes sense of the human ability to move between worlds, between determinate domains of meaning, however created – by God, through the human imagination, in metaphysical speculation, by play and ritual, through revelation, or in moods, sensibilities, and emotions (say, love, care, or concern) – and the moral claims enumerated in Human Rights discourse and also the Capabilities Approach. If time allowed, I would at this step in the argument provide an account of five different

<sup>16</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

<sup>17</sup> See Robert N. Bellah, *Religion in Human Evolution: From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). In the John Templeton Foundation funded *The Enhancing Life Project* of which I am a Principle Investigator, we call these 'counter-worlds' and to live rightly among them requires following various 'spiritual laws'. On this see [www.enhancinglife.uchicago.edu](http://www.enhancinglife.uchicago.edu).

<sup>18</sup> See *Theological Reflection and the Pursuit of Ideals: Theology, Human Flourishing, and Freedom*, edited by David Jasper and Dale Wright (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013).

'types', including 'sub-types', of basic goods (pre-moral and moral) that must be integrated in order for a recognizably human personal and social life to endure. I could also show that a distinctive form of freedom or liberty is implied in the work of 'integration', meaning that the diversity of ways people can and do integrate their lives is itself a fundamental good and correlate right. That argument, just hinted at here, would fill out my version of 'liberal naturalism', as I have called it. But the more immediate challenge now is how the integrity of one's own life and the lives of others makes a claim on a person and how, if at all, that claim expands the range of human transcendence beyond its constriction to the 'immanent frame'. In order to do so, I want to examine briefly the idea of 'conscience' and the moral claim put on us by others, ourselves, and the divine. Conscience is a mode of being a moral creature and therefore freedom of conscience is a human right.<sup>19</sup>

Conscience, from the Latin *conscientia*, has meant many things in philosophical and theological thought—too many meanings to examine here. However, one feature is that it demarcates a 'doubleness' in the self. That is, self-knowledge is always with knowledge of another and the claim of that other on the self. Kant spoke of its terms of a person in the person; Martin Heidegger talked about the call of conscience as the call of the authentic self to the fallen self; the Stoics spoke of a divine spark in the self; St. Paul thought it was knowledge of the Law written on the heart, as did John Calvin; and Paul also worried about offending the conscience of others, even while Luther spoke of the terrified conscience. My point is not to rehearse names, but, rather, to note that 'conscience' usefully articulates a conception of humanity in which we know ourself in and with the claim of another on us as itself a movement between domains of meaning, between worlds. Conscience is a term for the scope of human transcendence operative within and beyond the 'immanent frame' or 'dreadful immanence' in which the claims of the 'integrity' of life, one's own and that of others, is constitutive of the self. In the religions, this means that 'conscience' is a communication among and between worlds, including the divine world. And this is why, on my account, the right to freedom of conscience finds many of its historical roots in the freedom of religion, that is, the freedom to follow or to reject the claims of a religious community.

In other words, the claims of conscience provide a humanistic beginning point for a 'pattern of life' linking self, society, and the ultimate environment of life, whether divine or not, in a way that makes responsibility the condition for peoples' specific identities, rather than their specific identities constituting the conditions for and limits of responsibility. And that is a point, as far as I can see, that Human Rights discourse and the Capabilities Approach must endorse as two humanistic but also global outlooks on social justice. Lifting the brackets on our inquiry thereby lets us see the constitutive contribution theological reflection on conscience makes to the shared effort to fashion a global ethics. In this light, I think we can rightly speak of the cosmopolitan conscience important for our global age.

<sup>19</sup> For a further discussion see William Schweiker, *Dust That Breathes: Christian Faith and the New Humanisms* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

## Conclusion

I want to conclude these reflections with a brief response to an obvious objection to my argument, especially insofar as it is developed theologically around the ideas of multiple worlds and also a religious conception of conscience. The critic of my position might state that the symbolic, ritual, and narrative resources of the religions that are used to imagine and conceive of their 'pattern of life' are too awash in blood and authoritarianism ever to be of any use in forging a humane global ethics. For example, ISIS, or the Islamic State, claims, as reported in *The New York Times*, to find warrant in the Qur'an to allow, and even to demand, the rape of non-Muslim women and girls and to use that teaching to recruit young men to their cause.<sup>20</sup> Such violent and authoritarian interpretations of Islam seem, the critic holds, endemic to Islam and therefore that religion cannot serve the purpose of global justice. And the critic would further argue that such atrocities are not only in Islam; they are found, if truth be told, in virtually all of the world's religions. The conclusion to draw, then, is that it is best to reject religious resources in developing a global ethics.

I admit that this is indeed an incredible problem facing anyone daring enough to use religious resources in ethical reflection. But the critic, it seems to me, has missed a crucial point of my argument. Conscience, I have argued, is a concept for the movement between worlds as the human mode of moral being and that mode of being communicates the claim of the integrity of life, one's own and that of other living beings, as constitutive of self. From this idea, I have specified a human right and capacity to determine the humane use of religious resources and also the norm for the rejection of inhumane expressions of religion. Religions—Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and others—are not self-interpreting. They are interpreted and lived by human beings. The claims of the cosmopolitan conscience, I am arguing, provide the norm for the interpretation of a religion's resources and orientation for how to live in our global times. I suspect that even non-religious traditions face some version of the critic's challenge. I have merely tried to suggest how an ethics funded by religious resources might meet the criticism for the sake of enhancing life in the global age.

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