Twelve

A NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING PEACE AND RELATED GLOBAL ISSUES

William C. Gay

1. Introduction: Wisdom and Power in International Relations

Plato said that as long as wisdom and power, or philosophy and politics, are separated, “there can be no rest from troubles.”1 In The Republic, he sought to forge such a union. For over two millennia, from Plato through John Rawls, philosophers have put forward models for the just state.2 Despite these ongoing efforts, W. B. Gallie contends, “No political philosopher has ever dreamed of looking for the criteria of a good state viz-à-viz [sic] other states.”3

I will argue that as long as wisdom and power are separated in international relations, we will continue to have problems. We need to forge a normative framework capable of addressing global issues. I further maintain that, in order to advance a global normative framework, achieving peace, or at least the “outlawry of war” championed by John Dewey, may well be the precondition for success in addressing the myriad global problems facing humanity.4

I agree with Ronald Glossop that among all the global issues we need to address, war is “humanity’s most pressing problem.”5 How can we adequately protect everyone’s human rights, secure economic well-being for all persons, preserve this planet’s rich biological diversity, and attend to other serious global concerns if we fail to end war?

The structure of my argument is as follows: I will begin by reviewing the parochial and warist implications of the focus on national sovereignty within Enlightenment political philosophy from Thomas Hobbes through Immanuel Kant. Then, after indicating how Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx point beyond the modern state in a way that would allow for the global application of normative principles, I will note that the Hegelian and Marxian traditions have not made this normative prospect focal. Finally, in order to develop a global normative framework, I will connect the efforts within twentieth-century philosophy to develop arenas of applied ethics to recent efforts in political science to develop a model of a humane world community. I will argue that we need to develop both nationally and internationally what
Dewey and Daniel Robinson termed political ethics and we need to pursue a set of global humanist values such as the ones proposed by Robert Johansen.  

2. National Sovereignty and the State of War


From the time of Hobbes, political philosophy has recognized that while the establishment of a nation may end an internal state of war, sovereign nations stand in a state of nature in relation to one another. In other words, sovereign nations are in a state of war with one another because no superior power dictates terms to them. The normative implications of the temporal and geographic limits of the social contract are especially stark in the absolutist political theory of Hobbes. Moral principles are inapplicable prior to the establishment of the commonwealth and outside the boundaries of the commonwealth, because in a state of war “nothing can be unjust.” Just as every one has a “right to every thing” in the prior state of nature, even so the commonwealth is not restricted in its international affairs since “covenants, without the sword, are but words.” From the very outset of social contract theory, a normative framework for addressing global issues has been absent.

The lack of restraints on a government’s international affairs receives a novel and disturbing twist in the liberal political theory of John Locke. Liberalism, like absolutism, is directed almost exclusively to the conduct of the internal affairs of the state. Although John Locke says very little about the international relations among states, he draws an important distinction in the executive branch between a national and an international function which he terms, respectively, the “executive” and the “federative.” Locke connects the executive to domestic actions dealing with regulations passed by the legislative branch and the federative with international actions, including “the power of war and peace, leagues and alliances.” He suggests that the federative role will often be united with the executive. He ends by noting that, despite the implications of its far-reaching powers, the federative “is much less capable to be directed by antecedent, standing, positive laws, than the executive; and so must necessarily be left to the prudence and wisdom of those whose hands it is in, to be managed for the public good.”

Within liberal political theory as well, principles of consent and morality do not bind governments in their international relations. Despite lip-service to accountability of the executive branch in international affairs found in such legislative provisions as the War Powers Act, the absence of genuine restraints continues largely unabated to this very day within liberal democracies. Consequently, liberal political theory likewise fails to provide a normative framework for addressing global issues.
The democratic political theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau does move toward a normative framework with potentially global applicability, but the formulation of this framework is abstract and underdeveloped. In contradistinction to Locke’s liberalism, Rousseau begins by placing the welfare of the community before individual rights. Instead of basing political decisions on majority rule, which Rousseau characterizes as the adding of all the private wills of the people, he favors the general will, which is based on the common interest.\(^10\) He intended this principle of common interest for internal application by a government founded on an initial unanimous consent. With his concept of the general will, he unwittingly provided a framework for addressing the common interests of people beyond the confines of their particular nation-state.

One common interest of humanity is to avoid senseless slaughter in the wars of states purportedly founded to avoid the high death toll from conflicts within nature. Rousseau observes about national wars, “More murders were committed in a single day of combat and more horrors in the capture of a single city than were committed in the state of nature during entire centuries over the entire face of the earth.”\(^11\) Rousseau was writing in the eighteenth century!

Even in Rousseau, consent of the people as a necessary condition for waging wars is absent. Democratic political theory, as well, fails to develop an explicit transnational normative framework capable of addressing global issues. Still, Rousseau provided inspiration to those who eventually moved beyond the confines of social contract theory.

B. Kant and the Noninterventionalism of a World Federation

More explicitly than any of his predecessors, Immanuel Kant sought to respond to the state of war that exists among nation-states. Even if, from the viewpoint of his cosmopolitanism, he regards individual human beings and not states as the constituents of the world community, he nevertheless applies to the relation among states his moral principle that we should always treat persons as ends and never as means. On this basis, in “Perpetual Peace,” he rejects the acquisition of one nation by another nation because such action would turn a nation into a thing.\(^12\) Kant wants each nation to regard every other nation as an end in itself and never as a mere means to satisfy its own narrow national interest. He contends that whenever the consent of citizens is not necessary for waging war, genuine peace is not possible.\(^13\)

In his essay “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent,” Kant draws on social contract theory and notes in his philosophy of history that just as the “unsociable sociability” of persons led to civil society, even so the “unsocial sociability” of nations may lead to international federation.\(^14\) For persons living since the formation of civil societies and before the formation of an international federation, Kant sees war as a central, if not primary, problem.
Beyond the devastation of war and prolonged recovery after, the escalating costs of preparing for war will eventually compel people to find an alternative. Until then, he contends we cannot expect any moral progress. When he considers the transition by individuals into civil society and by nations into international federation, Kant returns to a point he made in his philosophy of history and asserts that any such transition is governed by law and requires giving up lawless freedom.

Even if perpetual peace is unlikely, Kant stresses the importance of its possibility. Otherwise, if we knew that perpetual peace is unachievable, no duty to try to advance genuine peace would exist. For this reason, Kant contends that because politics can be guided by moral theory, it should be so guided by moral theory. Pulling these various points together, Kant concludes “Perpetual Peace” as follows:

If it is a duty to make the state of public right actual, though only through an unending process of approximation to it, and if at the same time there is a well founded hope that we can do it, then perpetual peace, which will follow the hitherto falsely so-called treaties of peace (but which are really only suspension of war), is no empty idea, but a task that, gradually completed, steadily approaches its goal (since the times during which equal progress occurs will, we hope, become ever shorter).

Despite Kant’s hope that perpetual peace is possible, the price he pays for accepting nation-states is noninterventionism. He explicitly states, “No nation shall forcibly interfere with the constitution and government of another,” and argues, “a foreign power’s interference would violate the rights of an independent people struggling with its internal ills.”

According to Gallie, Kant did not expect that internal problems of politics would be solved domestically before the external relations among nations are solved internationally. He observes that Kant is simply an heir to the Western tradition of statism, namely, Kant develops his political thinking from the point of view of taking the state for granted.

Gallie contends that from the time of Plato, political philosophy has focused on the good in relation to a particular city or state. Even though all states have also had neighbors who could be potential rivals, political philosophy has not addressed how to pursue the good in relation to these other states. Contrary to Gallie’s lament that political philosophers do not look for the criteria of a good state vis-à-vis others states, instead, they have done so in relation to issues of national security. Despite this tradition, Gallie stresses that Kant recognized that we need to confront questions about relations among nations. In particular, he says that Kant was more concerned than any other philosopher with questions of how nations should interact morally. Because of Kant’s noninter-
ventionalist position on the response of one nation to a perceived injustice in another nation, Gallie contends that Kant’s position is “disappointingly negative and palpably incomplete.”

3. Hegel’s Post-Modern State and Marx’s Non-Statist Community

A. Hegel and the Limits of the Nation-state

Despite his highly technical vocabulary and very abstract manner of writing, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel initiates a tradition of political philosophy that points beyond the nation-state. This claim may be surprising since, modern political philosophy often views Hegel as more of a statist than Kant. A close reading of Hegel reveals that he saw beyond the nation-state in a normative manner. While Kant succeeded in offering a means to end the state of war among nation-states, he did so in a manner that left unchallenged the concept of national sovereignty. Even though Hegel appears to be the champion of the nation-state, he sees its limitations. Then, thinking beyond these limitations, he speculates on a higher form of political organization.

Hegel, with Thomas Hobbes, holds that while sovereign nations may end the state of war domestically, they remain in relation to other nations in a state of nature which is a state of war.

In developing this view in *Philosophy of Right* and *Philosophy of History*, Hegel relies on his famous discussion of the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Mind*. Hegel maintains, “the state has individuality;” so, nations, like individuals, seek recognition. Hobbes, too, saw that the state is like an individual. He distinguished authors and actors and natural and artificial persons in such a way that the sovereign becomes an artificial person acting on the absolute authorization of the people who are the authors.

One of Hegel’s additions to the discussion of relations among nations concerns the implications of groups of states, alliances, and federations. He notes, “even if a number of states make themselves into a family, this group as an individual must engender an opposite and create an enemy.” His reasoning again follows his analysis in the master-slave dialectic. For him, a nation’s self-understanding as sovereign and autonomous—its “certainty” of itself—is insufficient. The “truth”—the external, objective validation—of a nation’s “certainty” of its sovereignty and autonomy comes from other nations. The recognition that nation-states receive is “conditional on the neighboring state’s judgment and will.” Although rational thinking would suggest states should accept international law and follow treaties, they remain “in a state of nature in relation to each other” because such compliance depends on their “particular wills” and not a “universal will with constitutional powers over them.” Hence,
Hegel contends that when disagreements cannot be resolved by these particular wills, they are settled by war.\(^{29}\)

Since avoiding war, like obtaining recognition, depends upon the will of an “other,” “perpetual peace” is “infected with contingency.”\(^{30}\) While war is a permanent possibility for nations, it operates under the same limit as the struggle to death by individuals presented in the *Phenomenology*. In order to preserve the possibility for eventual recognition, some people accept slavery and some nations accept surrender. As a means for obtaining recognition, war should facilitate the return to a condition of peace among the nations involved, albeit one in which unequal recognition occurs.\(^{31}\)

While on ethical grounds, Kant forbids wars of extermination, Hegel, on political grounds, opens up an intriguing possibility. If it is true that the slave is the one who eventually becomes free, it may be subjugated nations are the ones that will ultimately achieve freedom. In a war in which a nation faces extermination or surrender, surrender is the more rational alternative. The problem is: at exactly what lower levels of destruction is surrender more rational?\(^{32}\)

Hegel’s dialectical method points beyond self-consciousness to absolute knowledge and beyond nation-states to world mind. The dialectic of the idea of state suggests our theory and practice need to move beyond the immediacy of a single nation and the mediation or negation of one nation by other nations. Out of the “dialectic of the finitude” of the particular wills of nation-states arises the “universal mind” which is “free from all restriction” and which, properly, has the “highest right of all,” and, Hegel believes, this highest right will be exercised over nations in world history.\(^{33}\)

**B. Marx’s Non-Statist Goal**

In his political philosophy, Karl Marx, more than Rousseau or Hegel, affirms transnational interest. Marx’s concept of species-being (*Gattungswesen*) provides an inclusive concept of the human race which, from the outset, is both descriptive and prescriptive. Marx uses the potentiality of any member of the species as a critical index against which to measure the actuality of any member or class of the species.\(^{34}\) This concern continues throughout Marx’s subsequent writings. In *Das Capital*, for example, he notes the human interest in the labor-time (and its distribution) to attain subsistence.\(^{35}\) In this regard, Marx also states the obvious fundamental importance of “species preservation,” observing that persons “must be in a position to live in order to be able to make history.”\(^{36}\)

Marx stresses the centrality of satisfying human needs.\(^{37}\) He argues that socio-economic development should bring satisfaction to all people and not deprivation to any specific class.\(^{38}\) Obviously, the satisfaction of this condition has global implications. To achieve this goal, Marx advocated moving beyond a capitalist economy and the nation-states associated with it. Marx was also
aware, even by the mid-nineteenth century, of the global ecological effects of human productive activity. Criticizing the Romantic dichotomy between persons and nature, Marx observes pure nature no longer exists “except perhaps on a few Australian coral islands of recent origin.” Oil spills have eradicated even that possibility, as have other forms of industrial pollution of the environment.

The positions of Hegel and Marx take us to the outer limits of the development of political philosophy’s consideration of the nation-state. The normative framework for addressing peace and related global issues that we can glean from Hegel and Marx seems to require a move beyond the modern state. Whether this move can be a post-modern state or whether it will require a withering of or alternative to the state remains open to question. The subsequent Hegelian and Marxian traditions did not focus on these global dimensions of their thought. Even by the close of the nineteenth century, continuing with modern nation-states had been shown to be problematic and awareness of their limitations grew ever more acute with the devastating wars of the twentieth century. Not only had we developed no adequate means to move beyond the nation-state system, but we had no prospects for even reforming the relations among nation-states.

4. Political Ethics and a Humane World Community

A. The Development of Political Ethics by Dewey and Robinson

Despite the persistence and even intensification of global problems, such as war, which elude management—let alone resolution—by nation-states, this system of national sovereignty likely will continue well into the twenty-first century if not even longer. During the continuation of the nation-state system, philosophy need not remain on the sidelines, offering only theoretically abstract and politically irrelevant reflections. By expanding the concept of applied philosophy, we can develop useful normative frameworks for responding to problems within and among nation-states. To do so requires moving applied philosophy beyond professional ethics to political ethics. Interestingly, the basis for political ethics developed prior to the recent surge of interest in professional ethics.

Since the very beginning of the twentieth century, ethicists have attempted to apply ethics to national and international politics. In these efforts, Dewey provided what are probably the most prolific and influential contributions. Dewey’s pragmatism, which is so closely associated with an advocacy for democracy, increasingly addressed global issues and did so from a perspective that aimed to avoid or at least reduce reliance on violence. As Charles Howlett observes, the destruction of World War I, and especially the devastation wrought by nuclear weapons in World War II, led Dewey to aim for “a
new democratic organization in which human beings, not citizens of different nations, would have a say in the execution of world peace.”

In his “Ethics and International Relations,” which appeared in the first volume of Foreign Affairs in 1923, Dewey questions whether we can rely on utilitarianism in the international arena, since the motives to which it appeals—general happiness—“have little chance to operate in international affairs.” Instead, in seeking to make possible reliance on ethics in international relations, he proposes that the “one legal change” which could facilitate “enormous change” is the outlawry of war. For Dewey, as Robert Westbrook notes, “outlawing war was both an end of and means to the democratization of politics.” He adds, “Dewey’s writings on outlawry did for the first time envision a politics consistent with his ethics.” We have here, in relation to the “least change,” a shift from making philosophers kings to making wars illegal.

In his 1928 essay “If War Were Outlawed,” Dewey makes clear the need for a transnational normative framework for dealing with war. He states:

When war is a crime by the law of nations, conscience is on the side of the law of one’s community and law is on the side of conscience. The warlike people will then be the non-patriotic and the criminals. The pacifist then becomes the active patriot-loyal citizen, instead of an objector, a nuisance and a menace, or a passive obstructionist. The appeasement of the world can never be brought about as long as the public conscience and public law remain at odds with each other.

Dewey was then writing in suspicion of United States’ involvement in the proposed League of Nations. As he wrote elsewhere in the same year, he opposed involvement because “entanglement in that system means entanglement in a war system,” while he would support United States’ participation in an international association if “international politics are cut loose from war and the threat of force.”

Some would suggest that, in the context of current terminology, Dewey would prefer the term “social ethics” to “political ethics.” In writing, he more frequently used the term “social ethics.” Regardless, he is making transnational applications of normative principles, but not as an “externally imposed authority” who “knows” what should be done. On the contrary, he denied that any normative system provided a straightforward decision mechanism on which one could rely. Instead, as Abraham Edel and Elizabeth Flower contend regarding what could be called Dewey’s approach to applied ethics:

The preliminary step is the diagnosis, the analysis of what kind of problem is involved, its locus in the situation, what resources are available to
handle conflicts claims, goods, values, and what is required in a constructive effort to resolve the problem-situation.47

Along with Ludwig Wittgenstein, Dewey facilitates a distinctive type of applied philosophy in which he seeks to tackle the seemingly most intractable global problems.48 For Dewey, war, particularly war in the nuclear age, poses such a challenge. In the 1948 edition of *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, he stresses that the destructive use made of atomic fission “occurred not only in a war but because of the existence of war.”49 Dewey was not alone in applying philosophy to the dangers introduced by nuclear weapons; others who did so include Albert Camus and Bertrand Russell.50

Despite Dewey’s major contribution, the explicit development of political ethics as a type of applied ethics that goes beyond professional ethics should be credited to Robinson. In *The Principles of Conduct*, he develops, as a complement to theoretical ethics, a concept of applied ethics. At progressively broader levels, personal ethics is the application of ethics to individual relations, professional ethics is the application of ethics to groups, and political ethics is the application of ethics to relations among peoples.51 This delineation of these three areas corresponds to, and is based on, the arenas designated by Hegel as the family, civil society, and the state.52 But the issue is not so much who initiated this type of applied ethics or what specific term is used for its international application. The point is that within the tradition of applied philosophy a normative framework exists for moving beyond professional ethics to the ethical assessment of global issues.

**B. The Normative World Order System of Johansen**

War poses the most serious challenge to international ethics, but not the only one. A comprehensive normative framework for addressing global issues needs to articulate the key values that it seeks to advance. A group of value-oriented political scientists associated with the World Policy Institute (formerly the Institute for World Policy) has taken the lead in this area. One of its founding works is Robert Johansen’s *The National Interest and the Human Interest*. His distinction between national interest and human interest is obvious. He sees pursuit of national interest as thwarting an adequate resolution of the global problems facing humanity. Beyond our differences are our similarities as members of the human race and its inhabitants, along with other species of the global ecosystem. The concept of human interest, like Rousseau’s general will and Marx’s species-being, gives priority to our broader interests and facilitates dealing with global issues in ways not subject to the limitations that occur with the particularist interests, the national interest, of sovereign states.
At the outset, Johansen considers five alternative models for achieving world order. He compares the Westphalian nation-state system of the last two centuries, in which nation-states regard themselves as sovereign and the international community regards interference in their internal affairs to be warranted only if a nation invades the territorial sovereignty of another nation, to the concert of great powers, a concert of multinational corporations, and world government with the World Policy Institute’s humane world community.

As he notes, the institute’s four key world order values are: (1) peace without national military arsenals, (2) economic well-being for all inhabitants on the earth, (3) universal human rights and social justice, and (4) ecological balance. The humane world community is the only one of the five alternatives considered that ranks high on all four global humanist values and on both levels of human solidarity also assessed by Johansen (see table 1). World government and a concert of multinational corporations receive a high rating on advancing peace but not on much else. By contrast, the concert of great powers is split between high and medium ratings, while at the very bottom of the scale is the current Westphalian nation-state system, which ranks low on all four of the global humanist values, as well as low on achieving horizontal or transnational human solidarity. From a normative perspective, the humane world community appears to articulate the vision of the norms and mechanism missing in political philosophy.

In the first place, as Johansen notes, from a global perspective “the human race is the constituency to consider in policymaking.” An orientation to the human race should include not only horizontal (transnational) but also vertical (trans-class) considerations. In addition, at both the economic and political levels, the focus should be on service to “human needs.” Finally, we need to include consideration of the planetary eco-system as a whole. As Johansen puts it, “the entire planet, the atmosphere around it, and the high seas are of prime concern.”

By utilizing the global humanist values proposed by Johansen, political philosophers can have a normative framework adequate for addressing peace and many other global issues.

5. Conclusion: The Future of Political Ethics

What will be the future of political ethics? So far, political ethics has hardly been more than a suggestion at the periphery of discussions in political philosophy and especially in politics. At the beginning of the twentieth century, we could have said the same for professional ethics. Now, most hospitals have ethics boards. Even some major corporations conduct training in business ethics. Could political ethics eventually gain a similar respectability? To date, the feasibility of this prospect remains largely untested.
Table 1. A Summary Comparison of Alternative World Order Systems, 1980–2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership</th>
<th>Westphalian nation-state system</th>
<th>Concert of great powers</th>
<th>Concert of multinational corporations</th>
<th>World government</th>
<th>Humane world community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Aspirations</td>
<td>Sovereign independence, unregulated behavior</td>
<td>Geopolitical stability, political and economic inequality</td>
<td>Unregulated economic growth, profit maximization, capital intensive technology, high consumption</td>
<td>Enforced disarmament, strengthened international institutions</td>
<td>Dependable peace, economic well-being for all, respect for human rights and social justice, ecological balance</td>
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<tr>
<th>Performance in implementing global humanist values:</th>
<th>Peace</th>
<th>Economic well-being</th>
<th>Social justice</th>
<th>Ecological balance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic well-being</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Social justice</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Ecological balance</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<th>Performance in achieving human solidarity:</th>
<th>Vertical (transclass) identity</th>
<th>Horizontal (transnational) identity</th>
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<td>Vertical (transclass) identity</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Horizontal (transnational) identity</td>
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Low | Medium | High | Medium | High
If a sufficient number of philosophers attended to these issues, a dramatic change could occur that might quickly overcome the amorality of the political realism that Hobbes and the other Enlightenment political philosophers bequeathed to the modern world. As a result, we could close the gap between wisdom and power noted by Plato not only domestically but also internationally. Political ethics offers a means to join wisdom and power in confronting the global issues facing humanity.

NOTES

8. Ibid., pp. 634, 649.
17. Ibid., p. 370; p. 135.
18. Ibid., p. 386; p. 139.
25. Ibid., ¶ 331.
28. Ibid., ¶ 321.
31. Ibid., ¶ 338.
37. Ibid., p. 28 (German), p. 156 (English).


54. Ibid. pp. 34–35.

55. Ibid., p. 21.