

University of Groningen

Higher prudence as the supreme virtue in international politics

Kamminga, M.R.

Published in:
Philica

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2008

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Kamminga, M. R. (2008). Higher prudence as the supreme virtue in international politics. *Philica*, [134].

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.

- Philica front
- pageSearchAbout
- PhilicaTake the tour
- Publish your workWork
- needing reviewMost
- popular entriesHighest-rated entriesRecent
- reviews
- How to cite
- PhilicaFAQsSupport
- PhilicaContact usGet confirmed status

Higher Prudence as the Supreme Virtue in International Politics

[Menno R. Kamminga](#) ✓✱ (*International Relations and International Organization, University of Groningen*)

Published in inter.philica.com

Abstract

This article defends a radical, morally ambitious version of prudence in international politics. Thus, it claims that, rather than the 'lower prudence' favoured by political realist Hans Morgenthau, 'higher prudence' (Cochran 1983) should be regarded as the supreme virtue in international politics. This claim is based on a threefold argument. First, while Morgenthau rightly stresses the key importance of prudence for international political decision making, his own understanding of prudence lacks adequate ethical development and justification. Second, prudence in international politics must accept the ultimate authority of the 'theoretical wisdom' of cosmopolitan justice. Third, as international 'practical wisdom', prudence in international politics should accept risk for the ethically relevant yet non-basic values of national survival and international order for the sake of cosmopolitan justice, safeguarding only core national interests and values. Theoretically, higher prudence is a key concept of an international ethics that has advanced from political realism to cosmopolitan pluralism by including recent cosmopolitan insights.

Keywords: international ethics, prudence, political realism, cosmopolitanism, pluralism

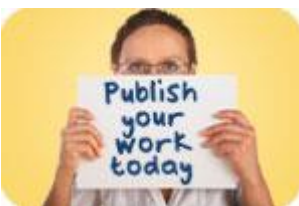
Article body

Introduction

In this article, I defend a radical, morally ambitious version of prudence, or practical wisdom, in international politics. Employing terminology developed by Christian political ethicist Clarke Cochran (1983), I shall argue that, rather than the 'lower prudence' Hans Morgenthau (1973, 1-15; cf. also Hyde-Price 2008, 42-43), the founding father of political realism, favours, 'higher prudence' should be regarded as the supreme virtue in international politics. For Morgenthau, prudent statecraft 'minimizes risks and maximizes benefits' (Morgenthau 1973, 8) for the nation-state and its citizens; it 'means above all steering the ship of state through the turbulent waters of international politics' (cf. Coll 1999, 93). Morgenthau's view, then, resembles the 'lower prudence' so evident in the Old Testament, the Pauline letters, Augustine, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Lower prudence 'is cautious..., defensive, focused on survival and respect...,...conservative and realistic[;] values...stability because it understands the fragility of order and the evils spawned by social chaos[;] recognizes the place of...self-interest[; and] appreciates the limits of...possibility' (Cochran 1983, 195). By contrast, higher prudence, for which I shall argue, comes closest to the understanding of prudence in the Gospels and Aquinas. Higher prudence 'is active, caring more for justice than survival and for love than respect[;] takes risks in the interest of realizing higher values[; and contends] that the only genuine peace and stability are those founded on...justice and mercy' (Cochran 1983, 195-196). Remarkably, higher prudence, which 'appreciates lower prudence' (Cochran 1983, 196) for its valuing of order against revolt, yet is strongly sensitive to the demands of cosmopolitan ethics, seems more consistent with a deeper, status quo questioning, 'critical dimension' of Morgenthau's work on politics (Cozette 2008; cf. Lang 2007; Murray 1997). For example, Morgenthau (1973, 10) is well aware that the demands of morality might someday result in international conduct or an international system very different from what exists at present.

Following Alberto Coll, I take prudence per se to have the following features: 'First, [it recognizes] the difficulty of translating ethical intentions and purposes into policies that will produce morally sound results...Second, [it] draws attention to the statesman's character as a key component of his ability to act

NEWS: The SOAP Project, in collaboration with CERN, are conducting a [survey on open-access publishing](#). Please take a moment to give them your views



We aim to suit all browsers, but recommend Firefox particularly:

morally in the political world' (Coll 1999, 75-76). In sum, most typical of prudence is a leader's ability to deliberate well. Thus, like Coll (1999), I understand prudence to have moral, Aristotelian and Christian, roots, rather than self-interested, Machiavellian or Hobbesian ones. The prudence tradition, then, endorses the relative, not absolute, autonomy of the political sphere, clustering around 'the general proposition that, although politics is distinct from morality, it is ultimately grounded in and justified by it' (Coll 1999, 76). Accordingly, I accept Coll's broad understanding of the two Aristotelian intellectual excellences of 'theoretical wisdom' and 'practical wisdom': 'For all its remarkable independence of means, Aristotelian prudence is ultimately subject to the "theoretical" wisdom of what we might call moral philosophy and theology. The practical wisdom...of the political world needs the illumination of a higher wisdom' (Coll 1999, 84).[1]

My thesis of higher prudence being the supreme international virtue will be based on a threefold argument. First, while Morgenthau rightly stresses the key importance of prudence for international political decision making, his own understanding of prudence lacks adequate ethical development and justification. Second, prudence in international politics must accept the ultimate authority of the 'theoretical wisdom' of cosmopolitan justice. Third, as international 'practical wisdom', prudence in international politics should accept risk for the morally relevant yet non-basic values of national survival and international order for the sake of cosmopolitan justice, safeguarding only core national interests and values. Theoretically, higher prudence is a key concept of an international ethics that has advanced from political realism to cosmopolitan pluralism by including recent cosmopolitan insights.

Realism's lower prudence and its shortcomings

It is worth quoting in full the famous and often discussed passage in Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* about the key role of prudence in international conduct:

'Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place. The individual may say for himself: 'Fiat justitia, pereat mundus (Let justice be done, even if the world perish),' but the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care. Both individual and state must judge political action by universal moral principles, such as that of liberty. Yet while the individual has a moral right to sacrifice himself in defense of such a moral principle, the state has no right to let its moral disapprobation of the infringement of liberty get in the way of successful political action, itself inspired by the moral principle of national survival. There can be no political morality without prudence; that is, without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly moral action. Realism, then, considers prudence – the weighing of the consequences of alternative political actions – to be the supreme virtue in politics. Ethics in the abstract judges action by its conformity with the moral law; political ethics judges action by its political consequences' (Morgenthau 1973, 10-11).

Morgenthau's understanding of prudence clearly has Aristotelian roots (Lang 2007; cf. Murray 1996; 1997). Thus, he views prudence as 'consideration', or 'weighing', and makes a distinction between 'ethics in the abstract' and 'political ethics', one which reflects the distinction between the theoretical wisdom of moral philosophy and the practical wisdom of political prudence.

But why would Morgenthau be right to attach key importance to prudence in international political decision making? Certainly, the prudence tradition highlights valuable personal characteristics, such as the capacity to deliberate; the exercise of self-control and foresight against the passions and delusions of the mind; the ability to give due regard to circumstances; an appreciation for equity and forgiveness; and the capacity to learn to live with ambiguity, incompleteness, and inconclusiveness (Coll 1999; Dobel 1998). However, contemporary ethicists concerned with international moral principles are critical of the prudence tradition, objecting that prudence cannot offer adequate moral guidance to political leadership. Prudence fails to give guidance that is concrete and rational rather than intuitionist (see Coll 1999, 95); or prudence is simply a mask for enlightened self-interest (cf. Beitz 1999, 23, 56-59). Thus, since the last quarter of the twentieth century, international ethics has turned away from political realism towards a cosmopolitanism based on analytical philosophy. Whereas realism theorized mainly about the threat and avoidance of aggression and nuclear war, cosmopolitan liberalism – cosmopolitanism, for short - has placed quite different issues on the ethical agenda: gross violations of human rights, widespread poverty and hunger, and climate change. Consequently, it has stressed the need for developing and implementing principles of global (distributive) justice (Beitz 1999; Pogge 1989, 2002; Barry 1991; Moellendorf 2002; Singer 2002; Caney 2005). Cosmopolitanism is now leading the charge and may well do so for the foreseeable future (Rengger 2000, 763-764), although it meets opposition from 'internationalist' liberals, who favour more limited, nation-bound conceptions of distributive justice (cf. Miller 1995; Rawls 1999; see also the next section). If this outcome is right, then it would seem that prudence is obsolete, thus not of primary international ethical interest.

Yet prudence does have serious relevance for international conduct, because of, first, the personal and particular nature of the political decision making process and, second, the tragic nature of international politics. Thus, first, political decision making is always the work of (wo)men operating within unique conditions that both enable and constrain, and so criteria are needed to establish who may be qualified for the task. Moral principles may be translated into policies only through the mediation of a complex process in which humans play a critical role. A correct set of moral principles is not sufficient to ensure the moral soundness of policies informed by such principles. In Aristotelian terms: 'theoretical wisdom does not become embodied in action except through a filtering process that includes the reason, imagination, will, choices, and particular acts of particular human beings' (Coll 1999, 96). That is why the states(wo)man's character, including his (or her) deep predispositions, and intellectual and moral skills, matters so much. Moreover, while it may not rest on some exact (set of) standard(s), prudence will mitigate some of the worst errors to which political leaders are inclined, such as hubris, mean-spiritedness, self-righteousness, moral fanaticism, and the tendency to give primacy to ideological abstractions. 'A man who was nothing but "political man" would be a beast, for he would be completely lacking in moral restraints. A man who was nothing but "moral man" would be a fool, for he would be completely lacking in prudence' (Morgenthau 1973, 14). Most directly, though, the moral reasoning process – the balancing of motives, means, and consequences, and the cultivation of inward attitudes and habits that should accompany this process – is unavoidable for any political practitioner or theorist confronted by moral dilemmas. Thus, if political decision making is to be moral – rather than cynical, moralist or ideologically rigid – prudence seems inescapable (Coll 1999, 95-98; Dobel 1998, 76; Cochran 1983, 192, 195-196; cf. Amstutz 2005, 40-41, 223-224).

Second, from the perspective of individual personal experience, international politics seems largely tragic, inevitably engendering bad outcomes. Morgenthau's insistence on the importance of prudence largely results from his 'tragic' view of international politics (Hyde-Price 2008, especially 43-44, cf. Lang 2007; Mearsheimer 2001; Frost 2003, Mayall 2003, Lebow 2005, Brown 2007). What Morgenthau means by 'the tragic nature of political choice and political action' (Myers 1999, 14) is the inevitability – not simply the historical factuality, as Beitz (1999, 185-199), the cosmopolitan, suggests – of bad outcomes, given decision makers' inability to fully determine or predict policy outcomes, while they do bear responsibility for these outcomes (cf. Lang 2007, 28-30; Murray 1996, 106). I now try to show that Morgenthau's prudence view is indeed rooted in a plausibly practical understanding of the international context.

International practice seems tragic because of at least two human experiences: incompatible social obligations and incompatible views about the right way to live. As Mervyn Frost (2003, 484-487) demonstrates, incompatible social obligations result from our embeddedness in moral arrangements that are contradictory, conflictual, and ambiguous. Tragedies result from our simultaneous participation in groups such as families, military formations, churches, nations and states. By acting in terms of the morality internal to one practice we undermine our moral standing in another. In international politics, Frost (2003, 490-491) points out, many of us have found ourselves to be the tragic victims of what appears to be an agonistic relationship between the two most powerful global practices of our time. We consider ourselves to be rights holders in the global society of rights holders. As members of this global civil society we criticize actors who do not respect people's civil society rights in a rather neutral, impersonal way. However, we simultaneously see ourselves as bearers of citizenship rights within the society of democratic and democratizing states. As such, we expect others to respect the rights of our sovereign state within which we are constituted as citizens. We expect others to recognize our state's right to non-interference in its domestic affairs. Our simultaneous membership of these two social practices regularly puts us into predicaments in which whatever we do has tragic consequences. Either we support our fellow citizens and undermine the moral commitments we have as members of the global civil society, or we uphold the individual rights that civilians have as members of the global society and may be criticized for ignoring the best interests of our fellow citizens. The conflicts involved are serious: protectionism versus free trade, open or closed borders for refugees, humanitarianism versus sovereignty, humanitarian intervention versus self-determination, global poverty relief versus duties to our fellow-citizens (and to our own personal projects), and global distributive justice versus national self-interest (Frost 2003, 491-492; Brown 2007, 9). The experience that 'to act is to do wrong to someone' (Brown 2007, 9) seems especially painful in conflicts arising from scarcity of essential resources, notably (climate polluting) fossil fuels. As Alasdair MacIntyre has written:

'What your community requires as the material prerequisites for your survival as a distinctive community and your growth into a distinctive nation may be exclusive use of the same or some of the same natural resources as my community requires for its survival and growth into a distinctive nation. When such a conflict arises, the standpoint of impersonal morality requires an allocation of goods such that each individual person counts for one and no more than one, while the patriotic standpoint requires that I strive to further the interests of my community and you to strive to further those of yours' (MacIntyre 1984: 6).

A second source of the experience of international tragedy is formed by incompatible differences between communities about the right way for each to live. To quote MacIntyre again:

'[T]he impersonal standpoint...requires neutrality...also between rival and competing sets of beliefs about the best way for human beings to live...Hence in conflicts between national or other communities over ways of life, [this] standpoint...will once again be that of an impersonal arbiter, adjudicating in ways that give equal weight to each person's needs, desires, beliefs about the good and the like, while the patriot is once again required to be partisan [and to defend the particular way of life of his or her community]' (MacIntyre 1984: 6-7).

It should be emphasized that international tragedy as characterized above is not basically ethical. The arguments of Frost, Brown, and MacIntyre do not suffice to show that no fundamental solution to the dilemmas outlined exists. Yet this state of tragedy is clearly ethically relevant: it makes a mere international application of moral principles lead to bad results. Thus, decision makers in international politics should not ignore it. Indeed, dealing with tragedy requires of them that they strike some balance or another between the obligations and value differences individual persons encounter.[2] Put differently, a teleological political ethics of ultimate ends should be replaced by non-teleological politics of responsibility (Hyde-Price 2008, 40-41), of which openness to experience is an essential ingredient.[3]

However, while we should agree with Morgenthau that prudence is the 'X factor' that proper international conduct cannot miss, we must also judge his understanding of prudence as quoted above to go without adequate ethical elaboration and justification. For one thing, Morgenthau does not systematically elaborate his 'ethics in the abstract', so that the content and justification of his 'universal moral principles' - he merely mentions 'justice' and 'liberty' - remains puzzling (cf. Murray 1996, 106, but cf. also Cozette 2008, 19). For another, the apparent peripheral role of universal moral principles in his 'political ethics' lacks adequate justification. Thus, it remains unclear why 'national survival', if taken to mean more than the survival of the state's citizens, should be seen as a 'moral principle' (cf. Beitz 1999, 54-55) - one even capable of overriding the universal moral principle of 'liberty' - and why, apparently, 'successful political action' means, first of all, good 'political consequences' for the nation-state itself. Indeed, Morgenthau's claim that 'universal moral principles...must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place' seems rather meaningless ethically, as the rest of the quoted passage leaves it open to what extent the 'filtering' should take place in political practice. Not surprisingly, non-realist ethicists have regarded Morgenthau as an international moral sceptic (Beitz 1999, 11-66; 2005, 410-411; Cohen 1984, 310-311), even if clearly an unintentional one. In short, the main problem of Morgenthau's notion of lower prudence is that its guiding moral force is weak and that it, in the absence of a proper defence, is possibly even untenable. An adequate understanding of international prudence must be significantly clearer about theoretical wisdom (abstract ethics) and practical wisdom (political ethics) than Morgenthau's conception.

Cosmopolitan justice as theoretical wisdom

Theoretical wisdom aims at knowledge of first, necessary, and non-contingent principles - in ethics about what is really right and wrong: it is 'the most precise kind of knowledge' (Aristotle 2002, VI, 1141a, 16). I assume that in international ethics we should take 'global justice' as the ultimate target. But why must international prudence accept the ultimate authority of the 'cosmopolitan' conception of global justice? To demonstrate this, I argue that of both the authoritative conceptions that currently exist, the cosmopolitan conception of global justice is superior to the internationalist one from the theoretical wisdom perspective of moral philosophy.

Charles Beitz (1999, 199-200, 214-216) has offered very clear characterizations of both internationalist justice and cosmopolitan justice. The justice conception of internationalism (or 'social liberalism', as Beitz calls it) is rooted in a two-level understanding of global society, in which 'state-level societies have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their people', while 'the international community' should protect 'background conditions in which just domestic societies can develop and flourish' (Beitz 1999, 215). Conceiving societies as the agents of global justice, the internationalist object is 'to establish a political equality of states, each committed to and capable of satisfying the human rights and basic needs of its own people' (Beitz 1999, 215). 'Because domestic societies...are taken to have nonderivative moral significance, there is a natural basis for...a priority of compatriots' (Beitz 1999, 215). By contrast, cosmopolitan justice is rooted in the idea that principles should be identified that are acceptable from a point of view in which each individual person's prospects are equally represented: 'every human being has a global stature as the ultimate unit of moral concern' (Beitz 1999, 199). Because cosmopolitanism 'accords no privilege to domestic societies or to national [or other] states', its conception of justice entails the global extension of the (distributive) 'justice [criteria] that apply within a single society' (Beitz 1999, 215). As Beitz remarks, one main advantage of internationalism is its 'closer accord with widely held beliefs about the [moral] significance of the national community', and one main advantage of cosmopolitanism is its 'theoretical attractiveness of bringing global and sectional considerations within a single [transparently egalitarian viewpoint]' (1999, 216). As Beitz also notes, we cannot endorse both: internationalism 'accepts the national community as having a moral status which cosmopolitanism must regard as suspect' (1999, 216).

Why, then, should we take the cosmopolitan conception to be superior from the perspective of moral philosophy? Moral philosophy entails critical, impartial reflection on moral intuitions and conventional moral beliefs, assuming that '[i]t is the rights and interests of persons that are of fundamental importance from the moral point of view' (Beitz 1999, 55). In taking individual persons as fundamental, cosmopolitanism is wholly in line with this moral philosophical perspective; insofar as it takes societies as fundamental, internationalism (Miller 1995; Rawls 1999) is not. Indeed, internationalism entails a compromise between cosmopolitan theory and nationalist practice, precisely because it seeks to stay close to actual beliefs of people about the value of their national community. From a moral philosophical perspective, internationalist 'justice' is troublingly uncritical: the beliefs that people(s) happen to have are not necessarily just. Also, to make first principles of morality dependent on (contingent) cultural or political practice (Sangiovanni 2008) is to blur the distinction between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom within political ethics. From the perspective of theoretical wisdom, a further problem is that, as Ernest Gellner (1983, 6) has noted, 'nations, like states, are a contingency, and not a universal necessity', their functionality in the modern world notwithstanding. Remarkably, suggesting that liberal democracy is morally superior to other forms of society and that only a liberal world can be fully just, Rawls (1999, 62), the most important internationalist, should concur. It is consistent with his original method of 'moral philosophy' (Rawls 1971; later abandoned for one of 'political philosophy'; Rawls 1993; 1999; cf. also Miller's 2000, 174 rather sudden, basic ethical acceptance of a 'weakly egalitarian' understanding of global justice, discussed in Kamminga 2003, 24). By contrast, cosmopolitanism does not depend upon contingency. It is morally prior 'because the ultimate units of the great society of all mankind are not states (or nations, tribes, empires, classes or parties) but individual human beings, which are permanent and indestructible in a sense in which groupings of them...are not' (Bull 2002, 21).[4] Therefore, justice is cosmopolitan: 'a more or less egalitarian principle of...distributive justice' (Beitz 1999a, 208, cf. 198-199, 216; contra Shapcott 2008, 190), or perhaps a principle of corrective justice based on a general duty not to cause harm (Pogge 2002), is globally binding. When it comes to common resources such as the capacity of the atmosphere to absorb greenhouse gas emission, it seems hard to deny that the principle 'an equal share for everyone' is the most reasonable and fair starting-point (Singer, 2002, 35-36). Cosmopolitan justice may entail a global concern for basic civil and political rights, and further mean that 'persons have a human right to subsistence', 'persons of different nations should enjoy equal opportunities', '[e]veryone...has the right to equal pay for equal work', and '[b]enefiting people matters more the worse off these people are' (Caney, 2005, 122-124).

Importantly, to understand the cosmopolitan conception of justice in terms of theoretical wisdom is to understand cosmopolitan justice as pre-political rather than political (cf. Nagel 2005). However, this is not how cosmopolitans tend to see things. They usually insist on the direct practical relevance of their principles: these tell us what we should do or not do. Thus, for Beitz (1999, 199-200, cf. 5), cosmopolitanism 'applies to the whole world the maxim that choices about what policies we should prefer, or what institutions we should establish, should be based on an impartial consideration of the claims of each person who would be affected'. Beitz (1999, 175-176) even claims that 'a war of self-defense fought by an affluent nation against a poorer nation pressing legitimate claims under the global principles...might [give] rise to a justified refusal to participate in the affluent nation's armed forces'. And Singer (2002), the utilitarian, consistently insists that we should live by demanding altruistic principles and protect the value of human life everywhere, as that value is greater than any personal project or national solidarity people may cherish. Remarkably, some of cosmopolitanism's critics seem to share this view. Thus, they have criticized cosmopolitan justice as unrealistic in a world of cultural pluralism, of international anarchy (Shapcott 2008, 186-190; Kamminga 2006), and of humans with limited moral motivations (Miller 1995, 57-58; but cf. Ypi 2008, 54-58). And Chris Brown (2007, 11-12; cf. 2002, 184-185) criticizes cosmopolitanism's dominance in international ethics by suggesting that it 'is a discourse that is largely devoid of a sense of the tragic dimension to human existence, and that this absence is intellectually and politically debilitating'. According to him, cosmopolitans such as Barry, Beitz, and Pogge, and especially Singer, do not see that their pleas for global redistribution in practice go at the expense of Western workers, which is a tragedy. Cosmopolitanism's strive for analytical clarity has been bought at a price.[5]

Yet, and consistent with my earlier defence of the practical necessity of prudence, I would insist against both friends and enemies of cosmopolitanism that one need not, and should not, understand its conception of global justice to have direct political relevance. To do so is to make cosmopolitan justice vulnerable for the (then indeed plausible) criticisms just mentioned and thus to miss cosmopolitanism's real contribution: it is precisely its analytical rigour and insistence on clarity and precision in the use of moral concepts that endow it with theoretical wisdom. Cosmopolitan justice functions as a pre-political yet politically authoritative perspective that critically transcends particularities, memberships, and engagements – a perspective from which judgements can be made about the good and bad of transnational political systems, with equal concern for the rights and interests of individuals as its yardstick. Even if we may never have the proper institutional means to enforce the equal treatment of persons globally, international political orders that sustain unequal treatment may still lack ultimate moral justification. To say it with John Vincent (1986, 124-125): 'From [cosmopolitan justice] we keep the sense of direction.'

Now that we have seen why international prudence must accept the ultimate authority of cosmopolitan theoretical wisdom, we must consider to what extent cosmopolitan justice actually should play a role in moral deliberation about international politics.

International practical wisdom: cosmopolitan justice under pluralist conditions

Practical wisdom is concerned with perception, with knowing the right thing to do in a particular circumstance. It deals with the contingent, with things that change, and with knowing how to seek successful means to justice. Prudence 'is not only about what is universal, but needs to discern the particulars as well, since it has to do with action, and action is concerned with particulars' (Aristotle 2002, VI, 1141b, 15-16). Thus, international prudence would seem to be about both cosmopolitan justice and certain (inter)national 'particulars'. I now argue that practical wisdom in international politics should be higher prudence, and thus should still make serious room for considerations of cosmopolitan justice. That is, I argue that international prudence should be willing to take risk with the ethically relevant yet non-basic values of national survival and international order, protecting only core national interests and values at the expense of cosmopolitan justice.

If we should take higher prudence to be the supreme international virtue, then the answer to the basic question - to what extent should international practical wisdom deviate from the theoretical wisdom of cosmopolitan justice? - would roughly be: 'although not not at all, only to a small degree'. However, why, exactly, not 'not at all'? To start with, political leadership, if it is to be prudent, should somehow include certain particulars in the deliberation process. First, international prudence should acknowledge the political value of community. Surely it would be unwise for political leaders to ignore widely shared beliefs about the value of the national community. The national community, while a contingency and thus not morally fundamental, is still the source of loyalty, solidarity, and moral-cultural identity for many people in the modern world. Miller (2000, 166) is probably correct to observe that 'for a great many people it matters a great deal that they belong to a particular nation, that the nation should continue to exist, and that it should enjoy self-determination'. Second, I think that prudence should accept the state as the major actor in 'politics in the absence of government' (Waltz 1979, 89) and thus the political value of order between states. Here I accept the arguments of the English School (Bull 2002), Wendtian constructivism (Wendt 1999), and even ecologists (Eckersley 2004; cf. Barry and Eckersley 2005) about the enduringly positive role of the state in world affairs as opposed to other actors. The state system is not just the actual starting-point for action; it also promotes international order on the basis of the shared interests and values of its members. Let me say, then, that national survival and international order are values, albeit non-ultimate ones, that should somehow be included in practical decision making. Indeed, this sensitivity to common sense is the lower prudence contribution that should in any event be appreciated.

Next it can be shown that a clear practical tension exists between cosmopolitan justice on the one hand and national survival and international order on the other. Hedley Bull's account of cosmopolitan justice - which includes what he calls 'world justice' and 'human justice' - is very instructive here:

'Demands for world justice [- a more equitable distribution of wealth among all individual members of human society, or...minimum standards of wealth or welfare within this society -] are fully realisable, if at all, only in the context of a world or cosmopolitan society...[To pursue the idea of world justice in the context of the system and society of states is to enter into conflict with the devices through which order is at present maintained (Bull 2002, 84-85, cf. 81)...The framework of international order is inhospitable also to demands for human justice...International society takes account of the notion of human rights...that may be asserted against the state to which particular human beings belong, but it is inhibited from giving effect to them, except selectively and in a distorted way. If international society were really to treat human justice as primary[,] then in a situation in which there is no agreement as to what human rights or in what hierarchy of priorities they should be arranged, the result could only be to undermine international order' (Bull 2002, 85).

Clearly, then, if cosmopolitan justice should play a role in international decision making, it must do so in competition with order and survival and so cannot be realized completely. The practical cosmopolitan would be a value pluralist, for whom justice is the primary, but not overall, overriding value.

However, in view of the dangers indicated by Bull, why should we not adopt lower prudence entirely, and thus accept its presumable, rough answer to the question of to what extent international wisdom should deviate from the theoretical wisdom of cosmopolitan justice: 'to a large degree, or even completely'? Such an answer seems even more plausible if we take into account that it may not be obvious why, ethically, political leaders within a decentralized states system should have anything to do with cosmopolitan justice. After all, it is their citizens who have such obligations in the first place, and states and their leaders seem in no position to replace individual persons as agents of cosmopolitan justice; they seem primarily agents

of local justice. It would be appropriate for a world government, if that legitimately represented the world's individuals, to carry out existing global distributive obligations. But if a world government is both unrealistic and undesirable, then it does not obviously follow that some derivative obligation to do so must fall on states, as they happen to be dominantly present (Kamm 2006, 33-34).

Yet I believe that international lower prudence alone is not acceptable. Whereas the burden of proof lies with lower prudence – within the prudence tradition, it creates the largest gap with cosmopolitan justice – arguably it cannot carry this burden. Lower prudence is right in the sense that political leaders ought not to sacrifice national survival and international order entirely for the sake of cosmopolitan justice. Indeed, leaders ought not to destroy the relative autonomy of the international sphere. However, lower prudence is wrong to treat national survival and international order as the main goal for a scrupulous weighing of costs and benefits and thus as more or less sacrosanct. If the value of cosmopolitan justice is of ultimate significance and the values of national survival and international order are not, then an approach of risk-avoidance towards the latter values cannot be ethically justified. Having primary cosmopolitan obligations themselves, citizens may not expect their leaders to do anything they can to protect national survival and international order. For leaders, the real task seems to try reconciling their trusteeship responsibilities with the ethical primacy of cosmopolitan justice. Against lower prudence, then, it seems reasonable to hold that leaders should be willing to put the – after all, contingent and at best instrumental – values of survival and order at risk up until the point that something deep as the real specific identity of their citizens becomes endangered. The fundamental error of Morgenthau's realist preference for lower prudence is twofold: (1) an explicit unwillingness to put survival and order at risk because of ignorance, or negligence, concerning the full scope of cosmopolitan justice; and (2) an overestimation of the ethical significance of these contingent political values. In largely pursuing the national interest and merely accepting 'certain moral constraints' of 'liberty' and 'justice' upon it (cf. Murray 1996, 104 about Morgenthau), international lower prudence seems ethically an unduly conservative interpretation of Aristotelian prudence (cf. Cochran 1983, 196; Coll 1999, 92-93). Indeed, in disregarding the value of cosmopolitan justice, lower prudence in international politics would come close to an attitude of scepticism towards theoretical wisdom. To strengthen the point: not only would life be safer (fewer wars, fewer emergencies) without communal emotional entanglements, as even Michael Walzer (2004b, 44-45), the communitarian, admits. It is also possible that people, say, for ethical or economic reasons, come to stop valuing their community in so high an extent. Therefore, while such political values do act as a moral buffer against cosmopolitan dreams, they may not be given (almost) full scope, as lower prudence would want. Presumably, only those national interests and values that are really constitutive of personal identity under current circumstances may be morally deep enough to entail valid limitations to cosmopolitan justice, and order and survival matter only to the extent that they are necessary for protecting these (which might be the case at times).

This leads naturally to higher prudence. A variant of prudence willing to take risks for the sake of exploring possibilities open to moral action, international higher prudence is the appropriate midway between the cautiousness of realism and the 'legalism-moralism' (cf. Morgenthau 1973, 12) of utopianism. The radical political implications of cosmopolitan justice – its basic challenge to political life – must be taken seriously, even if we should rebel at taking cosmopolitan directives literally, particularly their claiming of most, if not all, areas of life. In view of the ultimate cosmopolitan obligations of citizens, prudent political leadership should not hesitate to move up from (lower) 'trusteeship' to (higher) 'stewardship', which requires guarding against foolish squandering of national resources as well as taking responsibility for the accompanying risk (cf. Cochran 1983, 197-199). Incapsulating the demands of cosmopolitanism will probably disturb international order, but the way to pursue cosmopolitan justice without compromising this purely theoretical ideal by striving for new, distant, and state overruling institutions is to limit the ideal by protecting only core national interests and values. That is, political leaders should not automatically strive for national survival, order, tranquillity, accommodation, limited objectives, and caution, but only safeguard the lives of their citizens and to sustain the core features of the national way of life. Beyond these, indeed morally deep, purposes, leaders should act creatively and do whatever they can for the goal of cosmopolitan justice. As Patrick Dobel (1998: 77-78) notes: 'Although it is profoundly important to avoid harm and loss, Saint Thomas Aquinas argued that prudence actively seeks to accomplish good.'

How, more precisely, should the prudent political leader who values justice more than survival and order act? While prudence naturally cannot mean exactly the same action for leaders insofar as they work under diverging conditions, some guidelines can be given. Recall the major issues recently put on the agenda of international ethics: gross human rights violations, deep poverty, and climate change. Indeed, if there is one item on the international agenda that raises truly global practical ethical questions and thus justifies taking risks concerning national survival, it is the case of global warming, because that potentially affects every person on the planet. The second and third issues (cf. Bull's 'world justice') require a risk-taking approach from state leaders towards their citizens. Insofar as it asks for humanitarian intervention, the first issue (cf. Bull's 'human justice') requires such an approach towards their soldiers, for whom violently defending abstract human rights rather than concrete national security purposes might entail considerable psychological strain. Under current circumstances, higher prudence would require great transfers of resources from the global rich to the global poor in the name of justice. And it would reject a lower

prudence's tendency to see a point in intervention only when there is a material or, for that matter, ideological advantage to be gained; it would promote humanitarian intervention for the sake of basic rights at least. To quote Nicholas Wheeler (2000, 51): '[It] demands that state leaders override their primary responsibility not to place citizens in danger and make the agonizing decision that saving the lives of civilians beyond their own borders requires risking the lives of those who serve in the armed forces.' However, it would not eschew selectivity, as it is not possible to take the same action in every case in which basic rights are threatened; any form of prudence as a moral virtue will dictate different responses in different cases (Wheeler 2000, 48; cf. Vincent 1986, 124).[6] As regards deep poverty and climate change, acting on the basis of prudence illuminated by cosmopolitanism rather than by internationalism makes significant difference. For while internationalism would expect the international community to offer 'assistance', say, by providing development aid to states who cannot achieve the goals of satisfying the human rights and basic needs of their people on their own and by offering emergency aid in times of disaster, cosmopolitanism would expect leaders to reform international institutions such as the financial, trade, and climate regimes in such a way that they distribute goods and services more evenly globally (Beitz 1999, 215-216; cf. Rawls 1999, 105-120).

But what if other states refuse to act out of higher prudence, or what if citizens offer strong resistance? In order to mitigate or adapt to these problems, higher prudence would entail the following three supportive guidelines. First, leaders should pursue cosmopolitan civic education (Nussbaum 1997; Ypi 2008) among their citizens against conservatism, appealing to already existing transnational sentiments, loyalties, and perceived obligations. They should make their citizens come to lay more emphasis on their cosmopolitan than on their local obligations (cf. Frost's account, cited earlier). This is important especially in those contexts where leaders have little room for cosmopolitanism-oriented behaviour because of the presence of libertarian or conservative, rather than liberal or socialist, core values (cf. Noël and Thérien 1995). Second, so long as acting for the purpose of cosmopolitan justice does not violate the core interests and values of their citizens, the undercompliance of others does not provide leaders with an excuse. If some states are not going to do their part, then the others may have to do more than their share if the task is going to get done at all; indeed, this is what a risk-taking approach requires. For the sake of cosmopolitan justice, 'the prudent steward...might urge his nation to take the risk of cutting arms spending before its adversary does' (Cochran 1983, 198). Third, even if acting for the purpose of cosmopolitan justice did violate the core interests and values of their citizens, political leaders would still have to find ways to fulfil obligations of justice. Thus, what should be accepted for the sake of cosmopolitan justice under all circumstances is the 'principle of displacement' (cf. De George 1990, 27-29). Here this principle would mean the following: if a state faces the prospect of helping other, poor states or their individual members, but as a single actor is incapable of doing so without thereby sacrificing core national interests and values, it does not follow that such a state has no moral obligation to carry out further activities. Rather, it follows that the state is morally bound to shift its activity to a level that is effective. Between states, leaders of rich nations have a responsibility to do anything within their capacity to get leaders of other rich states on the line consistent with the act originally envisaged. What is more, within rich states, individual citizens have a responsibility to do anything they can to create agreement about what they can do to do justice to people elsewhere. Thus, the displacement principle holds that collective or individual impotence does not neutralize global moral obligation, but leads to a displacement of duty. Moral energy should be invested on a level that is one step higher to bring about a cooperation that does stand a chance of being effective. Prudent leaders, therefore, help build and sustain transnational communities based on trust and solidarity (cf. Dobel 1998).

Conclusion

Theoretically, higher prudence is a core concept of an international ethics that has advanced from political realism to cosmopolitan pluralism, which is a position that conjoins deep national concerns with more recent, cosmopolitan ones. I conclude by offering a cosmopolitan pluralist reformulation of Morgenthau's prudence passage – the political realist formulation that marked the starting-point for my discussion:

Cosmopolitan pluralism maintains that cosmopolitan principles of justice cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place. The individual may say for herself: "Fiat justitia, pereat mundus (Let justice be done, even if the world perish)." While the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care, it is still obliged to put national survival at risk for the sake of cosmopolitan justice. Both individual and state must judge political action by cosmopolitan principles of justice. Now while the individual has a moral right to sacrifice herself in defence of such a global moral principle, the state's right to let the infringement of cosmopolitan justice get in the way of political action successful for the nation does not go at the expense of core national interests and values only. There can be no political morality without prudence; that is, without consideration of the political consequences of seemingly moral action. Yet cosmopolitan pluralism considers not prudence in general but higher prudence in particular – the weighing of the consequences of alternative political actions in the light of the ethical overridingness of cosmopolitan justice, thus for the world's citizens and future generations, and the deep specific concerns of its own citizens – to be the

supreme virtue in politics. Ethics in the abstract judges action by its conformity with cosmopolitan moral principles; political ethics judges action by its overall political consequences.

Bibliography

- Amstutz, M.R. (2005). *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics*. 2nd ed. Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham.
- Aristotle (2002). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans., gloss., and intr. J. Sachs. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, R. Pullins Company.
- Arnaud, D, & T. LeBon (2000). Practical and theoretical wisdom. *Practical Philosophy*, 3(1), 6-9.
- Barry, B. (1991). Humanity and justice in global perspective. In B. Barry, *Liberty and Justice: Essays in Political Theory 2*. (pp. 182-210). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barry, J. & R. Eckersley (eds.) (2005). *The State and the Global Ecological Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Beitz, C.R. (1999). *Political Theory and International Relations*. 2nd ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Beitz, C.R. (2005). Reflections. *Review of International Studies*, 31(2), 409-423.
- Brown, C. (2002). *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brown, C. (2007). Tragedy, 'tragic choices' and contemporary international political theory'. *International Relations*, 21(1), 5-13.
- Bull, H. (2002). *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. 3rd ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Caney, S. (2005). *Justice beyond Borders: A Global Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cochran, C.E. (1983). The radical gospel and Christian prudence. In F. Canavan (ed.), *The Ethical Dimension of Political Life: Essays in Honor of John H. Hallowell*. (pp. 188-199). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cohen, M. (1984). Moral skepticism and international relations. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 13(4), 299-346.
- Coll, A.R. (1999). Normative prudence as a tradition of statecraft. In J.H. Rosenthal (ed.), *Ethics and International Affairs: A Reader*. 2nd ed. (pp. 75-100). Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Cozette, M. (2008). Reclaiming the critical dimension of realism: Hans J. Morgenthau on the ethics of scholarship. *Review of International Studies*, 34(1), 5-27.
- De George, R.T. (1990). Using the technique of ethical analysis in corporate practice. In G. Enderle, B. Almond & A. Argandoña (eds.), *People in Corporations: Ethical Responsibilities and Corporate Effectiveness*. (pp. 25-33). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Dobel, J.P. (1998). Political prudence and the ethics of leadership. *Public Administration Review*, 58(1), 74-81.
- Eckersley, R. (2004). *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press.
- Frost, M. (2003). Tragedy, ethics and international relations. *International Relations*, 17(4), 477-495
- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
- Hyde-Price, A. (2008). 'A 'tragic actor'? A realist perspective on 'ethical power Europe'. *International Affairs*, 84(1), 29-44.
- Kamminga, M.R. (2003). Global justice: The morality of cosmopolitan liberalism. In M.R. Kamminga, *On*

- Global Justice*. (pp. 5-26). Groningen: Centre for Development Studies University of Groningen.
- Kamminga, M.R. (2006). Why global distributive justice cannot work. *Acta Politica*, 41(1), 21-40.
- Kamminga, M.R. (2007). International political theory: Varieties of moral discourse. *Acta Politica*, 42(4), 421-442.
- Lang, Jr., A.F. (2007). Morgenthau, Agency, and Aristotle. In M.C. Williams (ed.), *Realism Reconsidered: The Legacy of Hans J. Morgenthau in International Relations*. (pp. 18-41). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lebow, R.N. (2005). Tragedy, politics and political science. *International Relations*, 19(3), 329-336.
- Linklater, A. (1998). *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- MacIntyre, A. (1984). Is patriotism a virtue? *The Lindley Lecture*. Lawrence: University of Kansas, Department of Philosophy.
- Mayall, J. (2003). Tragedy, progress and the international order: A response to Frost. *International Relations*, 17(4), 497-503.
- Mearsheimer, J.J. (2001). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton.
- Miller, D. (1995). *On Nationality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Miller, D. (2000). *Citizenship and National Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Moellendorf, D. (2002). *Cosmopolitan Justice*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Morgenthau, H.J. (1973). *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 5th ed. New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Murray, A.J.H. (1996). The moral politics of Hans Morgenthau. *The Review of Politics*, 58(1), 81-107.
- Murray, A.J.H. (1997). *Reconstructing Realism: Between Power Politics and Cosmopolitan Ethics*. Edinburgh: Keele University Press.
- Myers, R.J. (1999). Speaking truth to power: The quest for equality in freedom. In J.H. Rosenthal (ed.), *Ethics and International Affairs: A Reader*. 2nd ed. (pp. 11-27). Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Nagel, T. (2005). The problem of global justice. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 33(2), 113-147.
- Noël, A. & J.-P. Thérien (1995). From domestic to international justice: The welfare state and foreign aid. *International Organization*, 49(3), 523-553.
- Nussbaum, M.C. (1997). *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Pogge, T.W. (1989). *Realizing Rawls*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Pogge, T.W. (1994). Cosmopolitanism and sovereignty. In C. Brown (ed.), *Political Restructuring in Europe: Ethical Perspectives*. (pp. 89-122). London: Routledge.
- Pogge, T.W. (2002). *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1993). *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1999). *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Rengger, N. (2000). Political theory and international relations: Promised land or exit from Eden? *International Affairs*, 76(4), 755-770.

- Rengger, N. (2005). Tragedy or scepticism? Defending the anti-Pelagian mind in world politics. *International Relations*, 19(3), 321-328.
- Sangiovanni, A. (2008). Justice and the priority of politics to morality. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 16(2), 137-164.
- Shapcott, R. (2008). Anti-cosmopolitanism, pluralism and the cosmopolitan harm principle. *Review of International Studies*, 34(2), 185-205.
- Singer, P. (2002). *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Vincent, R.J. (1986). *Human Rights and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waltz, K.N. (1979). *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Walzer, M. (2004a). The triumph of just war theory (and the dangers of success). In M. Walzer, *Arguing about War*. (pp. 3-22). New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Walzer, M. (2004b). Emergency ethics. In M. Walzer, *Arguing about War*. (pp. 33-50). New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wheeler, N. (2000). *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ypi, L.L. (2008). Statist cosmopolitanism. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 16(1), 48-71.

Notes

[1] Aristotle (2002, VI, 1145a, 6-11; cf. also 1141b, 15-16, quoted later in the text) himself concludes about the relationship between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom: 'it is not the case that practical [wisdom] is in authority over [theoretical] wisdom or over the better part of the soul, just as the medical art is not in authority over health; for medicine does not make use of health, but sees how it may come about, and then it gives orders for the sake of health, not to health. It would be similar if someone were to say that politics rules the gods, because it gives orders about everything in the city.' Even so, I accept the argument of David Arnaud and Tim LeBon (2000, 8) that theoretical wisdom is also needed for safeguarding prudence from an unwarranted moral conservatism (in Aristotle's case, regarding the treatment of women and slaves), and to provide prudence with the capacity to help individuals apply values in less straightforward, difficult or new, situations.

[2] One might think it possible to eliminate the tragedy experience altogether by creating global institutions. Frost (2003, 490) believes that for many people in the contemporary world tragic stories raise the possibility of changing, reforming, or transforming the social institutions involved. There are no good reasons to maintain and nurture the social institutions that produced this tragedy. Frost (2003, 492-494) then argues that today we know of the possibilities of transformation and devote much time and energy to thinking about this matter. Successful examples are the transformations towards post-apartheid South Africa and the European Union (EU). However, Frost's response to tragedy suffers from liberal over-optimism (Mayall 2003; Hyde-Price 2008, 40). Ironically, it evokes the tragic objection that trying to transform the world order may well have unintended and bad consequences. Significantly, Frost's transformation examples (post-apartheid South Africa, the EU) are not global in scope. Indeed, he does not offer any evidence for the practical possibility of global transformation. Thus, attempts such as Frost's to consciously create global institutions are utopian, and striving for them may well have bad outcomes, not to mention the enormous time it would take to create such global institutions. Moreover, a global framework such as Frost's may itself be a morally dubious alternative to the present states system. It suffers from similar defects as the neo-medievalist-like proposals of Thomas Pogge (1994) and Simon Caney (2005), which also advocate overlapping structures and criss-crossing loyalties. While a neo-medievalist international society could avoid the classic dangers of the system of sovereign states, it would be subject to more serious dangers. With its complex structure of overlapping jurisdictions and multiple loyalties, mediaevalist society has been even more violent than the modern states system (Bull 2002, 245-246). In any event, striving for global institutions by no means eliminates the need for prudence in responding to international tragedy.

[3] Here I should mention Nicholas Rengger's (2005, 325-327) Oakeshottian suggestion that 'scepticism' entails a better conception of international politics than 'tragedy'. Human beings and their actions are

simply what they are, their imperfectability typical of them, so tragedy is no part of life. It does more harm than good to see them this way, for it is still somehow an attempt to improve humans, even if a relatively modest one. It is, then, vacuous to try arguing on the one hand that recognizing the reality of 'tragedy' in human life should make us more aware of the precariousness of our situation and save us from hubris, and on the other that we can somehow learn from this ways of making that world a better or a safer place. However, Rengger's suggestion is unconvincing. Even if people mostly behave in the way he describes, Rengger ignores without argument that tragedy lies in the fact that people are not only selfish but have more sides. They also behave in solidarity with others, possess a sense of justice, and have a capacity for indictment and also for idealism. Indeed, much tragedy-related moral discourse entails an appeal to the human capacity for idealism, and that this is why this discourse finds its audience (cf. Lebow 2005; Cozette 2008). There is no conclusive evidence to think, as Rengger (2005, 326), suggests, that this is foreign to man's character. Tragedy does not necessarily exclude social progress. If the frequency and scope of tragedy can be reduced through learning (cf. Linklater 1998; Coll 1999; Cochran 1983), then progress is possible even if universal harmony and precise prediction of the consequences of human behaviour are not. More or less modest hopes for progress may well be rooted in some synthesis between an ancient, Greek acceptance of hard realities and a modern activism based on the Enlightenment belief in human ability to master their environment (Lebow 2005, 334-335).

[4] It should be noted that insofar as the cosmopolitan argument did depend on the contingent fact of economic interdependence or globalization (cf. portions in Beitz 1999; Pogge 1989; 2002; Moellendorf 2002), it could not claim theoretical wisdom. Yet leading cosmopolitans have acknowledged much of the weakness of this empirical dependence, and now ground their theories in universalist accounts of the moral equality of persons (Beitz 1999; Moellendorf 2002; Caney 2005; Barry 1991).

[5] However, I would want to insist against Brown that cosmopolitanism's lack of direct practicality does not affect its theoretical validity. Cosmopolitanism's analytical nature is also its independent and irreducible strength, one that should not be left unattended (cf. Kamminga 2007).

[6] What is not higher prudent, but unduly cautious, is 'what NATO did in the Kosovo war, where its leaders declared in advance that they would not send ground forces into battle, whatever happened inside Kosovo once the air war began' (Walzer 2004a, 17). For such political realism violates what is clearly a feature of higher prudence: 'when it is our action that puts innocent people at risk, even if the action is justified, we are bound to do what we can to reduce those risks, even if this involves risks to our own soldiers' (Walzer 2004a, 17).

Information about this Article

This Article has not yet been peer-reviewed
This Article was published on 9th July, 2008 at 15:58:14 and has been viewed 4931 times.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 License](#).

The full citation for this Article is:

Kamminga, M. (2008). Higher Prudence as the Supreme Virtue in International Politics. *PHILICA.COM Article number 134*.

[<< Go back](#)

[Review this Article](#)

[Printer-friendly](#)

[Report this Article](#)

Website copyright © 2006-07 Philica; authors retain the rights to their work under [this Creative Commons License](#) and reviews are copleft under the [GNU free documentation license](#).
Using this site indicates acceptance of our [Terms and Conditions](#).

This page was generated in 0.1535 seconds.