Book Review: Justice Without Borders: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Patriotism
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This clear and highly convincing book articulates and defends a plausible version of cosmopolitanism while providing an excellent overview of recent debates. 'Cosmopolitanism', Tan begins, 'takes the individual to be the ultimate unit of moral concern and to be entitled to equal consideration regardless of nationality and citizenship' (p. 1). A major problem cosmopolitanism must face, particularly a strong cosmopolitanism such as Tan's that is not content to seek a global economic minimum but wishes to address global inequality as well, is how to take account of special ties and commitments, particularly to one's nation.

It helps, first, to focus on the economic and social aspects of global justice. (Political justice is the subject of Tan's earlier book, *Toleration, Diversity and Global Justice* [University Park, PN: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000]). One objection, that cosmopolitans are imposing 'Western' or liberal values on cultures that do not share these values, is to some extent defused by explicitly including economic and social justice in one's conception. Third world countries typically seek economic justice, such as redistribution, and are more likely to object to liberal political conceptions of justice that demand basic liberties if these conceptions ignore glaring poverty and inequality (pp. 5, 78). It is important also to distinguish cosmopolitanism as a moral ideal from the institutional claim that there should be a world state. Tan points out that one can favour the former without being committed to the latter, and that the former might be better served by global institutions that preserve substantial sovereignty for states. Tan's cosmopolitanism is also focused on justice, not culture: there is no denial here that membership in a particular cultural community is constitutive of a person's social identity and a condition of her autonomy, but Tan rejects the claim that justice is limited by state boundaries. Tan also rejects the extreme view that all morality needs to be reduced to cosmopolitan morality, acknowledging the normative independence and irreducibility of special obligations to one's nation or state—however one might analyse the source of these. However, such special obligations must not be at the expense of one's obligations to non-compatriots. In this way he dodges the criticism that cosmopolitanism is too demanding in the fashion of Singer's utilitarianism. Further, by focusing on justice—on the institutional structure of the global economy—rather than on ethics, one's personal actions, it is possible for one both to go deeper to the roots of global poverty and injustice in such things as unequal distribution of resources, and also personally to live a normal life with concerns independent of global justice.
Tan endorses the sort of global Rawlsianism previously advanced by such writers as Pogge and Beitz, which calls for global equality of respect and concern for all individuals, through guarantees of basic liberties and security, and also equality of opportunity and a distribution of income and wealth which maximizes the well-being of the worst-off representative persons. This position thus goes beyond a ‘weak’ cosmopolitanism that calls for ‘basic rights’ to subsistence. Basic rights may not even be realizable if inequality is not addressed, in part because inequality is what makes people vulnerable to exploitation. And it may not be possible to give equal concern without at least the degree of equality that is called for by the difference principle. Tan’s contribution to the defence of a strong cosmopolitanism consists in answering the critics of this position, beginning first with Rawls himself, who explicitly rejects cosmopolitan justice, favouring instead a duty of assistance akin to the basic rights position. The most interesting argument is that which extrapolates from political liberalism a principle of toleration of illiberal but decent peoples. Tan finds this inconsistent with the liberal position from which Rawls begins. In political liberalism, there is toleration of different conceptions of the good, to the degree that these are compatible with, and can endorse by an overlapping consensus, the principles of political liberalism itself. But toleration of the intolerant, of conceptions of social order that reject liberalism, is a position that undermines liberalism on the domestic level, and so too on the international level. Also, given that Rawlsian liberalism is distinguished from utilitarianism by its insistence on the worth of each person, egalitarian justice must be not only between societies but within them as well. Thus, Tan argues, nonliberal hierarchical societies should be accepted in the international community only as a modus vivendi (pp. 78-79).

Another challenge comes from nationalists, particularly liberal nationalists who regard commitment to the nation to be an essential requirement for the realization of liberalism. Tan argues (in Ch. 5) convincingly that his cosmopolitanism is compatible with self-determination (no world state is required). And a special affinity for one’s compatriots, which may be a necessary condition for achieving justice, does not rule out that such affinities might develop on the global level. Tan argues further (in Ch. 6) that liberal nationalists ought to be cosmopolitans. If the right to national self-determination is indeed universal, then liberal nationalists cannot coherently deny this right to other nations than their own, and this entails that each nation should have its fair share of the resources required for self-determination. Since this is as much a relative affair as it is a matter of possessing basic necessities (p. 117), liberal nationalists should favour ‘international egalitarianism’. This falls short of cosmopolitanism since it is possible for nations to divide resources among themselves equally, and yet for individuals within some of these nations not to get their fair share from a cosmopolitan egalitarian point of view (p. 108). Another argument notes that nation building requires some measure of immigration control, but this is incompatible with a liberal commitment to equal opportunity, unless there is sufficient international justice to make possible opportunities for everyone without border crossing.

The biggest challenge, according to Tan, comes from those who maintain that cosmopolitanism is incompatible with patriotic concern. Some regard this as a reductio ad absurdum of cosmopolitanism, others as a reductio of patriotism. Thus, Tan’s reconciliation serves the cause of patriotic concern as well as that of cosmopolitanism. After rejecting instrumental defences of patriotism (offered, for example,
by Goodin and Nussbaum), which he argues do not take patriotism seriously enough (and are not in any case inconsistent with cosmopolitanism), and after rejecting a restricted cosmopolitanism as inconsistent with justice as impartiality, Tan defends a limited patriotism: patriotism is acceptable—whatever its ultimate grounding—so long as it does not come at the expense of cosmopolitan justice, just as friendship, whatever its justification or intrinsic worth, is non-problematic so long as it does not lead one to commit injustice for one’s friends. One can reasonably ask whether this leaves anything for patriotic concern that is relevant to distributive justice. For with respect to distributive justice, patriotic concern would involve allocating something additional for compatriots—income, social services, whatever—and, where would these resources come from, if not from the stock that would otherwise be distributed to the globally more disadvantaged? Patriotic concern then would boil down to encouragement of sentiments, and perhaps allocation of a nation’s resources to collective over individual projects, but not any distributive partiality for compatriots over non-compatriots.

Some patriots point to the principle of reciprocity that binds compatriots: they share not only a cooperative but also a coercive scheme, and special duties are owed to each to justify the imposition of coercion. But this argument fails to acknowledge the similar involuntariness of global economic arrangements, and does not account for the particular exclusions involved in any drawing of borders. And, as with friendship on the domestic level, citizens can be fairly reciprocal with one another only if what they are sharing is justly theirs, and not taken unfairly from others. In sum, standard arguments for patriotic concern do not contradict the commitment to impartiality at the level of global institutional design (p. 197). If one still wants to argue for incompatibility the problem is ‘with the very idea of justice as impartiality’ (p. 200).

I do not wish to challenge the underlying premise of justice as impartiality. Instead, I want to raise two problems about Tan’s reconciliation of strong cosmopolitanism with concern for compatriots. The first derives from the relative abstractness of Tan’s analysis. By setting aside any institutional claims, he avoids criticisms directed toward world statism (or whatever global institutions might serve in lieu of a global state). But on the other hand, we are left with no clear idea of what actually would have to be given up by the haves of the world for the have-nots. It is surely not too much to ask for the removal of global inequities in trade, if it would bring millions out of poverty (p. 32). On this point strong and weak egalitarians agree. But strong egalitarians go further, not content until the worst-off are better off than they would be in any other conceivable scheme. This might entail, for example, that the worst-off in affluent countries should experience a substantial lowering of their standard of living so that the standard of living of the worst-off globally can be improved. Would such transfers come at the expense of reciprocity among citizens? Whether this difficult choice is required depends on what exactly the level is that is required by global justice, and on this Tan is silent. Thus what worries weak egalitarians such as Nagel—that the affluent will have to forego not only luxuries but also much of what makes their individual lives meaningful—continues to be a worry, at least in principle (p. 193). (All agree that we need to travel a great distance from where we are even to address basic needs, never mind the inequality that would remain once basic needs were met.)
Tan attempts to assuage this concern in part by claiming that ‘cosmopolitanism is not primarily a call for resource transfers to disadvantaged persons (though it will have that effect) but the creation of a global context in which all persons are treated with equal concern and respect’ (p. 201), and he follows this claim with a list of measures such as removal of tariffs and reform of patent laws that involve no ‘handouts’. But such measures surely fall short of cosmopolitan justice, which seeks not only fair trade but also equality of opportunity. An equality of resources, at least part of what might be involved in achieving equality of opportunity, is advocated (p. 53), but this is hard to imagine without substantial transfers of wealth or income beyond what is achievable through fair trade. A global difference principle would go even further. So the further development of strong cosmopolitanism needs to spell out these implications, see what it entails for redistribution, and then see how that squares with our other commitments.

My second point concerns an unresolved tension between international egalitarianism and strong cosmopolitanism. The former, as we have seen, only requires that each nation get its fair share of the earth’s resources. This, we have seen, may be not only compatible with, but required by liberal nationalism, and it is one way to make good on the moral premise that we owe justice to whomever our actions or omissions affect, and that the fact of sharing the earth’s surface creates duties of justice (pp. 33-34, 170). But Tan, and most liberals, start from the principle of equal respect and concern for each individual. For the latter to be achieved, each nation must adopt liberal egalitarian policies internally. If a regime of liberal egalitarian states seeks to impose this requirement on nonliberal states (or even inegalitarian liberal states), the problems of intolerance and denial of self-determination arise in a more pointed way. For one is not just giving states their fair share of the earth’s resources, which it is hard to imagine any refusing, but requiring them to adopt a quite specific conception of justice, which it is equally hard to imagine many not refusing.

The tension between internationalism and cosmopolitanism arises also in the context of Tan’s reply to one of Rawls’s arguments against cosmopolitanism, that it violates the principle of holding people responsible for their choices. A global difference principle, Rawls argues, would be consistent with the scenario in which two societies, equally endowed, pursued different paths of development, one being industrious and productive, the other lazy; but in the end the former would have to redistribute to the latter despite the latter’s choice. Tan rightly points out that such an account conflates the inequalities that result from choice with those that result from the global structure, and he then wishes to redistribute only with respect to those resulting from the global structure (p. 72). This seems sound, even if it might be difficult in practice to disentangle the effects of choice from the effects of global structure. However, as he himself notes (pp. 72-73), the offspring are not responsible for the bad choices of their parents. So if one is consistently individualist, why should not a more invasive interpretation of the difference principle kick in after a generation? If, on the other hand, we want to respect internal distributive practices, this would seem to point toward letting societies do as they please, within the limits of basic human rights, but on an international level maximizing the minimum as much as possible, despite the imprudent or free-riding collective choices of some societies. In short, there is a tension between self-determination and cosmopolitanism that needs to be addressed, and it is hard to see how to reconcile individualism, self-determination, and the principle of responsibility. A satisfactory strong...
cosmopolitanism will need to build on Tan’s important synthesizing work by addressing this problem.

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The recent attention paid to the transnational issues in Anglo-American philosophy owes its origin to Peter Singer’s seminal article ‘Famine, Affluence and Morality’ (*Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1.3 [1972], pp. 229-43). Singer’s main concern was direct aid for famine relief, though he asserted, but perhaps did not sufficiently emphasize, that there are other types of aid for alleviating poverty-related suffering in the world. In any case, the core idea was that the individual and the government are obligated to do whatever would produce the best outcome. Singer’s use of the now-famous example of the drowning child to make vivid the case for overseas emergency relief was not meant to imply that the only type of aid is the donation of money in the form of emergency relief funds. Rather, the intent of the analogy was to bring home the point that distance does not make a moral difference. Along with this, Singer’s concern was to show the urgency of our duty to help, with the same level of zeal, in doing whatever would bring the best overall beneficence. The consequences need not be measured by their immediacy—often development-related aid is more effective in redressing poverty though it may be less immediate—but the duty to help should be no less urgent.

Singer’s new book, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*, based on the Terry Lectures delivered at Yale University, addresses the issue of aid in alleviating poverty, but it also discusses three other emerging global issues not mentioned in the 1972 article. In the book, the demand for a new ethic is equally urgent, although the scope of individual moral responsibility in meeting these demands is far less stringent than in the article. Instead, Singer now stipulates political responsibilities of nations and institutions. These responsibilities are stringent indeed, but Singer makes room for national self-interest in deciding political obligations, anchoring his demanding beneficence principle to political reality—a realistic move that is refreshingly different from his earlier abstract cosmopolitanism.

The most salient mark of the new international reality, Singer notes, is the redefinition of national sovereignty due to the forces of an aggressive global economy, pervasive effects of global ecology, and the emergence of a human-rights culture that increasingly points to the moral irrelevance of national boundaries. Ethics should reflect this new reality, according to Singer, in promoting international collaboration so that measures to combat poverty-related deprivations would be no less urgent than the global responses to violations of negative rights.

Singer discusses four major global issues in *One World*: environment, global trade, human rights, and foreign aid. It is unclear, though, why Singer would not discuss some other emerging global concerns that transcend national boundaries and point to the need for global cooperation, such as the spectre of international terrorism,