Contemporary International Political Theory and Global Environmental Politics: Bridging Artificial Divides?

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Abstract

This thesis studies the intersection between contemporary international political theory and global environmental politics. It asks whether concern for global environmental degradation requires a rethinking of the assumptions that underlie international political theory as a field of study within the discipline of International Relations. Answering this question, the thesis introduces three 'images' of international political theory: the liberal cosmopolitan, the critical-theoretical, and the anti-foundationalist. It investigates the contributions of these three images of international political theory to global environmental politics. Assessing, through the three images, the status of contemporary international political theory in light of environmental concerns, the thesis suggests that while international political theory offers many important insights into discussions of global environmental politics it also appears significantly limited when dealing with environmental concerns. Key among its limitations is the human-centred framework and mission of contemporary international political theory that an encounter with environmental concerns helps expose. The thesis argues that international political theory, both to be true to its purpose – that is, the extension of moral and political inclusion in world politics – and to maintain its relevance in the contemporary world, must seek a more thorough engagement with environmental concerns. The thesis contends that a fundamental rethinking of the assumptions that underlie contemporary international political theory forms an important – and necessary – part of this engagement.

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Introduction

The central research question that this thesis seeks to investigate is: 'Do environmental concerns require a radical rethinking of the assumptions underlying contemporary international political theory? If so, why and how?' This research question builds on two initial observations. First, it reflects the acknowledgment that while the discipline of International Relations (IR) has an important contribution to make to our understanding of contemporary environmental politics, concern for the natural environment poses a challenge to IR 'as we know it'. That is, whether due to an apparent lack of fit between 'a single integrated, enormously complex and deeply interdependent ecosystem and the still dominant form of global political organization: a fragmented system of sovereign states' (Hurrell 1995: 132) or 'the scale, spread, dynamics and complexity of global environmental degradation' (Saurin 1996: 78), environmental concerns patently call into question our accustomed ways of thinking about international politics. Most notably, perhaps, it has been suggested that, for IR to maintain its relevance in the face of global environmental change and degradation, the discipline should proceed, in Robert Cox's terms, in a 'critical' rather than a 'problem-solving' mode (Cox 1981). It should, in other words, pay more attention to 'the very framework for action, or problematic' in relation to which it defines itself, and, ultimately, with the aim of transforming this framework (Cox 1981: 129).

The second observation that the central research question of this thesis reflects relates to a particular body of thought, recently revived in the discipline of IR, and its relationship with environmental concerns. The body of thought that I am here referring to is known within the discipline as either 'international political theory' or 'normative IR theory'. What is characteristic of this body of thought is its explicit engagement with the normative aspects of world politics, in particular the question of moral and political inclusion. In this vein, it invites us to consider, for example, the moral status of state boundaries, the ethical underpinnings of state sovereignty, and the rights, duties, and responsibilities of individuals and communities in the international realm. As an important part of this inquiry, it seeks to understand who, or what, is

included within which moral and political frameworks – and who, or what, gets excluded, and on what account.

The focus on the normative aspects of world politics in the study of international political theory has particular resonance in global environmental politics. In fact, many (if not all) of the challenges posed by global environmental change for contemporary society and politics involve important normative considerations. These include, for example, deciding on who, or what, has the right to use natural resources; who, or what, must carry the responsibility for environmental destruction; how such rights and responsibilities should be arrived at; and how, and amongst whom, they should be distributed in the international realm.

With its self-declared interest in questions of rights, justice, and responsibility in the international realm, international political theory would seem to offer a useful resource for thinking through such issues. What is more, with an increasing awareness of the unequal production of, and exposure to, global environmental degradation, environmental concerns would seem to present a vitally important and highly interesting case for international political theory. Curiously, however, the field of international political theory has remained surprisingly silent about environmental concerns, in general, and the normative aspects of global environmental change, in particular.

Against this background, then, the current thesis explores the interface between contemporary international political theory and global environmental politics. In doing so, it argues for a more explicit engagement by international political theorists with environmental concerns, thereby seeking to bridge the gap that currently seems to exist between international political theory and global environmental politics. The argument consists of two moves. First, the thesis investigates the contributions of contemporary international political theory to global environmental politics. This discussion forms the main part of the thesis. The second, and more tentative, move involves a critical evaluation of this contribution. This evaluation builds on the prior discussion of the potential contribution of international political theory to global environmental politics and is developed in the final chapter of the thesis. With these two moves, the thesis aims to make a case for a turn to international political theory in

the attempt to respond to the challenges posed by global environmental change for contemporary society and politics. As a critical part of this argument, the thesis offers some observations on the potential shortcomings of international political theory in light of environmental concerns. It argues that while environmental concerns may require a reconsideration of some of the underlying assumptions of international political theory, this is an opportunity that international political theorists cannot afford to overlook if they wish to maintain their integrity and relevance in contemporary world politics.

Seeking to bridge the gap between contemporary international political theory and global environmental politics, the thesis draws its inspiration from studies exploring the relationship between political theory and environmental concerns, on the one hand, and IR theory and environmental politics, on the other. The former is commonly known as 'green political theory'; the latter converge around international environmental politics as a sub-field of IR. Budding in the 1980s and 1990s, both have developed into thriving fields of study with their own distinctive debates, research agendas, and bodies of literature. At the same time, there has been an increasing exchange of views between these two fields, with green political theorists recognising the need to extend, in light of the global nature of environmental degradation, the realm of their theorising beyond the state, and IR scholars acknowledging the critical importance of environmental considerations in the study of contemporary world politics. In this context, the present thesis is inspired, in particular, by the attempts of green political theorists such as Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley to develop green thinking so as to reveal not only the 'ecological blindness' of conventional political theorising, but also to take account of the global context of politics. Short of a systematic engagement with these two authors' work, the thesis welcomes Dobson's and Eckersley's recent advances into the realm of international politics (cf. Dobson 2003; 2005; 2006; Eckersley 2004; 2005; 2007; 2010). Beyond this, the thesis is also influenced by the work of a number of IR scholars who have sought to reflect on the ecological conditions of IR theory. These include Eric Laferrière and Peter Stoett, Deborah Mantle, and Matthew Paterson (cf. Laferrière and Stoett 1999; 2006; Mantle 1999; Paterson 1996; 2000; 2001). What I take from these scholars, collectively, is the idea – and the instruction – that contemporary theorising about politics and international relations must be situated in an environmental context.

With this guidance in mind, the present thesis investigates the intersection between contemporary international political theory and global environmental politics. The thesis contends that an in-depth analysis of this intersection is crucially important in the face of global environmental change and degradation. This is because environmental degradation impels us to reflect on our attitudes towards and our relationship with the natural environment. What is more, with global environmental change predicted to create new, as well as to perpetuate old, political divisions in the international realm, it is of paramount importance to consider how such divisions may be bridged by extending moral and political inclusion in world politics.

In pursuing this task, the thesis seeks to contribute to existing debates surrounding the study of the ethical aspects of world politics in general and global environmental politics in particular within the discipline of IR. The thesis makes six important contributions, each directed towards bridging some of the artificial divides that currently exist between, and within, these two fields of study.

The first two contributions of the thesis concern the study of international political theory. First, identifying three different 'images' of contemporary international political theory, the thesis argues for an expanded view of this highly important field of study. In doing so, it seeks to bridge the gap that is often seen to exist between normative IR theorising on the one hand and anti-foundationalist IR theory on the other. The three images discussed in this thesis are the 'liberal cosmopolitan', the 'critical-theoretical', and the 'anti-foundationalist' image, respectively. Second, and interrelatedly, the thesis outlines the underlying assumptions of these three images. In the course of this discussion, it points, in particular, to their respective responses to the question of extending moral and political inclusion in world politics in the context of how each approach enables us to respond to problems in environmental politics.

The third contribution of this thesis is both more general and aspirational, and relates directly to the purpose of the thesis to explore the encounter between contemporary international political theory and global environmental politics. It is, simply, to connect the study of contemporary international political theory more closely with environmental issues. Following on from this, the thesis reflects on the

insights that international political theory offers into global environmental politics, uncovering, also, some of the limitations of international political theory in light of environmental concerns. These are the fourth and fifth contributions of the thesis. Sixth, and finally, the thesis proposes one possible correction, or supplement, to contemporary international political theory: the extension of moral and political inclusion in world politics beyond the human subject.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. **Chapter 1**, 'Understanding Global Environmental Politics: A Contribution from International Political Theory?', offers international political theory as a potentially useful – albeit often overlooked – resource in the quest to think through the implications of global environmental change and degradation for contemporary society and politics. It highlights the central place given to normative considerations, in particular the question of moral and political inclusion, by scholars of international political theory. The chapter introduces three different 'images' of international political theory: the 'liberal cosmopolitan', the 'critical-theoretical', and the 'anti-foundationalist'. Each of these images offers a different interpretation of – and solution to – the problem of extending moral and political inclusion in world politics. The rest of the thesis examines the potential contribution of these three images of international political theory to global environmental politics.

Chapter 2, 'The Liberal Cosmopolitan Image of International Political Theory and Global Environmental Politics', begins this analysis by exploring the contributions of the liberal cosmopolitan image of international political to global environmental politics. It locates this image initially in the work of Charles Beitz and Thomas Pogge, two well-known cosmopolitan critics of the liberal theory of justice presented by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* ([1971] 1999a). It also reflects on the work of three scholars who have offered challenging alternatives to the 'Rawlsian' cosmopolitanism of Beitz and Pogge: Charles Jones, Onora O'Neill, and Martha Nussbaum. The chapter identifies three key assumptions that underlie liberal cosmopolitanism: the fundamental equality of individuals; the impartiality of political institutions and processes; and the universal applicability of the rules and norms necessary for the functioning of a society. Building on this discussion, the chapter examines the ways in which liberal cosmopolitan assumptions might help us in addressing the moral and political problems posed by global environmental degradation. It also analyses the implications

of environmental concerns for the liberal cosmopolitan image of international political theory.

Chapter 3, 'The Critical-Theoretical Image of International Political Theory and Global Environmental Politics', discusses the contribution of the critical-theoretical image of international political theory to global environmental politics. It focuses on the work of Andrew Linklater, arguably one of the most prominent representatives of critical-theoretical thinking in the discipline of IR. The chapter first outlines Linklater's position, with particular emphasis on Linklater's argument for a Habermasian discourse-theoretical approach to world politics whereby the legitimacy of our moral and political guidelines is dependent upon their being endorsed by all those that stand affected by them. Following this discussion, the chapter explores the contribution of this line of thinking to global environmental politics. In doing so, the chapter draws attention to points of connection between Linklater's critical international theory and the recent development of so-called 'green IR theory'. Building on this work, the chapter discusses what a critical-theoretical position on international political theory might have to offer for efforts to respond to global environmental change. It points to Linklater as a rare example of an international political theorist who has sought to reflect on environmental concerns in his work – albeit not systematically. Finally, the chapter highlights some of the ways in which the insights that Linklater's critical-theoretical position offers into global environmental politics differ from those that can be gleaned from the liberal cosmopolitan image of international political theory.

Chapters 4 and 5 examine the contributions of the anti-foundationalist image of international political theory to global environmental politics. There are two prominent examples of this image in the study of international political theory, and thus this image is explored over two chapters. **Chapter 4**, 'The Anti-foundationalist Image of International Political Theory and Global Environmental Politics: A Post-structuralist View', discusses post-structuralist approaches to international political theory and their potential contribution to global environmental politics. The chapter introduces post-structuralist international political theory in three steps. First, it describes the problem faced by those arguing for a post-structuralist approach to international political theory: that post-structuralism does not fit within the

conventional framework of international political theory. The chapter finds, however, that while it may not be possible to fix IR post-structuralism firmly in international political theory – or in any other branch of IR – its concern with inclusion and exclusion resonates strongly with international political theory. In the second step, then, the chapter outlines the assumptions that underlie post-structuralist approaches to questions of inclusion and exclusion in world politics. Third, the chapter draws attention to David Campbell's work as an example of a post-structuralist approach to moral and political questions in world politics. Following this discussion, the chapter moves on to an examination of the contribution of post-structuralist international political theory to global environmental politics.

Chapter 5, 'The Anti-foundationalist Image of International Political Theory and Global Environmental Politics: A Pragmatist View', examines the contribution of pragmatist international political theory to global environmental politics. The structure of this chapter follows closely that of Chapter 4 on post-structuralist international political theory. In this chapter, I focus on the work of Molly Cochran as an example of a pragmatist approach to international political theory. Cochran's work is particularly important in the context of the current thesis because it aims to contribute – explicitly and directly – to the study of normative issues in world politics. The chapter engages with Cochran's work by first locating her position within international political theory and then describing its underlying assumptions. Building on this discussion, the chapter examines the contribution of pragmatist thinking on global issues to global environmental politics. Of particular importance here is Cochran's argument for so-called 'international public spheres' as a way of democratising existing international practice. The chapter discusses the implications of this argument for global environmental politics.

The examination of the three images of international political theory and their respective contributions to global environmental politics in Chapters 2 to 5 forms the first move central to the argument of this thesis, namely, the attempt to facilitate a more thorough engagement with environmental themes in the study of international political theory. To complete this argument, the final chapter of the thesis, **Chapter 6**, entitled 'International Political Theory beyond the Human Subject? Promise, Prospects, and Pitfalls', considers some of the limitations of international political theory in light

of environmental concerns. Building on the discussion of international political theory in earlier chapters of the thesis, it asks whether the response that international political theory can offer to global environmental problems is sufficient. The chapter suggests that, despite its many useful insights into discussions on global environmental politics, this may not be the case. Most problematically, perhaps, its engagement with environmental concerns is kept in check by its human-centred framework and mission. This need not mean, however, that we declare international political theory obsolete as a result of global environmental change. Such a conclusion, I think, would be premature – and perhaps even invalid. Rather, I want to suggest that an encounter with environmental concerns presents international political theory with a momentous opportunity for renewal and change, and it is vitally important that scholars of international political theory understand this. Encountering environmental concerns involves engagement with some deeply challenging questions, such as the relationship between humans and nature, and it requires stretching our imagination further than we are accustomed to, to include not only other *human* beings, but, simply, other beings regardless of whether they are human, plant, or animal, or animate or inanimate.

By calling into question some of the underlying assumptions of international political theory, concern for the natural environment challenges normative IR theorists to think outside and beyond their proverbial – and predominately human-centred – 'box'. This is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, it opens up the discourse of international political theory to a wider variety of voices and points of view, including those of the non-human natural environment. Practically, it holds the promise of facilitating the creation of political communities and institutions that are more socially just and environmentally sustainable than those that exist at present. With its focus on the ethical dimensions of world politics, international political theory has an important role to play in this process. To maintain its significance, however, it must query the implications of its assumptions for thinking about environmental issues. Most importantly, perhaps, it must refocus its view so as not to exclude, prematurely and categorically, any particular kind of entity or way of being from within its field of vision.

1 Understanding Global Environmental Politics: A Contribution from International Political Theory?

1.1 Introduction

Environmental problems, the conventional wisdom goes, have no respect for boundaries. We are constantly being reminded by scientists, environmental activists, and politicians alike that climate change is 'global', that pollution spills across frontiers, that we 'all' stand affected, in one way or another, by environmental change and degradation. In response, multilateral treaties are drawn up; global summits are held; those who pay no attention to the protection of the global environment are named and shamed in the international arena. Politics, it is argued, must 'go global' – or, at the very least, reach beyond the borders of the state – if we are to respond to the challenges posed by environmental change and degradation in an effective, timely, and appropriate manner.

But what, exactly, does it mean to talk about 'global' politics in the face of the current environmental crisis? And what should a 'greening' of global politics involve? Arguably, the answer to these questions depends much on the environmental problem under consideration. Climate change, with its obvious planetary effects, is a prominent example of an environmental problem that calls for a collective international response, a goal which has been partly achieved through the near universal agreement to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the subsequent (albeit far less comprehensive) adoption of the legally binding 1997 Kyoto Protocol. At the same time, and despite calls for global action, many of the responses adopted by the international community remain bounded, or subject to national decision-making – and, some argue, rightly so. Even in the face of global threats such as climate change, state sovereignty must be upheld, 'national' interests defended, 'our' values and 'our' way of life preserved.[1]

[1] Consider, for example, the reasons given by the then President of the United States George W. Bush in a speech in June 2001 for his refusal to sign the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. According to Bush, the problem with the treaty is that by exempting developing countries, in particular China and India, from its requirements – and thus leaving them to pursue economic development without any constraints – it gives them an undeserved advantage in the global economy. While the US wants 'to work cooperatively with these countries in their efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions and maintain economic growth', Bush makes it clear that it is not willing to do so within the Kyoto framework: 'For America, complying with…[its Kyoto] mandates would have a negative economic impact, with layoffs of workers and price

But things are not that easy. What complicates matters is that whilst climate change and global warming clearly affect every corner of the globe, they by no means do so in equal measure. Their effects are neither uniform nor evenly distributed across different countries, regions, or populations. Nor are they evenly produced. Some of us are more deeply implicated in the production of global environmental change than others, and, what is worrying, more often than not it is those others who bear the ecological brunt – and pay the ecological price – of our decisions and activities. As the 2007/2008 United Nations Human Development Report, entitled *Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*, poignantly puts it, while it is '[r]ich nations and their citizens [who] account for the overwhelming bulk of the greenhouse gases locked in the Earth's atmosphere', it is '[t]he world's poor [who] will suffer the earliest and most damaging impacts…While the world's poor walk the Earth with a light carbon footprint they are bearing the brunt of unsustainable management of our ecological interdependence' (UNDP 2008: 9). This discrepancy between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' has also been acknowledged at the negotiation table, with, for example, both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol recognising the 'specific needs and special circumstances' of developing countries, 'especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change' (UNFCCC 1992: Art. 3.2). Beyond the 'high' politics of international summitry and treaty-making, civil society groups and environmental activists have sought to highlight the plight of those whose views have not commonly (or not appropriately or effectively) been heard at international negotiations by staging their own alternative talks and formulating their own alternative principles and declarations for a more socially just and environmentally sustainable global politics. For example, the recent World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of the Mother Earth, organised in Cochabamba,

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increases for consumers.' ('President Bush Discusses Climate Change', http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010611-2.html. Accessed 15 January 2008). Whatever the effects of the Kyoto agreement on US economy, there is, however, the danger that the allowances that the agreement makes for developing countries contribute drastically to climate change. According to India's former environment secretary and former advisor to India's Prime Minister on climate change Prodipto Ghosh, India continues to abide by the Kyoto agreement (at least partly) for this reason: 'The goals of addressing climate change cannot supersede our goals of maintaining our current rates of GDP growth and poverty alleviation programs, as was agreed by everyone at Kyoto…[global warming] is a challenge for the West. Those countries have been at a tremendous party since the nineteenth century and now the party has to come to an end. It is the West that has to get serious about this problem.' (Peter Foster, 'India Snubs West on Climate Change', *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 June 2007, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/main.jhtml?xml=/earth/2007/06/12/eaindia12.xml. Accessed 20 January 2008).

Bolivia, in April 2010, brought together a range of civil society actors and organisations representing various groups from across the world – such as indigenous peoples, women, and the poor – that are often marginalised in official climate change negotiations.

It is not, however, only state borders, the sovereignty norm, or simply existing relations of global economic power that are challenged by environmental problems. It is also the boundaries between different generations of human beings. Global warming, for example, clearly affects not only us 'here and now', but has longer-lasting (and potentially permanent) effects on the ecological and climatic conditions of the planet – conditions that shape the life chances of future generations the same way as ours have been shaped by those who came before us. Furthermore, it is not just the spatial and temporal boundaries between human societies that are under challenge, but also the boundaries that are thought to demarcate us humans from the so-called 'natural' environment, as well as those that separate the animate from the inanimate aspects of the ecosphere. Global environmental change and degradation raises the question of the appropriate relationship between humanity and nature. With further loss of biodiversity, declining fish-stocks, and a general deterioration of the state of the global environment – and all despite international efforts to stave off environmental degradation and to conserve the global environment – we need to consider on what grounds, if any, humans may, justifiably, intervene in and disrupt nature. What should be the limits of such intervention? Is it human well-being that provides the benchmark or, perhaps, the health of the planet as a whole? How much nature – and which parts of it – should we protect? And if the natural environment is to be protected from human intervention, how do we know where nature begins and humanity ends? Is the difference between humanity and nature biologically determined or perhaps culturally dependent? In the light of increasing evidence suggesting that global environmental change is, at least in part, human-induced, can we think of the environment as something 'out there', as an entity separate from human society?

Against this background, the question that this thesis seeks to explore is what happens to politics – and our theories about politics – in a world where existing divisions between states, generations, and species are rendered increasingly problematic by the borderless reality of environmental change and degradation. Does global

environmental change undermine politics as we currently 'know' it? Are our established ways of thinking about politics, along with our present analytic tools and conceptual categories, rendered problematic – if not outright redundant – by environmental change and degradation? If so, how might we go about constructing political practices and frameworks of analysis that are more responsive to environmental issues? In what ways, if any, might environmental concerns require us to rethink the rights, duties, and responsibilities of individuals and communities in the contemporary world? And on what basis, and to what end, should such inquiry be pursued? The question is, in other words, how far contemporary international political theory might be able to go in addressing environmental concerns, and whether it needs minor adjustment, major extension, or – possibly – fundamental renegotiation.

To begin answering these questions, and to make sense of the complex moral and political problems highlighted by global environmental change and degradation, the present chapter draws attention to a particular body of thought, recently revived in the discipline of International Relations (IR), that has explicitly sought to engage with moral and political questions thrown up by a world where our political realities are not only bordered or parochial, but also shaped by borderless processes. The tradition of thought that I am here referring to is that body of thought known in the discipline of IR as either 'international political theory' or 'normative IR theory'. It is the contention of this thesis that by illuminating the importance of questions of rights, justice, and responsibility in the international realm this body of thought offers an additional – albeit often overlooked – resource in the quest to think through the implications of global environmental change and degradation for contemporary politics.

To this end, the current chapter offers an overview of international political theory as a field of study. In doing so, the chapter highlights the central place given to ethical considerations by international political theorists, in particular the question of moral and political inclusion. Building on a discussion of the question of moral judgement in this literature, the chapter defines three 'images' of international political theory: the 'liberal cosmopolitan', the 'critical-theoretical', and the 'anti-foundationalist'. Each of these offers a different interpretation of – and a solution to – the problem of extending moral and political inclusion in world politics. The rest of the thesis then examines the potential contribution of these three images of international political

theory to the extension of moral and political inclusion in world politics in line with environmental concerns. It also considers the potential shortcomings of these three images of international political theory in an effort to create political practices that hold the promise of reaching across the boundaries – whether spatial or 'natural' – that divide 'us' from 'others'.

In doing so, the following section of the current chapter introduces international political theory as a tradition of thought. Following this preliminary discussion, which seeks to highlight the normative dimension of international political theory, the third section of the chapter turns to the question of moral judgement in international politics. In the fourth section, the chapter develops this argument further by defining three images of international political theory that offer three different ways of extending moral and political inclusion in world politics. In conclusion, the chapter offers some preliminary remarks on how international political theory might, as a body of thought, be able to deal with environmental concerns and what some of the limits of this engagement might be.

1.2 International Political Theory: Underlying Assumptions and Key Concerns

It is by no means easy, let alone uncontroversial, to define international political theory as a tradition of thought or field of study. Indeed, as international political theory has in recent decades established itself in the discipline of IR, it has become increasingly difficult, if not virtually impossible, to define it so as to do justice to the diversity and level of sophistication of discussions in the literature. Thus, the problem one faces when attempting to define international political theory is not that definitions of the field would be hard to come by. Rather, it seems to be the opposite – even to the extent that the question of how to define international political theory as a field of study, or what to call it, has become a point of contention in the literature.[2] Nonetheless, while the exact definition of, and label given to, international political

[2] Molly Cochran, Toni Erskine, and Mervyn Frost, for example, use the term 'normative IR theory' (cf. Cochran 1999; Erskine 2008a; 2010; Frost 1996), whereas Kimberly Hutchings prefers 'international political theory' (Hutchings 1999). Chris Brown has employed both, labelling the field as 'normative IR theory' in *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Brown 1992), but changing to 'international political theory' in *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today* (Brown 2002). Simon Caney has opted for 'global political theory' arguing that the term 'international political theory' is not only misleading but that it also is too often 'employed to refer to the ways in which states should treat other states' (Caney 2005a: 2). Terry Nardin, on the other hand, talks about 'international ethics' (Nardin 2008; see also Nardin and Mapel [1992] 2001).

theory remains contested, the various contributions to this body of work are united by certain underlying assumptions and key concerns.

Most importantly, international political theory is marked by its explicit engagement with questions of rights, justice, and responsibility in the international realm. As Chris Brown explains, in this regard international political theory stands apart from both conventional political theory and mainstream IR theory. According to Brown, the key element of distinction between international and domestic political thought derives from the latter's acceptance of the 'bounded quality of politics' (Brown 2002: 11). Here it is worth quoting Brown at length:

> international political theory shares with political theory a concern with rights and justice, but it focuses this concern on the particular problems thrown up by the implications of sovereignty for these key notions…The existence of bounded political entities is a backdrop to most conventional political theory, something that political theorists are aware of but do not allow to impinge too radically upon their consciousness. For international political theorists, this bounded quality of politics is foregrounded; it becomes the key feature of political life. The existence of a boundary between the domestic and the international is taken for granted by conventional political theory, but is contested and cross-examined by international political theorists. (Brown 2002: 11)[3]

It is important to note, however, that the centrality of state sovereignty for international political theory does not follow from a simple division of the world into separate territorially defined entities. Rather, according to Brown, while 'a political geography based upon a system of autonomous sovereign units encourages a particular mode of thinking about the world in which notions of "right" and "justice" are particularized and parochialized…this is particularly striking in a world in which government is seen as *representative* and *responsible*' (Brown 2002: 11, emphasis added). Indeed, as Brown continues:

> The 'subjects' of an autocrat have few rights, and justice is another word for the will of the ruler, but once subjects become '*citizens*' then the issue of what

[3] Or as Molly Cochran puts it: '[N]ormative IR theory is distinguished [from political theory] by its concern with the question of the moral relevance of states. Respect for state sovereignty is a principal norm of international practice…[therefore] to inquire into the value invested in this norm and to determine whether it is justifiable [is an important task for normative IR theory]…Political theory, for the most part, is not interested in the question of the moral relevance of the state form, and often takes this institution for granted as the forum in which ideas of the good and the good polity are worked out' (Cochran 1999: 10).

> they owe to each other as opposed to non-citizens becomes real. Giving priority to the interests of fellow citizens or co-nationals inevitably involves downsizing one's obligation to everyone else. (Brown 2002: 11, emphasis added)

The preferential treatment of one's fellow citizens implied by conventional political theory is a key assumption queried by international political theory.

As for the relationship between international political theory and mainstream IR theory, Brown argues that the key difference between the two follows from the former's aim to be 'critical' and to account for the fact 'that we live in "a world of our making"' (Brown 2002: 13).[4] According to Brown, the point is not only that 'conventional IR theory takes the world as it is', but that in doing so 'it fails to realize that any account of how the world is can only exist within a framework of shared ideas and concepts. Rules, regularities and patterns are not found within the world, and norms are not imposed upon it; rather they are all products of theory and constitutive of the world' (Brown 2002: 13). Indeed, as Brown puts it, 'taken as a whole, "international political theory" is not an adjunct or supplement to conventional international relations theory, but an alternative project starting from a fundamentally different ontology and epistemology' (Brown 2002: 14). International political theory is committed 'to the idea that "international relations" is not *sui generis*, an activity that is so different from other areas of social life that it requires the development of patterns of thought specific to its peculiar circumstances' (Brown 2002: 14, emphasis in the original).

While useful as a starting point, it is worth noting that Brown's description of international political theory is not without its problems. In the first instance, it remains open to question whether international political theory can deliver the awaited challenge to the idea of state sovereignty. Furthermore, as debates within the field attest, it is also arguable whether international political theory as a field of study can be characterised as 'critical'. According to Kimberly Hutchings, for example, this is, by and large, not the case. Instead, Hutchings suggests, there are many approaches within the field that could be labelled as 'problem-solving' in that seeking to identify 'the

[4] According to Nicholas Rengger and Ben Thirkell-White, international political theory is one of the areas of study in the discipline of IR that has used 'the intellectual space' opened by writers such as Robert Cox and Richard Ashley as a 'springboard' for its development (Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007: 12-13).

principles that morally legitimize or justify the institutions and practices of international politics' they invoke a distinction between 'morality and politics, state and international, universal and particular' (Hutchings 1999: 47, 51). According to Hutchings, however, and in view of what she considers to be intrinsic to international political theory – namely, the idea that what matters in the study of international politics is not only 'the theory of politics' but also 'the politics of theory' – this is highly problematic (Hutchings 1999: 93). Thus, Hutchings argues, '[t]o change the way of thinking in normative international theory requires not only that one does not view international politics in essential distinction from domestic politics or morality, it also requires the abandonment of prevailing notions of normative truth' (Hutchings 1999: 92-3).

This charge by Hutchings is a serious one. It relates to the question of the foundations of normative judgement, a theme that will be introduced below in this chapter and further discussed in later chapters of this thesis. What I want to focus upon in the present context is Hutchings's argument that the aim of international political theory (and of theory in general) is not only to describe but also to *prescribe*; to say what is 'wrong' and how it could be otherwise. According to Hutchings, 'normative theory purports to provide the resources from which both to judge whether the world is or is not as it ought to be and, insofar as is and ought are estranged, to prescribe how the world should be changed' (Hutchings 1999: 5). This is important in that it is an element of international political theory that Brown's description discussed above does not, at least not explicitly, seem to acknowledge. Indeed, while Brown argues that international political theory has contributed to the healing of a drift or a 'loss of contact between international relations and the wider issues of political and moral philosophy' (Brown 1992: 84), he has been less willing to confer to international political theory the right to prescribe. Understood accordingly, international political theory can be seen to '[stand] between philosophy in general and the specific, practical discourses of international relations' (Brown 1992: 82). According to Brown, 'the role of the [normative] theory of international relations is a special case of the role of philosophy in general; the aim is to show how things "hang together"' (Brown 1992: 82).

Molly Cochran has explicitly taken issue with Brown's putatively descriptive normative agenda. According to Cochran, Brown's definition of international political theory 'limits him in regard to pursuing the traditional role of political theory, the critical evaluation of beliefs' (Cochran 1995a: 46). Instead, Cochran suggests, while arguably presenting 'an extension of the project of political theory beyond the confines of the state' (Cochran 1995a: 44), international political theory should explicitly seek to evaluate 'processes of value consensus toward an improved world order' (Cochran 1995a: 46). As Cochran argues, 'political theory does not simply explore established values and what we understand by them. It is normative, asking the "should and "ought" questions of which values or standards generate a better polity' (Cochran 1995a: 46). In this sense, international political theory should be understood as a tradition of thought that 'takes as its subject matter the criteria of ethical judgement in world politics and seeks shared principles for extended moral inclusion and social reconstruction in international practice' (Cochran 1999: 2).

Following Cochran and Hutchings, then, international political theory should be understood as a tradition of thought that is characteristically 'normative' in the prescriptive sense of the word. This appears to challenge Brown's understanding of the field as primarily descriptive rather than evaluative. To be fair to Brown, though, it is worth noting that when first writing about normative IR theory as a body of thought in *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* in 1992, he was more worried about this body of work being exclusively associated with 'standard setting and prescription' rather than with 'the study of how (and what and by whom) standards are set' and 'the belief that normative theorists claim to possess some special knowledge which enables them to solve the difficult moral dilemmas of the day' (Brown 1992: 3). Whilst making this statement, however, Brown points out that IR theory, regardless of whether it is nominally normative, is in fact 'steeped in normative assumptions…[and] grounded in normative positions, whether acknowledged or not' (Brown 1992: 3). In this sense, engagement with international politics presupposes, whether implicitly or explicitly, 'the business of standard setting and norm creation' (Brown 1992: 3).[5] The

[5] One example of a scholar who seems to assume, rather than explicitly state, the prescriptive function of contemporary international political theory is Erskine. Erskine argues that as 'the natural extension of political theory into the realm of the international' international political theory serves a descriptive purpose: it seeks to inquire into the question 'how we get from where we are presently situated, steeped in our own immediate circumstances, with our local ties and particular loyalties, to consideration for

point that scholars such as Cochran and Hutchings, albeit in different ways and for different reasons, make, however, is that this engagement should be – and should be made – apparent.

Understood accordingly, international political theory can perhaps be seen as being fundamental for initiating what Mervyn Frost has called a 'normative turn' within the discipline of IR, a turn that demands, Frost argues, explicit engagement in 'ethical argument about what ought to be done in international affairs' (Frost 1998: 119). However, assuming that this is (and should be) the case, the question arises: on which grounds, if any, might it be possible to engage in moral argument on matters of international politics? In a pursuit to shed light on international political theory as a field of study, the following section of the current chapter takes up this question.

1.3 International Political Theory and the Question of Moral Judgement: Key Debates

The question of whether it is possible to engage in moral argument and to pass moral judgements in international politics occupies a central place in the study of international political theory. This question has been deemed particularly important in light of the multiple divisions – whether political, economic, cultural, or religious – and the various, and often striking, commonalities and interdependences that mark the landscape of international politics. It is important to note, however, that the reason why this question arises for international political theory is *not* because this body of thought deems moral judgement inappropriate in, or inapplicable to, international politics.[6] Rather, it is the opposite: it is *because* the international realm can be understood to form a part of the moral world that the problem of moral judgement arises.

It is possible to identify two key ways in which students of international political theory have approached the issue of moral judgement. These two understandings relate to two different, albeit closely inter-related, debates in the study of international political theory. In the first place, the question of moral judgement has

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distant strangers' (Erskine 2008a: 10). Erskine's argument suggests, however, an engagement in what Brown calls 'the business of standard setting and norm creation'. See also Erskine 2010.

[6] For a discussion of moral scepticism in the discipline of IR, see, for example, Beitz (1979) 1999: 15-27, Frost 1986; 1996.

been understood to reflect what Cochran has referred to as the division between 'universalism' and 'particularism' (Cochran 1995a: 47). According to Cochran, a clear demonstration of this division in the field of international political theory can be found within the so-called 'cosmopolitan-communitarian debate': cosmopolitans, emphasising the individual human being as an independent moral agent, invoke universal criteria of moral judgement; communitarians, viewing the state as 'the framework that founds and enables the ethical discourse in which social judgements are possible', appeal to particularistic, i.e. state-centric and culturally-specific, foundations of morality (Cochran 1995a: 48).

On the other hand, however, the question of moral judgement has been understood to entail a reflection on not simply *where* the foundations of morality might lie (or how they might be established) but rather *whether* they can be said to exist (or to be established) in the first place. Cochran and Hutchings, for example, have respectively argued that this is an issue that neither cosmopolitans nor communitarians, due to their reliance on the categories of the universal and the particular, are able to appreciate (cf. Cochran 1999; Hutchings 1999). In other words, neither approach is able to deal with the issue that *actually* is at stake in debates over moral judgement – namely, the question whether it is possible to identify a determinate standpoint, or foundation, for moral judgement at all. According to Cochran, it 'is not the universal or particular *scope* of moral claims' that is important when passing moral judgements or evaluating moral claims in the international realm, 'but *the way they are put forward*: that is how one justifies and enforces one's claims' (Cochran 1999: 14, emphasis in the original). Or, as Richard Shapcott has put it,

> [o]ne of the problems with the cosmopolitan/communitarian framework is that it misrepresents the nature of the issues at stake, constructing [the] debate as one over moral/political *boundaries*. However, much of the literature on which this debate draws is not concerned with boundaries as such but with disputes over the nature, source or grounding of morality *per se*…the central question is about how we acquire *knowledge* of the good, and the relationship between the right and the good, rather than over the *boundaries* of the moral community. (Shapcott 2001: 32, emphasis in the original)[7]

[7] As to the literature on which the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate draws, Shapcott refers to the so-called 'liberal-communitarian debate' in political theory (Cf. Mulhall and Swift 1992). In her *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach*, Cochran has also drawn attention to points of connection and contrast between the categories of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism in IR and liberalism and communitarianism in political theory (Cochran 1999).

Understood accordingly, while the first understanding of the question of moral judgement can be argued to relate to a divide between cosmopolitans and communitarians, the second understanding seems to involve a division of international political theory into 'foundationalist' and 'anti-foundationalist' approaches. In the following, I will seek to explore in more detail the underlying assumptions of these two divides and to examine their respective implications for the study of international political theory.

1.3.1 The Question of Moral Judgement and the Cosmopolitan-Communitarian Divide

To date, a discussion of international political theory would seem curiously incomplete without a reference to either the categories of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism or the so-called 'cosmopolitan-communitarian debate'.[8] Thus, in order to understand international political theory as a field of study, it is crucial to enquire into the implications of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate for the normative dimension of international political theory. In other words, it is necessary to enquire into the conditions of possibility of moral judgement in the international realm as they have been understood within the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. Before engaging with the question of moral judgement within this debate *per se*, however, a few words on the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate itself are in order.

For better or for worse, the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate has played an important part in the development of international political theory. Brown, for example, has argued that this debate functions as an important reminder of international political theory's 'many points of contact with moral and social philosophy' (Brown 1992: 12). Furthermore, according to Brown, the distinction between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches that underlies the debate is useful since it highlights 'the most central question of any normative international relations theory, namely the moral value to be credited to particularistic political collectives as against humanity as a whole or the claims of individual human beings'

[8] The details of the so-called 'debate' between cosmopolitans and communitarians have been well documented in the literature, Brown's *New Normative Approaches* (Brown 1992) and Janna Thompson's *Justice and World Order: A Philosophical Inquiry* (Thompson 1992) as perhaps the two most obvious initial points of reference. It is these two authors, and these two works, that are often cited as having introduced the divide between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches to the study of international political theory (cf. Cochran 1995a; 1999; Erskine 2008a; Hutchings 1999; Smith 1995).

(Brown 1992: 12). In this vein, according to Steve Smith, for example, '[t]he basic distinction [between the two categories] is simple: communitarian theories argue that political communities are the bearers of rights and duties in international society; cosmopolitan theories argue that moral arguments should be based not on communities but on either humanity as a whole or on individuals' (Smith 1995: 9).

Whether Smith's 'simple' distinction between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism adequately describes the two perspectives is a moot point. Indeed, there are many who have been critical of any 'basic' or 'simple' distinction between these two categories. In Erskine's view, for example, it is possible to distinguish between two issues that are at stake in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. In the first place, Erskine argues, the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate relates to the issue of 'the sphere of equal moral standing'. This refers to 'the realm of those whose moral worth is considered to be on par with our own when we attempt to negotiate questions of obligation in international relations' (Erskine 2008a: 15). In other words, it describes 'the area within which claims to moral duty, solidarity, and loyalty towards "fellow moral agents" provide intelligible – and compelling – appeals' (Erskine 2008a: 15-16).

In this regard, the line is often drawn between a universalistic or global cosmopolitanism and a state-centric or particularistic communitarianism. According to Charles Beitz, a key characteristic of a cosmopolitan perspective is that 'it is concerned with the moral relations of members of a universal community in which state boundaries have a merely derivative significance' (Beitz [1979] 1999: 182). It argues that '[t]here are no reasons of basic principle for exempting the internal affairs of states from external moral scrutiny, and [that] it is possible that members of some states might have obligations of justice with respect to persons elsewhere' (Beitz [1979] 1999: 182). A communitarian approach, in contrast, starts with a more circumscribed sphere of equal moral standing. This is evident in, for example, Michael Walzer's defence of the political community. Here it is worth quoting Walzer at length:

> Communal life and liberty requires the existence of 'relatively self-enclosed arenas of political development.' Break into the enclosures and you destroy the communities. And that destruction is a loss to the individual members…a loss of something valuable, which they clearly value, and to which they have a right, namely their participation in the 'development' that goes on and can only go on within the enclosure…Against foreigners, individuals have a right to a state of

> their own. Against state officials, they have a right to political and civil liberty. Without the first of these rights, the second is meaningless: as individuals need a home, so rights require a location. (Walzer 1985: 236)

Erskine suggests, however, that differences between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches do not stop with the scope of the realm of moral equality. According to Erskine, the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide, as conventionally understood in the discipline of IR, extends also to a consideration of the sources of moral agency. In this regard, Erskine draws attention to 'embedded' and 'impartialist' accounts of the individual moral agent, respectively. The key difference between these two understandings of moral agency is that while the former 'presents the moral agent as constituted by particular ties and relationships', the latter argues that, 'in order to engage in moral deliberation', it is necessary to adopt a perspective 'by which one temporarily removes oneself from consideration of particular affiliations' (Erskine 2008a: 24). Understood accordingly, then, Erskine argues that the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is best viewed as reflecting a particular configuration of positions with regards, on the one hand, their respective spheres of equal moral standing and, on the other, their accounts of moral agency and moral reasoning:

> communitarianism…combines an account of moral agency as embedded in particular ties and loyalties with a strictly delimited sphere of equal moral standing. Conversely, cosmopolitanism…combines a universal sphere of equal moral standing with an account of moral agency as abstracted from all particularity. (Erskine 2008a: 35)

Erskine has not been alone to draw attention to the different elements at stake in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. Cochran, too, has called for a fundamental unpacking of this divide, distinguishing between three key dimensions: first, 'a conception of the person and what constitutes the good life for the individual'; second, 'the moral standing of states' or 'whether states promote or impede the living of a good life by individuals'; and, third, the question of the existence of an 'external standpoint by which moral judgements can be made across cultures' (Cochran 1995a: 46-7). In the first dimension, the difference between cosmopolitans and communitarians is that while the former view the person as 'a pre-social individual…unencumbered by social attachments', the latter see it as 'socially embedded…to be constituted by the social matrices in which one is participant' (Cochran 1995a: 47). As for the second dimension, the cosmopolitan-communitarian

debate reflects a divide between those who view states as having 'no normative relevance' and those who 'regard states as morally relevant' (Cochran 1995a: 47). 'For the cosmopolitan', Cochran explains, 'the primary source of value rests not in institutions that compartmentalize humanity, but in humanity itself' (Cochran 1995a: 47). For the communitarian, in contrast, '[t]he state is an ethical forum where duties are made possible, where the socially constituted individual can realize himself or herself fully' (Cochran 1995a: 47).

With regards to the first and the second dimension of the debate identified by Cochran, similarities with Erskine's discussion of the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide are noticeable. As for the third and final dimension, however, Cochran shifts her focus to a theme that is not, at least not explicitly, addressed by Erskine. According to Cochran, namely, the divide between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism in this final dimension reflects a tension between 'universalism' and 'particularism' as moral standpoints. In other words, the divide pertains to the question 'whether there is a standard by which ethical judgements can be made across plural conceptions of the good' (Cochran 1999: 12). Here the key difference between cosmopolitan and communitarian perspectives lies in their respective starting points: 'cosmopolitans seek a standpoint for judging ends offered by morally equal individuals; whereas, communitarians focus on the ends of morally equal communities, questioning whether those ends can be evaluated by the same measure' (Cochran 1999: 12).

This question is not, of course, unrelated to conceptions of the sphere of equal moral standing, the role of states, or individual moral agency or personhood within the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. As Cochran argues, '[s]ince the cosmopolitan understands each individual to be capable of forming a conception of the good…[she] attempts a solution [to the problem of moral evaluation] through the construction of a detached standpoint from which we can transcend the particularism of plural goods' (Cochran 1999: 12). 'For the communitarian', in contrast, 'values, ends, and goods fostered in the state constitute tradition…which founds and enables ethical discourse…This raises, for the communitarian, the problem of how a standpoint for judging among states' plural conceptions of the good can be offered' (Cochran 1999:

12-13).[9] Importantly, however, what Cochran seems to be suggesting is that a discussion of the debate between cosmopolitans and communitarians in international political theory would appear incomplete without a consideration of the issue of their respective criteria of moral judgement. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly in the context of the present discussion, Cochran's remarks to this end help to underline one of the key characteristics of international political theory as a tradition of thought: its attempt to integrate prescriptive, normative political theory into the study of international politics.

Following Cochran, then, while both cosmopolitans and communitarians are in agreement that moral judgement is, indeed, possible in international politics, they disagree on the issue of the most appropriate foundations of moral evaluation. As Cochran explains, the cosmopolitan solution is to appeal to a moral standpoint that is individualistic, detached from any social ties, and thus universal. The communitarian answer, on the other hand, builds on the premise that our moral intuitions and codes reflect the customs and traditions of the community to which we belong. While this need not mean an end to moral discourse or moral judgement at the borders of the community or the state, it seems to imply that considerations of community carry special weight.

The assumption that it is possible to divide international political theory into a universalistic cosmopolitan and a particularistic communitarian camp has been challenged in a number of ways and by various authors in the literature (cf. Erskine 2002; 2008a; Frost 1996; 2002; Linklater 1990a; 1998; 2006a; Thompson 1992). Janna Thompson, for example, has argued that any theory of international justice, to be worthy of such a label, ought to

> tak[e] seriously the communitarian insistence that individuals form themselves and their ideas of the ethical in the framework of their social relations and through their commitments to their communities…[while] at the same

[9] Cochran's argument concerning the tension between cosmopolitan and communitarian approaches over the issue of moral judgement is complex and cannot, perhaps, be fully appreciated without a discussion of the two other dimensions that she considers to be at stake in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. Truly, I am inclined to agree with Cochran (and others) that our notions of moral agency and conceptions of personhood reflect the sources of our moral code and *vice versa*. And while this is an important issue to be addressed in its own right, it is not a question that the current thesis can hope to investigate. Instead, the focus here is on the question whether moral judgements can be passed in the international realm and, if so, on what grounds.

> time…considering whether…[these commitments] are justified. The very existence of a theory of international justice requires that we be able to make moral judgements about the behaviour and nature of communities and the rationality of people's commitments to them. (Thompson 1992: 188)

In a similar vein, Erskine has sought to outline an 'embedded' cosmopolitan position that, while maintaining a cosmopolitan moral purview, 'would neither require nor allow abstract appeals to our common humanity' (Erskine 2002: 474). Instead of appealing to an 'impartialist' justification of cosmopolitanism, according to which 'the standpoint of the moral agent is independent of all social particularity', embedded cosmopolitanism would start by 'locat[ing] the standpoint of the moral agent in the multifarious communities to which she belongs' (Erskine 2002: 474). Andrew Linklater, also, has argued for an understanding of a cosmopolitan morality that starts with 'the idea of "the connected self"' (Linklater 2006a: 111) and emphasises 'the *immanence* of universal obligation in everyday realities' (Linklater 2007a: 33, emphasis in the original). In *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era*, Linklater has referred to such an account as 'a thin conception of cosmopolitanism' (Linklater 1998: 48).[10]

It is not the purpose of the present thesis to evaluate whether attempts to articulate an ethical position in international politics that, in Erskine's words, 'would combine a situated account of moral agency with an inclusive sphere of equal moral standing' (Erskine 2008a: 40) have been successful. What is important in the current context, however, is the argument that efforts to bridge this gap are, fundamentally, in vain. According to Cochran, for example, the divide between cosmopolitans and communitarians remains unbridgeable because of the nature of their respective 'claims about *how* to ground attributions of moral significance to individuals or states' (Cochran 1999: 17, emphasis in the original): 'Because of its recourse to foundationalist epistemology, [the divide] speaks in terms of *oppositions* rather than a *range* of…positions that may or may not shade into one another, yet will always have to be negotiated and renegotiated' (Cochran 1999: 17, emphasis in the original).

[10] It is crucial to note that with regards the question of moral judgement Linklater's questioning of the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide extends beyond a simple problematisation of the categories of the universal and the particular, humankind and the community, or the impartial and the embedded. Rather, according to Linklater, '[w]hat is important from this vantage-point is not the order of priority in a hierarchy of duties but the tests to which loyalties of any kind ought to be subjected. The crucial measure is whether these loyalties are guilty of unjust exclusion.' (Linklater 1998: 57). Linklater's position will be explored more fully in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

What matters here, however, is not whether such judgements of the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide are accurate. Rather, what is crucial about this argument is that it reflects an understanding of the question of moral judgement in international politics that the division between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, or universalism and particularism, seems unable to appreciate. This is the question of whether or not it is possible to identify a determinate standpoint for moral judgement in the first place. Here it is important to note that such arguments should not be understood as a critique of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate for its consideration of the scope of equal moral standing, moral concern, or moral obligation. Rather, they are intended primarily as a critique of the cosmopolitan-communitarian framework and its *understanding* of the problem of moral judgement as being limited to the problem of the scope or extent of moral obligation. I will engage with this line of argumentation in the following section of the current chapter in the context of a discussion of debates over the foundations of moral judgement in the study of international political theory. Before shifting the focus from the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate and the question of the scope of moral judgement to debates over the foundations of moral judgement, however, a final word on the debate is in order, and it will be given to Brown.

Whatever the merits of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism, whether as approaches to international politics or as meta-theoretical positions, it is important to note that Brown, when introducing these two categories in his influential *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Brown 1992), intended the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide to be employed as nothing more (or nothing less) than an organisational device. In *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today*, Brown has renewed this call arguing that 'the "cosmopolitan-communitarian" classification of international thought employed in [*New Normative Approaches*]…was never more than a very crude aid of thought' (Brown 2002: vii). Thus, according to Brown, while '[t]here is a real distinction to be made between cosmopolitan and communitarian thought…it cannot be made to bear too much weight' (Brown 2002: 17). As Brown argues, 'this distinction is not, in fact, a suitable basis for classification. It obscures more than it clarifies; too many writers who seem to be in one camp cross

over to the other at crucial points' (Brown 2002: 17).[11] Nonetheless, the cosmopolitan-communitarian distinction remains important, and not simply as a heuristic device that allows for the organisation of international political theory into two different camps. It is significant, also, because it reflects developments within the study of international political theory, as well as the important points of connection that this field of study has with certain areas of thought beyond the discipline of IR, most importantly moral and political philosophy. Engaging with arguments that question the existence of *foundations* of moral judgement (but not the existence of moral judgement as such), the following section explores some of these issues.

1.3.2 The Question of Moral Judgement and the Foundationalist-Anti-foundationalist Divide

While Brown's *New Normative Approaches* has become a customary point of reference for those interested in the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide, it is less well-known for drawing attention to another key divide in the study of international political theory, namely, that between so-called 'foundationalist' and 'anti-foundationalist' scholars. This issue is addressed by Brown in the final section of *New Normative Approaches*. As Brown explains, what is at stake in this latter debate is the question of whether or not it is possible to find 'firm grounds for human knowledge' (Brown 1992: 198). The basic distinction between the two is simple: foundationalist thinkers argue that this is, indeed, possible; anti-foundationalists, on the other hand, deny the possibility of grounding knowledge in any kind of fixed, definite foundations.

Seemingly simple divisions can, however, prove highly problematic. According to Brown, with regards the division of international political theory into foundationalist and anti-foundationalist approaches, the problem is that most contemporary scholars, '[a]lthough they [themselves] might not use this term', can be labelled as 'anti-foundationalists' (Brown 1992: 198). In other words, they 'do *not* believe that firm grounds of human knowledge can be found' (Brown 1992: 198, emphasis added), at least not in the sense we cannot conclusively and definitely know whether our

[11] And Brown continues, somewhat sarcastically, '[t]he best strategy seems to be to present arguments and make connections but not to try to impose a classification scheme on the reader – who on past form seems likely to spend more time picking holes in the scheme than thinking about the issues that it is supposed to illuminate' (Brown 2002: 17).

conception of these grounds is the cornerstone of knowledge. Brown is keen to point out, however, that while all contemporary international political theorists might have an anti-foundationalist streak to them, they are not all in agreement on what the lack of foundations of human knowledge should mean for the study of society and politics.

In this regard, the key point of contention concerns the issue of whether or not the loss of faith in firm foundations of knowledge actually matters. On the one hand, Brown argues, there are those who 'do not believe that the absence of foundations is a matter of great moment, who believe that life can go on without foundations in much the same way as it did before' (Brown 1992: 198). Brown calls these scholars '"pale" anti-foundationalists…the parallel [being] with the Nietzschean idea of a "pale" atheist who, while rejecting belief in God, thinks it possible to carry on living in much the same way as before' (Brown 1992: 198). On the other hand, however, there are those who think that the disappearance of faith in the foundationalism of human knowledge constitutes, in fact, a 'great moment'; those, in Brown's words, who 'share the important negative characteristic of *not* being "pale" anti-foundationalists' (Brown 1992: 198, emphasis in the original). According to Brown, while 'they [might] experience the lack of foundations for human knowledge in many different ways', there is 'a shared sense that something very important is involved here. Intellectual life cannot simply proceed in the old ways; something profound has happened to Western thought once it becomes clear that the foundations upon which it rests are, ultimately, radically insecure' (Brown 1992: 198).

Brown's point about there being different 'shades' of anti-foundationalism is important. In the current context, however, I want to focus on the darker shade of anti-foundationalism identified by Brown. One of the main reasons for focusing on this strand of anti-foundationalist thought is captured nicely by Brown above, and is thus worth repeating here: that anti-foundationalists of a darker complexion believe, as Brown puts it, that '[i]ntellectual life cannot simply proceed in the old ways; [that] something profound has happened' (Brown 1992: 198). Furthermore, and as will be discussed below, this is also the sense in which most contemporary international political theorists seem to employ the term 'anti-foundationalist'.

If this is the case, it is worth asking what, then, has happened. According to Brown, what underlies anti-foundationalism of this latter kind is 'the belief that all the varieties of social and political thought dominant in the West since the Enlightenment – the discourses of modernity, perhaps – are in crisis' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1656). In particular, Brown argues, this crisis pertains to 'reason itself, as conventionally understood' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1658). According to Brown, this challenge has two main sources. In the first place, the reasons for modern, Western rationality being 'under threat' are political. In other words, they relate to the organisation of and the structures of authority in contemporary international society. As Brown puts it, 'in the twentieth century the instrumental rationality of the West has so often found itself at the service of dubious causes that it has become itself politically suspect' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1658). Secondly, Brown points to considerations of epistemology, or the theory, nature, and sources of human knowledge. '[I]n epistemological terms', Brown argues, 'one of the most common features of twentieth century thought is the view that rationality means different things in different contexts' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1658).

At this point, it is worth putting the argument for anti-foundationalism aside for a moment and, instead, highlight a crucial difference between the role of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate discussed above and the debate over foundations addressed here within the discipline of IR. The important difference between the two is that whereas the former has been understood as (more or less) internal to the study of international political theory, this is by no means the case with the latter.[12] Rather, the debate over foundations relates to efforts to make sense of the discipline as a whole in the context of an increasing awareness of what Richard Devetak has referred to as the 'dark underside' and the 'limitations of modernity' (Devetak 1995: 28). In this sense, it relates to a radically wider range of concerns beyond those of international political theory or those that the current chapter can hope to address. A brief discussion of these is in order.

In the discipline of IR, the challenge to modern modes of thought has involved two key moves. First, as Nick Rengger and Mark Hoffman have pointed out in an article titled 'Modernity, Postmodernism and International Relations', published in

[12] Note, however, the parallels between the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate in international political theory and the so-called liberal-communitarian debate in political theory. See, for example, Cochran 1999; Erskine 2008a; Shapcott 2001.

1992, it has 'triggered a self-conscious wave of theorising which [has] turned to critical theory, postmodernism and the interpretative social sciences in an effort to undermine the positivist and neo-positivist social science in the study of international relations' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 130). In other words, it has resulted in the development of a strand of IR theory that has been critical of the ahistoricism and scienticism of mainstream IR theory. Second, the critique of 'the discourses of modernity' has led to a need to distinguish between different so-called 'critical' approaches to international politics. In this regard, Rengger and Hoffman have drawn a distinction between 'critical interpretative theory' and 'radical interpretativism' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 132), while Brown, for example, has distinguished between 'Critical Theory (uppercase "C" and "T") and post-modernism' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1656; see also: Shapcott 2008: 329). According to Rengger and Hoffman, the point is that while the two approaches share a concern for the domination of IR by 'a set of modernist (largely positivist) assumptions' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 131), they disagree on what should be done in order to 'break with the positivistic, rationalistic tradition of the mainstream' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 132). Or, as Brown has put it, the critical theoretical and the post-modern represent two different 'sets' of responses to the crisis of modern Western thought. And since this is a crisis, Brown argues, that 'is not going to disappear if ignored', what is needed is a response 'other than a simple reassertion of the old values of the Enlightenment project' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1659).

Before exploring further the differences between critical theoretical and post-modern – or, as they are more commonly referred to in the discipline of IR, post-structuralist – responses to the crisis of modernity and Western rationality, it is worth saying a few words on the nature of the assumed crisis as it has been understood to pertain to the study of international political theory, in general, and the question of moral judgement within this field, in particular. In the first place, the crisis of modernity has been argued to involve a fundamental re-evaluation of our accepted ways of 'doing' international political theory. According to David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, for example, instead of 'searching for a singular ethical theory that could be devised in the abstract and applied in the concrete' (Campbell and Shapiro 1999b: viii), international political theorists should seek to account for '*the ethical relation* in which our responsibility to the other is the basis for reflection' (Campbell and Shapiro 1999b: x, emphasis in the original). In this sense, Campbell and Shapiro argue,

'[i]nstead of an epistemologically oriented ethics of discovery, which presumes a preexisting commonality that must be discerned…[one should seek to] promote an ethics of encounter without a commitment to resolution or closure' (Campbell and Shapiro 1999b: xvii).

Second, and interrelatedly, it has been suggested that the challenge to foundational thinking presupposes a move away from the categories of cosmopolitanism and communitarianism. This commitment underlies, for example, Cochran's argument introduced in the previous section that it 'is not the universal or particular *scope* of moral claims [that matters], but [rather] *the way they are put forward*' (Cochran 1999: 14, emphasis in the original). It also informs Hutchings's claim that the cosmopolitan-communitarian framework, inviting one to consider normative questions by 'opting for one or other of two apparently opposed alternatives' (Hutchings 1999: 51), reinforces 'conceptual oppositions' between 'reason and nature, ideality and reality, universal and particular…[and] the nature of morality and politics' (Hutchings 1999: 91). Thus, international political theory is left 'shuttl[ing] between the status of universal and absolute truth and particular and relative strategy or "way of life"' (Hutchings 1999: 92). What the field needs, instead, Hutchings argues, is to acknowledge that 'the validity of normative judgement of international politics relies ultimately on the identification of others with the conditions of possibility of the normative position in question' (Hutchings 1999: 183). 'Where there is no such identification,' Hutchings continues, 'the carrying through of that prescription in practice can only be a matter of coercion. This is why it is of primary importance that normative theorists should focus on the ethical potential of the world as it is rather than take refuge in the idea of truths or reason as the key to progress in history' (Hutchings 1999: 183).

With regards international political theory as a tradition of thought, and the question of moral judgement within this tradition, such concerns are by no means trivial. As Brown suggests, much contemporary international political theory reflects the twin assumptions that, first, the world cannot be described 'as it is, to [be] read off from the legible face of social reality' and, second, that '[r]ules, regularities and patterns are not found within the world, and norms are not imposed upon it; rather they are all products of theory and constitutive of the world' (Brown 2002: 13). Or, in Frost's

words, '[i]f our world is in some sense made by us, if it is the result of our choices, then it is certain that in the making of it, many of our choices will be guided by the values which we hold dear. The world we build will reflect our ethical beliefs' (Frost 1998: 126).

However, if we agree *inter alia* with Brown and Frost that the world is 'a human construct' and that it reflects 'our ethical beliefs', support for any particular view can be understood as an expression of what we believe to be right, just, or ethically appropriate. Thus, it is important to consider *whose* ethical beliefs they are that we are referring to, and *why* we should deem these beliefs to be authoritative or binding on our own or on others' actions. Peter Sutch has summarised these thoughts well in the context of his discussion on the relevance and place of liberal values in world politics:

> If human rights or, more generally, liberalism is to play a lead role in completing the development of international to a more global politics its principles need to be (potentially at least) the object of a real consensus of all relevant agents. Without this liberalism is simply one more distinctive and local way of life competing for international supremacy. (Sutch 2001: 205)[13]

Similar concerns can be discerned also in Hutchings's critique of 'unrealistic' normative theorising in international relations:

> Normative judgement and prescription is not unrealistic when it envisages a world radically different from the way it is now, it is unrealistic when it fails to think through the foundations on which it must be built in order to change the world, and what negative as well as positive implications that building may have. Most of all, normative theory is unrealistic when it substitutes rigorous analysis of how political agency can be generated within international politics with the illusory fast track power of privileged, non-exclusive insights into truth and history. (Hutchings 1999: xiv)

Be this as it may, the question of response remains. As discussed above, according to Brown, and Rengger and Hoffman, it is possible to distinguish between two sets of responses to the challenge posed by the crisis of modernity to international

[13] However, as Thompson points out, 'the problematic nature of any pronouncements about international justice is not a reason for not making them, but rather a reason for recognising that they are only a contribution to an ongoing debate which ought not to be dominated by western concerns and interests' (Thompson 1992: 190).

politics: the critical theoretical and the post-modern/post-structuralist.[14] Brown argues that the key difference between the two is located in the distinction between 'reconstruction' and 'deconstruction' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1659). According to Brown, while critical theorists, or 'reconstructors' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1659), 'seek to establish new foundations of knowledge, rescuing the Enlightenment project rather than undermining it' (Brown 1992: 198), the aim of post-modern/post-structuralist authors, or 'deconstructors' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1659), 'is not that of finding new ways of constructing the old categories of thought but that of demolishing these old categories more thoroughly' (Brown 1992: 199). In other words, whereas critical theorists attempt to 'produce a modern account of liberation and emancipation' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1662), post-structuralist scholars aim 'to bring to the surface features of discourse which normally are allowed to remain submerged' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1663).

Understood accordingly, with its emphasis on the reconstruction of modern social and political thought, critical theory seems to appeal, to borrow Rengger and Hoffman's phrase, to 'a "minimal foundationalism"' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 133). It is foundationalist, however, 'not only to a different degree from the mainstream tradition but in a wholly different way as well' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 133). This is reflected by the centrality of what Rengger and Hoffman refer to as the 'knowledge-interests nexus' – the idea that certain 'forms of knowledge promote certain kinds of normative interests regarding order within the international system' – to critical theoretical accounts of society and politics (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 133). As Devetak explains, critical theory aims to reveal

> the unexamined assumptions that guide traditional modes of thought, and…[to expose] the complicity of traditional modes of thought in prevailing political and social conditions…[t]he knowledge that critical international theory generates is not neutral; it is politically and ethically charged by an interest in social and political transformation. It criticises and debunks theories that legitimise the prevailing order and affirms progressive alternatives that promote emancipation. (Devetak 2001a: 161-2)

[14] In 'Postmodern Ethical Conditions and a Critical Response' (Crawford 1998), Neta C. Crawford offers a more ambitious typology by initially differentiating between post-modern, post-structuralist, feminist, and critical theorists. However, instead of outlining their crucial differences, Crawford focuses on the implications of critical-theoretical arguments for moral judgement in world politics. The critical-theoretical perspective will be addressed in Chapter 3 of the present thesis.

What is important in this regard, however, is not only the idea of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' or the argument 'that the main criterion for assessing truth claims is whether or not…[they] are emancipatory' (Smith 1995: 29). In addition, central to critical theory's 'minimal foundationalism' is its commitment to the method of immanent critique. As described by Devetak, immanent critique starts from the assumption that 'the resources for criticising and judging can only be found "immanently", that is, in the already existing political societies from where the critique is launched' (Devetak 2001a: 162). 'The task of the political theorist therefore', Devetak argues, 'is to explain and criticise the present political order in terms of the principles presupposed by and embedded in its own legal, political and cultural practices and institutions' (Devetak 2001a: 162).

In contrast to the 'critical interpretative' approach attempted by critical theory, the 'radical interpretativism' of post-modern/post-structuralist writers reflects a different starting point and mode of critique. In the post-structuralist view, Rengger and Hoffman argue,

> [i]t is not so much that the ethical and/or normative assumptions of the mainstream are hidden, and anyway wrong, though this may be so, but that the mainstream cannot understand the way it closes off and privileges its view of the world and therefore can offer us no real understanding of itself, world politics or, indeed, anything. (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 134)

In this way, instead of drawing attention to the association between knowledge and interests, the 'adoption of th[e] post-structural method (or anti-method) leads to…a focus on the power-knowledge nexus' (Rengger and Hoffman 1992: 134).

Arguably, the emphasis on the relationship between power and knowledge is one of the most important insights to be drawn out of post-modern/post-structuralist work in the discipline of IR. According to Devetak, the post-structuralist agenda has devotedly sought to highlight 'that many of the problems and issues studied in International Relations are not just matters of epistemology and ontology, but of power and authority; they are struggles to impose authoritative interpretations of international relations' (Devetak 2001b: 186).

While perhaps most prominent within the discipline, the critical theoretical and the post-modern/post-structuralist are by no means the only possible responses available to the 'crisis' of modernity.[15] In *Normative Theory in International Relations: A Pragmatic Approach*, Cochran has proposed an interesting alternative that builds on the American pragmatism of John Dewey and Richard Rorty (Cochran 1999). According to Cochran, there are two key reasons why it is worth pursuing a pragmatist line of argument. First, it is notable that pragmatism, as a philosophical tradition,[16] has not received much attention in the discipline of IR nor the sub-field of international political theory. Here Cochran draws attention to differences between the treatment of post-structuralism, on the one hand, and pragmatist thought, on the other, arguing that if insights from post-structuralist thought are relevant to IR, why not those from pragmatism. As Cochran puts it, pragmatism 'is at least deserving of similar attention to that which has been focused upon poststructuralist approaches in IR over the last ten years' (Cochran 1999: 170).

Second, Cochran argues that pragmatism has much to offer, especially with regards the study of international political theory. According to Cochran, it 'has a better capacity' than post-structuralist anti-foundationalism to deal with one of the key issues within the field, namely, 'the value of community' or 'the attachment persons have to the practices shared within communities' (Cochran 1999: 170). Indeed, while Cochran is highly sympathetic of the efforts of post-structuralist writers to 'challenge modernist notions of rationality, autonomy, and foundational philosophy as historical constructions which silently assume sovereign status' (Cochran 1999: 142), she is wary of their individualist stance. 'Regarding the normative position of poststructuralist IR theorists,' Cochran argues, 'it is evident that the subject of justice for these writers is the individual, and that their aim is the expansion of moral inclusion and individual autonomy in world politics' (Cochran 1999: 142). For Cochran,

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[15] In *New Normative Approaches*, Brown includes Michael Oakeshott, Richard Rorty, and Alasdair MacIntyre among those scholars that 'hold that there is something fundamentally suspect about the thought of modernity' but fall into neither the critical theoretical nor the post-modern/post-structuralist camp (Brown 1992: 196). See also Brown's discussion of the work of M. M. Bakhtin, Tsvetan Todorov, Christine Sylvester, and Rorty in his 1994 article '"Turtles All the Way Down": Anti-foundationalism, Critical Theory and International Relations' (Brown [1994] 2000).

[16] Cochran suggests that this tradition is more accurately described as 'anti-philosophical' insofar as it seeks to 'turn away from [Anglo-American analytical] philosophy and its truth-seeking methods' (Cochran 1999: 144).

> [t]his raises the question of whether or not poststructuralist antifoundationalism can adequately theorize the value individuals find, not only in individual autonomy, but in community tradition and membership as well…suggest[ing] that…the ability to think about the interplay between the value of individual autonomy and social membership appears circumscribed in poststructuralism. (Cochran 1999: 142-3)

Whether Cochran's pragmatist alternative offers a more satisfactory account of the relationship between the individual and the social/collective than post-structuralist approaches need not concern us here. I will return to this issue in Chapter 5 of this thesis. In the context of the present discussion – the question of moral judgement and the debate over foundations in international political theory – it is worth drawing attention to an aspect of Cochran's *Normative Theory in International Relations* that is reminiscent of Brown's treatment of the this divide discussed in the beginning of the current section. Contra Brown, who pointed to the differences *within* anti-foundationalism, arguing that there are those who are and those who are not 'pale' anti-foundationalists, Cochran suggests that, in fact, the opposite might be the case. Having analysed the implications of post-structuralist and pragmatist thought for international political theory, Cochran surmises that, instead of a *selection* of anti-foundationalisms, 'we have a range of foundationalisms from which to choose' (Cochran 1999: 168). According to Cochran, '[i]t appears that we cannot completely divest ourselves of recourse to some kind of grounds, however temporary, in order to be able to offer criteria for ethical judgement. Those engaged in normative IR theory cannot avoid being *weak* foundationalists of one sort or another' (Cochran 1999: 168, emphasis in the original).

Cochran's point is highly significant. It alludes to, and reminds us of, potential problems with using the division between foundationalism and anti-foundationalism as an aid of understanding. As with the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide, the categories of foundationalism and anti-foundationalism should not – perhaps cannot – be understood as settled or fixed. At the same time, however, they provide us with points of orientation that can help us to steer our way through debates and divisions amongst international political theorists, a particularly important aspect of an effort aimed at making sense of the potential contribution(s) of international political theory to the extension of moral and political inclusion in world politics in line with environmental concerns. In this pursuit, and building on the discussion above on the

question of moral judgement within the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, on the one hand, and the debate over foundations, on the other, the next section introduces three 'images' of international political theory: the 'liberal cosmopolitan', the 'critical-theoretical', and the 'anti-foundationalist'. It is through these three images that the later chapters of the thesis then explore the interface between international political theory and environmental concerns.

1.4 Three Images of International Political Theory

As discussed above, neither the cosmopolitan-communitarian nor the foundationalist-anti-foundationalist divide in international political theory stands unchallenged. While both tell us something about international political theory as a field of study in general, and the question of moral judgement within it in particular, neither can fully capture the flurry of theoretical activity that goes on within the field. And, as suggested above, perhaps this is not their purpose either. Rather, they offer means with which to make sense of contributions to the study of international political theory, means that, as discussions within the field attest, are open to debate and contestation.

With these caveats in mind, I want to suggest that it is possible to distinguish between different 'images' of international political theory. In the current context, I want to draw attention to three such images – the 'liberal cosmopolitan', the 'critical-theoretical', and the 'anti-foundationalist'. This is not to claim that these three images would exhaust the range of images available to, or imaginable by, international political theorists. Instead, I want to draw attention to these three images because, in their own respective ways, they are illustrative of the different ways in which moral and political inclusion might be extended in the international realm.

Before introducing the three images, a final word on the chosen strategy is in order. The 'image' approach adopted here does *not* seek to offer an alternative to either the cosmopolitan-communitarian or the foundationalist-anti-foundationalist divide (or to any other categorisation of international political theory). Rather, and as discussed above, it seeks to reflect and build upon these two debates on the question of moral judgement in international politics. Neither does it propose a stead-fast categorisation of contributions to international political theory. It is merely intended as an

organisational device with which to start making sense of some of the key issues at stake in contemporary international political theory. Underpinning this approach is the desire, similar to that suggested by James Brassett and Dan Bulley below, to further discussions on the study of the ethical aspects of world politics:

> An open, plural and engaged ethical conversation is required on such issues because just as ethics produces world politics, good conversation can generate alternatives…The task is rather to engage across perspectives, opening up alternatives and identifying blind spots. Ethics as conversation is entirely capable of supporting and fostering the development of new and plural possibilities in the context of existing and changing frameworks. (Brassett and Bulley 2007: 16)

The first of the three images of international political theory explored here can be referred to as the 'liberal cosmopolitan' image. I focus on this image because it is liberal cosmopolitan ideas that are regularly invoked in contemporary international political theory in support of arguments for global justice. These arguments offer a useful intuitive starting point for examining the contributions of international political theory to discussions on global environmental politics. With regards the question of moral judgement in international politics, the liberal cosmopolitan image has two key features. First, it builds on the assumption (discussed above with reference to the cosmopolitan-communitarian divide) that moral judgement in the international realm ought to be appropriately understood as individualistic and universalistic in character. Second, the liberal cosmopolitan image reflects a commitment to, to borrow Brown's description, 'pale' anti-foundationalism, or what Cochran has called *weak* foundationalism. According to Brown, scholars working within this image of international political theory 'do not believe that firm grounds of human knowledge can be found', but neither do they think that 'the absence of foundations is a matter of great moment' (Brown 1992: 198). In Cochran's terms, suggesting that 'foundations [be] loosened from prior transcendental or theological underpinnings and grounded only in the moral consensus achievable among humankind', the liberal cosmopolitan image is foundationalist in a '*weak*', rather than a '*strong*', sense (Cochran 1999: 15, emphasis in the original).

The second image of international political theory can be labelled as 'critical-theoretical'. Starting from the assumption that all knowledge is political in the sense that it reflects particular interests in a society, the critical-theoretical image argues that

it is thus necessary to encourage the development of a form of knowledge guided by 'an interest in freedom, emancipation from domination, and the achievement of rational autonomy' (Brown [1994] 2000: 1660). It strives towards progressive social and political change and the further emancipation of individuals and communities in the international realm. In this pursuit, it employs the method of immanent critique, thus challenging 'the utopian assumption that there is an unchanging universal ethical yardstick for judging social arrangements' and, instead, highlighting 'the prospects for greater freedom immanent within existing social relations' (Linklater 1996: 280).

The third and final image of international political theory can be referred to as 'anti-foundationalist'. In light of recent debates over foundations of moral judgement in the study of international political theory, it is of paramount importance to be as clear as possible about the meaning of this label in the context of this third image of international political theory. The starting point is simple. In the first place, the anti-foundationalist image refers to what Rengger and Hoffman's have called 'radical interpretativism', or what is more commonly known as either post-modernism or post-structuralism. What is particularly *anti*-foundationalist about such a perspective on international politics is that it is, in Campbell and Shapiro's words, "'against theory" insofar as it resists the desire for *a* theory of ethics that articulates abstract principles in a systemized manner' (Campbell and Shapiro 1999b: x, emphasis in the original). According to Campbell and Shapiro, '[b]eing "against" theory, ethics and justice is…a matter of being against the orthodox renderings of those domains and the ethico-political effects of those renderings' (Campbell and Shapiro 1999b: x). It 'stems in large part from a suspicion that those preoccupied with theories of ethics end up eliding the ethical relation; that the concern with Ethics obscures the contingencies and complexities of the ethical; and that a striving for the rules and principles of justice, especially those that demand impartiality, effects injustice' (Campbell and Shapiro 1999b: x-xi).

However, it is important to note that the ethos of being 'against' theory does not stop with post-modern/post-structuralist perspectives. And, therefore, neither does the anti-foundationalist image, exposing it thus as not a single image, but rather as a collection of images. The ethos of anti-foundationalism underlies, for example, Cochran's argument for a pragmatist approach to international political theory.

According to Cochran, the major contribution of pragmatist thought to this field of study is that it 'demonstrates that foundations do not solve problems…[foundations] represent nothing more than pretensions to resolve indeterminate moral situations' (Cochran 1999: 205). Instead of seeking to check

> the fit of an ethical claim with received and accepted moral principles…a pragmatic approach recognizes that ends are constructed in the process and are as plural as the number of situations which arise. A pragmatic approach has the flexibility required to engage the new, the different, which is bound to surface in any encounter with international, moral situations. (Cochran 1999: 205-6)

The above brief introduction of three images of international political theory – the liberal cosmopolitan, the critical-theoretical, and the anti-foundationalist – has focused on the question of moral judgement and the status of moral claims in the international realm. As argued above, it is possible to distinguish between these three images on the basis of their respective understandings of and responses to the question of moral judgement in international politics. As such, they represent, albeit only partially, the variety of approaches to international political theory. These images remain, however, important. Indeed, in their own respective ways they point towards the extension of moral and political inclusion in the international realm: the liberal cosmopolitan image presents all human beings as moral equals; the critical-theoretical image seeks to encourage the development of an emancipatory knowledge; and the anti-foundationalist image aims to defend difference and alterity in the face of homogenising and unifying global processes.

1.5 Conclusion

It is time to reflect on the key issue that animates the current inquiry – namely, the potential contribution of international political theory to the creation of more environmentally sustainable and socially just global political practices. Indeed, given the moral and political implications of global environmental change and degradation and the need for solutions that are global in scope but not necessarily universal in form, it is not difficult to see why international political theory, with its attention to the 'bounded quality of politics' and its aim to extend the boundaries of moral and political inclusion in world politics, might be seen to provide a useful resource for thinking through problems posed by global environmental change for social and political life.

However, despite its self-declared interest in questions of rights and justice in the international realm, it is noteworthy that scholars of international political theory have not paid much attention to environmental problems. Is this because environmental concerns are just not *that* important? This would be a huge omission on the part of international political theorists, if we take environmental problems to be one of the main challenges facing contemporary society. Moreover, this would be a bad defence given the effects that awareness of environmental problems has had on other disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. One cannot, of course, ignore the problem that international political theory might rely on assumptions that prevent engagement with the environment. Maybe international political theory as a collective enterprise has certain elements built into it that prevent engagement with environmental issues *per se*? Or maybe this problem persists only with reference to particular approaches and can be avoided by others?

By way of a preliminary conclusion, I want to draw attention to three issues in particular that call for further attention. First, while perhaps intuitively appealing, the argument that it is so-called 'cosmopolitan' approaches that are most useful when thinking about environmental concerns warrants further attention. It is open to question, for example, whether an approach to ethics that takes the individual as its starting point can engage with, and appreciate, a concern for environmental degradation.[17] The problem is that environmental degradation is both produced by and affects not only human beings as individuals but also as members of communities. Indeed, it is often the viability – or even the survival – of particular communities that is put into question by environmental change and degradation. A case to point is the anticipated plight (and possible disappearance) of small island states and low-lying coastal countries, such as Micronesia and Tuvalu in the Pacific, as a result of rising sea levels and changing weather patterns caused by global climate change. What is more, these communities are not necessarily defined by political borders. In fact, they often exist transnationally, stretching across state boundaries. The trans-boundary pathways

[17] This is not to suggest that individualism and cosmopolitanism are the same. Rather, and as will be discussed in Chapter 2 of the thesis, individualism is one important feature of cosmopolitan thinking. While I have highlighted the issue of individualism here, critiques of cosmopolitanism from a green perspective (or otherwise) extend beyond this. According to Robyn Eckersley, for example, 'the task of cultivating wider social and ecological loyalties must happen in the only way that communitarians know how: building additional layers of *community* that loosen (as distinct from dislodge) the hold of local, national and regional affinities so that they may be adjusted to encompass a wider network of still particularistic relationships' (Eckersley 2006: 107, emphasis in the original). See also Dobson 2003; 2005; 2006; Eckersley 2004.

of air and water pollution, for example, raise questions concerning the shape, form, and nature of political community. This is an area where insights from international political theory can potentially prove helpful. Vibrant debates on the question of the moral standing of states and the status of transnational duties are illustrative of some of the resources that international political theory has to offer.

However, while international political theory seems well-placed to contribute to discussions on the problems posed by environmental concerns for questions of rights, justice, and responsibility in this transnational dimension, the question of whether this response is adequate, or even appropriate, remains. In this regard, and this is the second issue that I want to draw attention to, it is worth asking whether international political theory can fully appreciate the implications of environmental destruction that are 'socially constructed' or 'socially produced' by various, overlapping discursive and material practices for international politics? Here is it important to note that, as Lorraine Elliott explains, while environmental degradation is 'an ethical problem' and 'an issue of justice', rather than 'just a biophysical process', it is an issue of justice 'not simply because some are more likely to cause it and others are more likely to suffer it but because the causing and the suffering are increasingly linked in a complex web of responsibility and displacement' (Elliott 2006: 345-6). This web reflects differences of political power and practical capacity, both of which interfere with attempts to cope with and respond to environmental degradation. The question that thus arises for international political theory is whether this body of thought can adequately address the issue of social and political power in global environmental politics.

Third, and finally, besides the issues of transnational duties and political power, there is the question of the moral standing of the natural environment.[18] According to Robyn Eckersley, for instance, it is 'ecocentric' (or 'ecology-centred') perspectives that provide the most appropriate response to problems posed by environmental degradation for modern political and social life (Eckersley 1992: 3). And while not arguing for the adoption of an ecocentric political theory, Brian Baxter, Nicholas Low and Brendon Gleeson, and David Schlosberg, amongst others, have highlighted the

[18] Equally important is the question of the moral standing of future generations in global environmental politics. See, for example, De-Shalit 1995 and Dobson 1999 on inter-generational justice and environmental concerns in general, and Caney 2006a, Hiskes 2009, Page 2006, and Vanderheiden 2008a for a discussion of inter-generational justice in global environmental politics, in particular.

importance of considerations of 'ecological', rather than just 'environmental', justice (cf. Baxter 2004; Low and Gleeson 1998; Schlosberg 2007). The key difference between the two is, as Schlosberg explains, that while environmental justice addresses 'environmental risks within human communities', ecological justice focuses on 'the relationship between these human communities and the rest of the natural world (Schlosberg 2007: 3). As for international political theory, then, the issue that arises is whether it can, as a tradition of thought, engage with such positions and whether the normative standards that it appeals to are appropriate for dealing with environmental concerns, such as the loss of biodiversity or the extinction of endangered species, beyond an obvious or immediate human point of reference.

Exploring the intersection between contemporary international political theory and global environmental politics, these are some of the questions that this thesis seeks to respond to. Addressing the contributions of the liberal cosmopolitan image of international political theory to global environmental politics, the following chapter begins this exploration. This discussion is followed by an examination of the respective contributions of the critical-theoretical and the anti-foundationalist images of international political theory to global environmental politics. The final chapter of the thesis returns to the critical agenda outlined above, asking, in particular, whether international political theory may be able to appreciate, and respond to, calls for ecological justice and the need to reach beyond the human subject as the central point of reference of moral and political theory.

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