

Future global ethics:

environmental change, embedded ethics, evolving human identity

<http://repub.eur.nl/pub/76018>

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Paper for: CERES Summer School on *The Right to a Sustainable Future: The Ethics of Development and Environmental Change*, June 30, 2014; and for *J. of Global Ethics*, 10(2).

Work on global ethics looks at ethical connections on a global scale. It should link closely to environmental ethics, recognizing that we live in unified social-ecological systems, and to development ethics, attending systematically to the lives and interests of contemporary and future poor, marginal and vulnerable persons and groups within these systems and to the effects on them of forces around the globe. Fulfilling these tasks requires awareness of work outside academic ethics alone, in other disciplines and across disciplines, in public debates and private agendas. A relevant ethics enterprise must engage in systematic description and understanding of the ethical stances that are expressed or hidden in the work of influential stakeholders and analysts, and seek to influence and participate, indeed embed itself, in the expressed and hidden choice-making involved in designing and conducting scientific research and in policy analysis and preparation; it will contribute in value-critical and interpretive policy analysis. It should explore how the allocation of attention and concern in research and policy depend on perceptions of identity and of degrees of interconnection, and are influenced by the choice or avoidance of humanistic interpretive methodologies. The paper illustrates these themes with reference to the study of climate change.

Keywords: descriptive ethics; climate change; human security; value-critical policy analysis; responsible science

Being in the world: Beyond the International Relations framework and disengaged philosophy

In a contribution to the first issue of this journal I argued the necessity, given comprehensive globalization, of moving 'Beyond the International Relations Framework' (Gasper 2005). A typical assumed starting point has been ethics as articulated within a nation-state, and the enterprise of global ethics is then seen as argumentation about how far—if at all—the proposed intranational principles still apply across national boundaries. Common classifications of positions in global or world ethics seemed often to assume that:

(i) giving low normative weight to national boundaries correlates strongly with (ii) giving [serious] normative weight to people beyond one's national boundaries, and vice versa; in other words that these two dimensions in practice reduce to one. [But they do not.]... We need to...distinguish various types of 'cosmopolitan' position, including many varieties of libertarian position which give neither national boundaries nor pan-human obligations much (if any) importance. (Gasper 2005, 5)

According low ethical status to national boundaries does not automatically bring interest in the lives and rights of people in other countries. I formulated some of the core issues as follows in another paper:

First, how far do we see shared interests between people, thanks to a perception of causal interdependence.... Second, how far do we value other people's interests, so that appeals to sympathy can be influential due to interconnections in emotion. Third, how far do we see ourselves and others fundamentally as members of a common humanity, or [instead fundamentally] as members of a national or other limited social community (with, for example, an ethnic, religious, ideological, or economic basis of identity), or as pure individuals; in other words what is our primary self-identification, as interconnected or separate beings. This prior set of perspectives determines our response to proposed reasoning about ethics and justice. (Gasper 2009, 1-2)

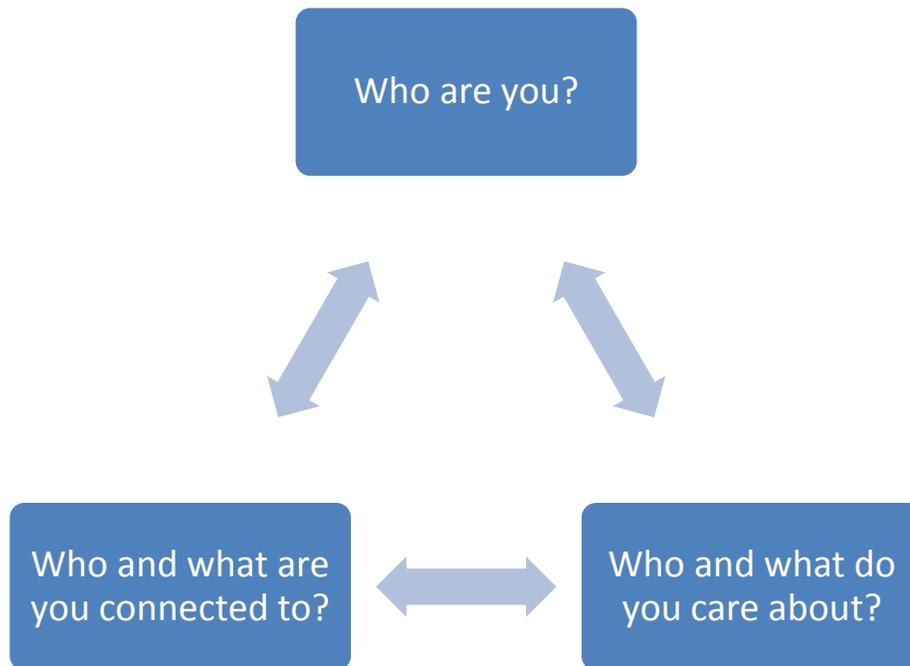
The questions are relevant in how global ethics discussions view human agents and in how agents view themselves; thus the 'we' in these formulations refers to everyone, not only—even though especially—to global ethicists and policymakers. Everyone 'does' (i.e. takes stances in) global ethics. Without significant globalisation of thought in at least one of the three dimensions mentioned above, academic discussions about global ethics will gain little audience or influence, I suggest.

The perceptions, attitudes, and emotions in these areas determine, for example, how much readiness exists to give attention to a proposition like Paul Collier's that "Because natural assets are not man-made, the rights of ownership are not confined to the present generation..." (Collier 2014, 45). Accepting a custodial role for the benefit of later generations relies on adopting a primary identity of member of a national community (as Collier presumes, rather than argues) or of the human species (which is where his logic of how to fairly share non-manmade assets may better lead).

The answer to each question affects the answers to the others, as indicated in Figure 1. A person's answer to 'Who are you?', for example, is influenced by his/her answers to 'Who (and what) are you connected to?' and 'Who (and what) do you care about?'. Strongly individualist or nationalist self-identifications, for example, are partly associated with ontologies of separateness and with methodologies that direct attention in certain ways (e.g., according to

monetized value and/or within national boundaries); and the self-identifications in turn influence what are felt as obligations.

Figure 1: Basic life perceptions



This present piece, to mark the tenth year of the journal, looks at how the study of global ethics needs to recognize that the agents in global ethics are not only set within a globally interconnected economic and social system—yet often adopt highly individualistic or nationalistic ethics—but exist within an interconnected and in several respects fragile global eco-system. Indeed those systems are ultimately inseparable and are better conceived of as a social-ecological (or ‘socio-ecological’) system (e.g., Berkes et al. 2001). As argued by Nigel Dower (2014) and Adela Cortina (2014), global ethics must link intensively with environmental ethics, development ethics and other sister fields. An integrating articulation of work in these fields is essential.

In addition, as implied by Hutchings (2014) and again Cortina (2014) work in global ethics must link strongly to thinking and practice beyond the academy. It should connect to and seek to inform the work in diverse disciplines and policy arenas that affects the lives and interests of non-elite and marginal groups worldwide. I would like to again stress ‘descriptive global ethics’ (Gasper 2005)—the close investigation of the ethical stances of publics, politicians, policy analysts, economists, environmentalists, lawyers, businessmen, etc., and not only fellow ethicists—as essential for ethics research to have more relevance, insight and influence. This

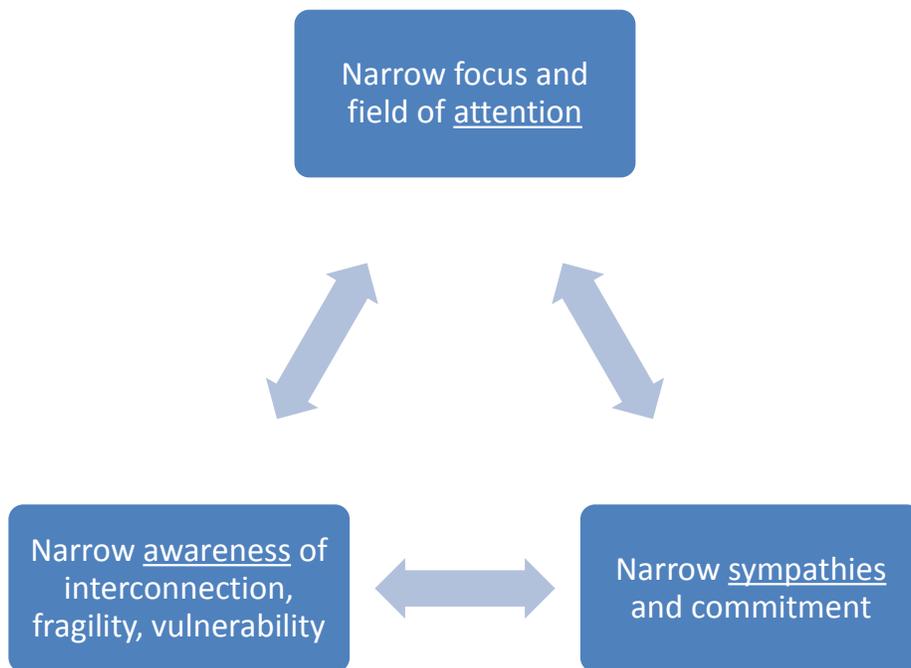
investigation is required for understanding both the complexities of the present and the possible dynamics: to not simply talk of relations between taken-for-granted groups and identities but to reflect on ongoing and possible movements in identity, “Movements of the ‘We’” (Gasper and Truong 2010).

I would like to elaborate these themes with special reference to analyses of global warming and climate change.

Whose being in the world? Environmental change and ignoring the poor

Figure 2 suggests how too limited awareness of interconnections, narrow sympathies, and narrow fields of attention amongst publics, decision-makers and experts, frequently due partly to narrow scientific disciplinarity, all contribute to and sustain each other.

Figure 2: Mutually reinforcing mental and emotional narrowness in science, policy and daily life



The narrow scope of attention found in most disciplines has been exacerbated in the case of social sciences and social philosophy by their emergence historically within in most cases an implicit nation-state framework (Wallerstein et al., 1996). Narrow scope of attention and the associated narrow awareness contribute to low concern for fellow humans outside the nation-state ‘nest’. Further, in increasingly ‘market’ (i.e. business) dominated societies, the transference of the principle of discounting the future in the style of a businessman managing

his own monetized assets, over to a society's management of the relations between generations and groups, as if people too are merely monetized assets to be used in a calculus of economic growth, contributes to *de facto* lack of serious concern for most fellow humans more than a generation or so ahead.

The challenges of global environmental change and unsustainability concern climate change most prominently, but far from solely. The 'planetary boundaries' that are already exceeded or increasingly threatened involve, besides greenhouse gas concentrations, the nitrogen cycle, (loss of) biodiversity, ocean acidification, and others (Rockström et al. 2009). Climate change itself involves many significant shifts besides global warming. In a recent paper I examine the patterns and determinants of attention and non-attention in mainstream discussions of climate change, with reference to 'The warm nest of the nation', 'The song of [endless economic] growth', and 'Climate silences'. The last phrase refers to the blind spots: the people and risks that are largely ignored (Gasper 2012). Nationalism plus the promise of never-endingly increasing delectation, supposedly reached and objectively adjudged by ever-growing monetized turnover, lead to the blind spots: the silences about people with little or no power in markets, especially such people who live in other countries, and about the risks they face of loss of their—in financial terms, paltry—livelihoods, including during 'extreme events', climatic, social and economic. Messianic belief in economic growth as the solution to all problems diverts attention from risks, especially risks for the poor, and from the costs inflicted on some groups and individuals. Studies which show high aversion to the 'risk' of not being precise, and hence exclude unpredictable extreme events from their adjudications, show correspondingly high willingness to accept the allocation of serious risks to marginal groups who are the least able to absorb and recover from them.

A now familiar theme in climate change analysis, expressed in terms of countries, is that the rich cause far more damage and are better protected against that damage and against natural events, while the poor cause far less damage yet are far more vulnerable to harm. This theme applies also, and has more moral force, when understood in terms of persons, around the world (Harris 2010). Some less familiar themes are: that, even so, the rich are less invulnerable than they often think, and are likely to be damaged too if they seek to marginalise rather than acceptably accommodate the poor; and that this is partly because the rich know less than they think they do, and so need to listen carefully to the poor, including to establish a basis for cooperation. Humanistic skills of interpretive analysis are central for this listening, learning and cooperation. We will see that these themes are at home in and can be nurtured by human security analysis.

I have elsewhere essayed comparison of a series of prominent social science studies on climate change, that considers their breadth of attention, awareness and sympathies (Gasper 2010). The comparison asked, first, how fundamental is the challenge of climate change

considered to be; second, how profound is the proposed response. In other words, is climate change seen as a routine, though complex, policy challenge, requiring just a routine even if huge response through mobilization and application of existing conventional policy tools, or is it seen as unprecedented, requiring a transformational response? The issues concern continuous dimensions, so to hint at this the studies are allocated in Table 1 across three categories in each dimension rather than just two.

Table 1: Challenge and response – some leading recent climate change policy studies

	ROUTINE RESPONSE	INTERMEDIATE RESPONSE	TRANSFORMATIONAL RESPONSE
ROUTINE CHALLENGE	Stiglitz 2007 World Bank 2010		
INTERMEDIATE CHALLENGE	Stern 2007 UNDP 2011	Hulme 2009 Prins et al. 2010 Stern 2010	
UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE		UNDP 2007 Campbell et al. 2007 Friedman 2009 Giddens 2009	Jackson 2010 (prosperity without economic growth) Dyer 2010 (geo-engineering) Hamilton 2010 (accepts both those responses)

We see a fairly strong tendency to follow the diagonal, showing the correlation we would expect between the depth of the perceived challenge and the depth of the response (whatever may be the direction of causation). There is also though a significant conservative tendency: in several cases we see a response that is less radical than the diagnosis. These are in the cells shaded grey. For example, the sociologist Anthony Giddens in his book *The Politics of Climate Change* recognises that we face an exceptional challenge, not least because of what he christens ‘Giddens’ paradox’: that because negative effects are long delayed and uncertain in detail we typically don’t do anything about the behaviour that causes them until the effects become manifest, by which time it will be too late. He calls this also the teenage smoker principle, which rests on our limited ‘telescopic faculty’ and/or limited self-solidarity. For climate change this is a partly misleading analogy: nearly all the negative effects of an individual’s actions concern other people, mainly in future generations, so the problem may lie more in lack of empathy and wider solidarity. Now in 2014, however, climate change appears to have sufficiently advanced and accelerated that it will substantially affect most people already alive, sometimes enormously so, including the present-day children of rich families and in rich countries, not only the physically and temporally distant poor; so the teenage smoker analogy is at least suggestive, here for whole societies.

Yet having identified both some of the dangers and the difficulty of response by normal means, Giddens' own paradox is that he rejects and even resents many transformational response proposals, such as for a Green revolution in lifestyles. His discussion shows little or no orientation to Southern experience and the hazards endured by ordinary people there. (As one reflection of this, the book's first edition even misspelt both its references to Darfur, as Dafur; 2009, 205.) He rejects the Precautionary Principle, disliking its conventional oversimple wording and reminding us that we cannot choose by a principle of avoiding risks, for we face risks in whichever direction we move. But the gist of the Principle is that we should assess and balance risks. John Holdren, President Obama's science advisor, suggests that: "we're driving in a car with bad brakes in a fog and heading for a cliff. We know for sure now that the cliff is out there, we just don't know exactly where it is. Prudence would suggest that we should start putting on the brakes" (quoted by Friedman, 2009, 160). Indeed, even if we don't know for certain but do have a well-grounded concern, and will also be safer on the road if we drive slower and will arrive not much later, then precaution is eminently sensible.

A third dimension of comparison thus concerns whether the author's viewpoint is implicitly from a Northern metropolitan centre of power or is more global in perspective, awareness and sympathies. Fourthly, does the study think that we can sufficiently understand climate change issues using mechanical ('mechanistic') methodologies – as if trying to understand a complex system of machinery, where definite knowledge of a perhaps large but still knowable limited number of factors and cause-effect links can suffice for definite and secure knowledge of outcomes? Or does the study hold that we also require interpretive methodologies, for understanding not merely non-human systems but socio-ecological systems that incorporate innovative, creative human meaning-makers? Will projections based on estimated routine, calculable predictable actions suffice, or must we try to think also about possibilities that can be contemplated but not calculated, arising out of conceivable conjunctures, new ideas, evolving feelings and shifting identities?

Comparison in terms of these last two dimensions leads to a summary contrast between four ideal-typical responses: 'Northern technocratic', 'Northern interpretive', 'global technocratic', and 'global interpretive'. I have examined for each type of response a prominent exemplar: for 'Northern technocratic', the famous 'Stern Review' report on the economics of climate change by Nicholas Stern, commissioned by the U.K. Government (Stern 2007); for 'Northern interpretive', the influential tour d'horizon *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* by Mike Hulme (2009), founder of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research; for 'global technocratic', UNDP's Human Development Report on climate change (2007); and for 'global interpretive', Gwynne Dyer's overview of narrative scenarios-based work on impacts and responses to climate change (2010). These studies and others are discussed in Gasper (2010,

2012, 2013b) and Gasper et al. (2013a, 2013b). Table 2 clarifies the selection of the four exemplar studies, whose approaches approximate to the four corners of the table.

Table 2: Responses to climate change, classified in terms of viewpoint and methodology

	MECHANICAL METHODOLOGY	Intermediate	INTERPRETIVE METHODOLOGY
NORTHERN VIEWPOINT	<i>Stern 2007</i>	Giddens 2009 Friedman 2009	<i>Hulme 2009</i> Prins et al. 2010
Intermediate	World Bank 2010 UNDP 2011 Stiglitz 2007	Stern 2010	Jackson 2009 Campbell et al. 2007
GLOBAL VIEWPOINT	<i>UNDP 2007</i>		Hamilton 2010 <i>Dyer 2010</i>

Stern (2007) used a mechanistic methodology for prediction and a predominantly conventional Northern viewpoint. To the projections of the natural sciences he adds projections of the profit-driven global economy. Seeking space for change, his more recent book *Blueprint for a Safer Planet* starts to strain against these features, appealing for example to ‘the vision, communication and organisation of Gandhi and Mandela’ (Stern 2010, 183), but is marked by internal tensions and incoherence given its mechanistic economic main orientation (Gasper 2010, 2013b).

Hulme followed an interpretive methodology which recognises that positions in climate politics are socially constructed and situations are inevitably seen differently by different groups, but remained dominated by a narrow Northern set of concerns. Like Giddens or Prins *et al.* he fails to combine his interpretive methodology with serious attention to the lives and vulnerabilities of the global poor (Gasper 2010). (Indicatively, like Giddens he suffers ‘D-moments’, repeatedly writing ‘Dacca’, the pre-1982 name, for the Bangladesh capital Dhaka.)

In contrast, the 2007/8 Human Development Report adopted a global perspective, with repeated emphasis on the human rights of vulnerable groups in both current and future generations. Yet its conventional economics methodology in policy design, and lack of active connection to organisations that represent ‘voices of the poor’, undermined what it could derive from this expressed perspective. It did not reach much further in policy design than had Stern (UNDP 2007; Gasper et al. 2013a).

Dyer (2010) illustrates an interpretive narrative methodology combined with a richer picture of persons and a wider range of interest and sources of information, reflecting and allowing openness to the global South as well as the economically dominant global North. This can give a better basis both for prediction, for example by taking cognisance of the human

reactions in complex contingent histories that a mechanistic approach understates, and for helpful change, by contributing to more mutual awareness, respect and even sympathy.

The distribution in Table 2 has considerable similarity to that in Table 1. This suggests two linked hypotheses. First, the less mechanical and more interpretive that the methodology is, and the broader the source of perceptions that steers its application, the more serious is felt to be the challenge posed by climate change and the more fundamental is the response identified as required. Second, the more that a global perspective is adopted, and the more interpretive is the methodology, the more room there is for ethical analysis that gives weight to the rights of marginal groups and is not tacitly dominated by reasoning in terms of national aggregates and money-power.

The dimensions of analysis in Table 2 help also in explaining the conservative paradox revealed in Table 1, of proposed responses that do not match the seriousness of the diagnosis. Approaches that ignore the lived experience of poor people, whether by adoption of mechanical and/or aggregating methodologies, or a Northern-centred frame of reference, or all of these, seem liable to generate policy proposals that do not match their earlier diagnosis; for by that stage the implications for poor people, plus their perceptions, knowledges and possible reactions, have disappeared from view. Ethical near-sightedness tends to bring observational myopia and explanatory short-sightedness. In contrast, ethical humanism strengthens methodological humanism, an interpretive orientation that facilitates learning. Listening to the stories of ordinary and poor people worldwide is both decent and wise (Gasper 2010).

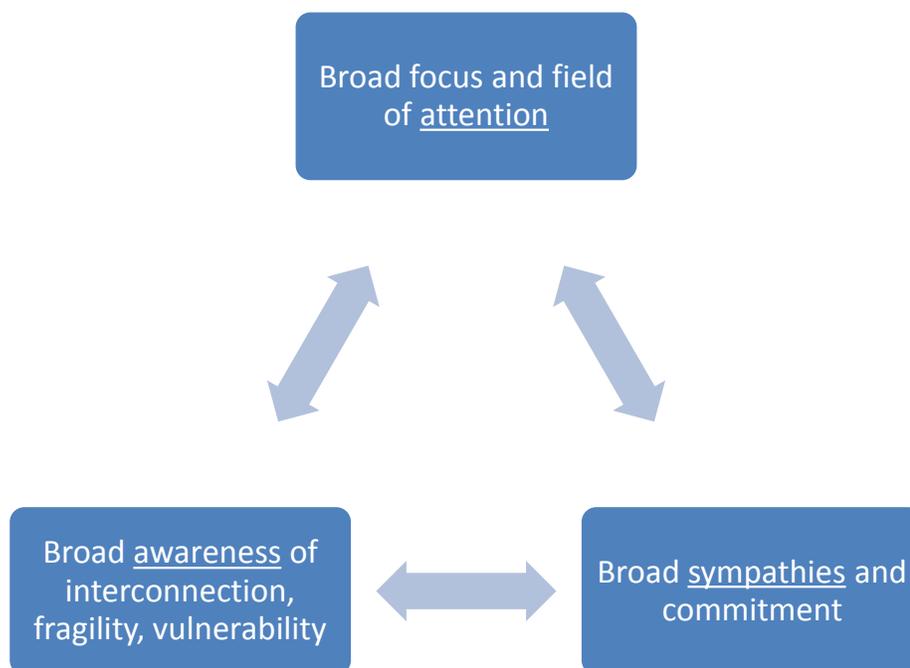
Suggestions for global ethics

A third, up-beat, version of our triangle suggests a potential virtuous set of links between, first, a holistic perspective, fed by inter- and trans-disciplinarity; second, understanding of interconnections, within and between personal, social and ecological systems and across national boundaries; and third, a sense of identity, affiliation and commitment that stretches beyond national boundaries and beyond only today (Figure 3). The three orientations will tend to respect and support each other.

In this light, a 'human security' perspective can contribute to the needed globalization of fundamental perceptions, through its focus on our interconnections and shared vulnerability (Gasper 2009; Gasper and Truong 2010). Growing out of the principle of common security that underlies the United Nations Charter and was re-emphasised by the 1980s Brandt Commission (e.g. in its second report, *Common Crisis*) and subsequently by many others, the human security perspective follows the logic of global public goods (Kaul et al. 1999). In global public health and more generally, even the rich lack security if they sanitize or secure their own private space but their neighbours' space and the public spaces remain unsanitized or insecure. Human security

analysis supports awareness of this interconnectedness better than do human rights approaches alone (Gasper 2012, Gasper and Truong 2014). Public goods provision cannot be based only on self-interest though, even when, if all participants cooperated, such a system would benefit all in comparison to its absence; for free-riding by some narrowly self-interested agents can undermine the required cooperation and bring disintegration of the system of provision. The cooperation needs some degree of mutual respect and concern, plus a sense of shared identity as beings with agency and reason who live in common and affect each other (cf. Cortina (2014), Hutchings (2014), Masolo (2014)). Human rights values are essential, but a human security perspective links these to a stress on connectedness. Unanchored sympathy and fellow-feeling are not enough to sustain steady cooperation, which must come, in addition, through institutions—local, national, international and global—that embody norms of both solidarity and enlightened self-interest and that rest on acknowledgement—intellectual, emotional, existential—of pervasive interconnectedness.

Figure 3: Mutually reinforcing mental and emotional generosity, in science, policy and daily life



Attention in global ethics to the contributions, limits and potential strengthening of the human security perspective seems to me a priority area, given its combination of, first, *in situ* focus on ordinary persons’ lives, livelihoods and perceptions, with second, analysis of how interlinking local and global systems and forces impinge on those lives. While the term ‘human security’ directs attention both to human individuals and to the human species, Kinhide

Mushakoji's sister term 'common human security' (Mushakoji 2011) usefully underlines the trans-individual focus. The claim that concern with human security is a fearful paternalist intrusion typically serves instead as excuse for indifference and collusion with oppression. One danger though is that the perspective has become identified in international circles with the Japanese state, which has used 'human security' as a banner for its global self-projection and too little as a principle also in domestic policy, certainly with respect to immigrants (see several papers in Truong and Gasper 2011). How the perspective is viewed by the current super-power, the USA, and the emergent super-power, China, requires special attention too, given both countries' sometime self-perception as unique, central, exceptional and superior.

More generally, to avoid being a specialist subdiscipline that talks only to itself and remains in an academic cradle, work in global ethics must be adequately connected to practice and should ally with value-critical policy analysis. The sort of 'descriptive global ethics' sketched above, identifying the value stances and the fields of attention of analysts, policymakers, powerful organisations and leaders of thought, amongst other agents, is part of interpretive value-critical policy analysis (Stone 2002; Wagenaar 2011; Yanow 2000). Some of Thomas Pogge's policy-oriented work illustrates much of this orientation; and the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology has presented similar advice (e.g. COMEST 2010).

Penz, Drydyk and Bose's study *Displacement by Development* (2011) is a strong exemplar of several of the types of desirable integration. It raises awareness of the forms of institutionalization of ethics, or neglect of ethics, in the systems that structure routines of policy, planning, business and administration: in training, in professional codes (or their absence), in governance processes, in systems of measurement and recording and in methodologies of planning and reporting, at all levels, local, national and trans-national.

Another exemplar is the 'embedded philosophy' described by Nancy Tuana (2013), that unveils the significant value-choices that are lodged unconsciously in the conventions and choices of technical specialisms and governance systems and that may only be unearthed by sustained cooperation between philosophers and technical specialists. Referring to the work over several years of a team of climate change scientists and philosophers doing integrated ethical-scientific analysis to evaluate proposed geo-engineering responses to global warming (summarized in Tuana et al. 2012), Tuana remarks:

...our work has become *unbounded* and, indeed, *undisciplined* in the sense of neither trying to bring together different disciplines nor transforming our disciplines, but rather practicing new ways of thinking together that aim at new knowledges, including rendering transparent what has been overlooked by past practices or made unknowable by [disciplinary] practices. (Tuana et al. 2013, p.1968; emphases in the original).

It is not enough to attempt to add ethics at a final stage, when ‘thinking about the implications’ of scientific findings. That is too late, long after the vital issues of focus have been decided (largely implicitly)—for example whether the impacts on poor people, women and marginal groups will be considered separately or not. Instead ethics must be involved at all stages, especially in identifying the areas for attention: “ethical assessment often poses scientific questions that are not typically addressed in natural and [even some] social science assessments”, such as “differences in regional impacts; and potential low-probability / high-impact events” (Tuana et al., 2012, 141). Those are exactly the sorts of questions that are addressed in human security analyses, which also—fundamentally—consider differences in the impacts across different social groups. Most of the deaths that can be expected as a result of global warming, through more numerous and more intense extreme weather events, for example, may be of babies, infants and the old amongst the poorest groups in the poorer countries. These deaths are rarely discussed even in the reports of the IPCC, which confines itself to estimates of impact on the value of gross economic product and of “losses in global consumption” (IPCC WGIII AR5, 2014, 17). Disappearance of such persons has little or no impact on global consumption; in money terms they consume almost nothing.

The roles of ethics in a globalized, trans-disciplinary world thus include: supporting responsible science, that takes as central to its fields of study the lives of the poor and those most vulnerable, and that supports responsible development (Penz et al. 2011); and, prior to that, clarifying the basic perceptual choices involved, regarding identity, interconnection and affiliation.

Acknowledgements

This piece draws on ideas explored in a public lecture at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague (Gasper 2010) and taken further in presentations at UNESCO meetings in Paris (September 2013) and Hanoi (December 2013), as well as in ongoing cooperation with Thanh-Dam Truong on human security and Asuncion Lera St.Clair on critical policy studies and environmental change. Eric Palmer gave valuable advice on exposition.

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