coming up in *Dædalus*:

**on time**

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**on learning**
Alison Gopnik, Howard Gardner, Susan Carey, Patricia Churchland, Elizabeth Spelke, Daniel Povinelli, Clark Glymour, Michael Tomasello, and others

**on secularization & fundamentalism**
a symposium featuring Nikki Keddie, Martin E. Marty, James Carroll, Henry Munson, Christopher Hitchens, and others

**on happiness**
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Comment by Anthony Lewis

The challenge of global justice now

How should the world deal with violations of human rights? Consider two tests of that question.

In the early 1990s, Serbian forces, carrying out what they called ethnic cleansing, raped and tortured and murdered thousands of Muslims in Bosnia. Serbian snipers in the surrounding hills picked off children on the streets of Sarajevo. The world did nothing meaningful to stop the savagery. West European countries sent troops and promised to protect declared ‘safe areas’ – a promise whose emptiness was exposed when Serbian forces entered the ‘safe area’ of Srebrenica and killed seven thousand Muslim men. Two U.S. presidents, the first Bush and Clinton, rejected proposals that America intervene with force. But the shame of Srebrenica finally forced President Clinton to act. He called for the NATO bombing of Serbian military targets. The Serbs quickly agreed to a ceasefire, and then accepted the Dayton agreements that ended the fighting.

In December of 2002, the British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, published a dossier of human rights violations by the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein: systematic rape, torture, gassing, public beheadings, mass executions. All were designed to suppress any resistance to the Saddam government, which the British dossier called a “regime of unique horror.” That Saddam had engaged in inhumanities on a gross scale could not be doubted. He used chemical weapons against Halabja, a Kurdish town in northern Iraq. He has killed more people than the two hundred thousand who died in the Bosnian war. Yet many supporters of human rights who had pressed for international intervention to stop the atrocities in Bosnia strongly opposed President Bush’s idea of war on Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. Amnesty International accused Foreign Secretary Straw of “cold and calculated manipulation” of human rights violations in Iraq to advance the cause of war.

The two cases show that whether and how to intervene on behalf of human rights is a complicated question. What was right in Bosnia does not provide a sure answer for other times, other places. And the two cases show something else: The presidency of George W. Bush has drastically changed the terms of the discussion on international human rights.

The essays in this issue of Daedalus explore fundamental aspects of the human rights question. Martha Nussbaum’s discusses a human trait that underlies much of the cruelty that human beings have inflicted on each other over the ages: our ability to believe that people of a different race or nation or color or religion are...
less human than ourselves. The Holocaust might have been expected to shock us out of such thinking. But its lesson did not prevent genocide in Bosnia or Rwanda, or make the supposedly civilized countries of the world act against it in a timely way. There seems to me to be a tinge of despair in Professor Nussbaum’s prescription that “an education in common human weakness and vulnerability should be a very profound part of the education of all children.” Athenians and Trojans, Hutus and Tutsis: If you prick us, do we not bleed?

At the other end of the problem from its origins is the question of how international society in the twenty-first century can control the base instincts of man. The essays range from the vision of Stanley Hoffmann—a world with institutions to investigate abuses and punish the abusers—to the skepticism of Jack Goldsmith and Stephen D. Krasner, their warnings about political realities and the dangers of utopianism.

The discussion of whether and how to intervene comes in a remarkable historical context. Consciousness of the problem—of the possibility of international intervention—developed slowly, then suddenly accelerated and became a major strand of policy in the world.

What might be called the beginning came in 1876, when Gladstone, the great Liberal British prime minister, then out of office, published a pamphlet on what he called the “Bulgarian Horrors,” the reported Turkish massacre of thousands of Bulgarians in what was then the Ottoman Empire. Disraeli, Gladstone’s long-time political opponent, said the pamphlet was “vindicative and ill-written,” adding with characteristic Disraeli mockery that the pamphlet was “of all the Bulgarian horrors perhaps the greatest.” But the British public bought two hundred thousand copies.

The idea that outsiders should stop a government from mistreating its own citizens was blocked then, and for nearly a century after, by the concept, in international law and politics, of inviolate national sovereignty. The U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau Sr., made that plain in a cable to the State Department during the Armenian genocide in 1915. “It is difficult for me to restrain myself from doing something to stop this attempt to exterminate a race,” he said, “but I realize that I am here as ambassador and must abide by the principles of non-interference with the internal affairs of another country.”

After World War II the United Nations adopted the Convention Against Genocide, giving the phenomenon a name and committing all the ratifying powers—including, eventually, the United States—to act if and when there was another mortal assault on a population group. But the convention was not enforced. Samantha Power tells the story in her chilling book A Problem From Hell. The title comes from a comment by Warren Christopher, President Clinton’s first secretary of state. It was what he called the genocidal situation in Bosnia, where America did not act for years because Clinton thought no serious American interest at stake. Or, to put it more realistically, he thought the American public might not support a risky venture in a far-off country of which it knew little. The same lack of political will led the U.S. and other governments to ignore warnings of genocide in Rwanda. Extremist Hutus were left free to kill eight hundred thousand of their fellow citizens in one hundred days.

But the failed response to genocide was paralleled, in the last third of the twentieth century, by a development of quite a different character: the rise of private organizations that took up the
cause of international human rights and had an enormous impact on public opinion and official policy. Amnesty International, then Human Rights Watch, and many other groups achieved far more than nearly anyone expected.

The human rights organizations publicized individual cases of tyranny, capturing the public imagination with the stories of Soviet dissidents and the victims of Latin-American dictatorships. At their urging, Congress passed legislation limiting U.S. relationships with governments that violated human rights. President Carter created the new position of Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights.

The growing concern about human rights had a powerful effect—a quite unexpected one—on the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders pressed for years for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which they wanted to legitimize the division of the continent between East and West. Western governments reluctantly agreed to hold the conference at Helsinki in 1975. The Helsinki Act, agreed there, included passages protecting human rights—among other things forbidding punishment for political beliefs. That "basket" of the act, as it was called, was considered unimportant. It turned out otherwise. Soviet and East European dissidents set up what they called Helsinki Watch Committees. In the words of Michael Ignatieff, director of the Carr Center on Human Rights Policy at Harvard, "They created an alternative pole of moral legitimacy."

In the West, Professor Ignatieff wrote, the idea of human rights went "from being the insurgent creed of dissidents and activists to something like the ruling ideology." It happened in the time of a generation: an astonishing event.

The concept of inviolate national sovereignty yielded to new mechanisms for the international enforcement of human rights. One is regional systems of protection, the notable example being the European Covenant on Human Rights, enforced by a commission and a court; Britain, for instance, has been forced to change a number of its laws after they were found in violation of the covenant. Another is the exercise of jurisdiction by national courts against wrongdoers from other countries; the dramatic case was the decision by Britain’s highest court, the House of Lords, that Augusto Pinochet, the former Chilean tyrant, who was in Britain as a visitor, should be delivered up to a Spanish judge investigating him for violations of the international convention against torture.

War crimes have been dealt with by various methods. Military intervention was used in Bosnia and then Kosovo to stop the brutality. Perpetrators were tried in special war crimes courts: not only to bring them to justice but, by holding them accountable, to meet the feelings of the victims and break the cycle of violence. The United Nations set up war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. And then almost all the countries of the world agreed to create an International Criminal Court to try those charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. It was the capstone of the new structure of human rights enforcement.

An International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty,¹ established by the government of Canada and several foundations, produced a report in 2001 that stated with admirable clarity the contemporary view on these issues. The report was entitled "The Responsibility to Protect," and that was its

¹ The commission’s co-chairmen were Gareth Evans of Australia and Mohamed Sahnoun of Algeria. Members included Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, Klaus Naumann of Germany, and Michael Ignatieff.
message: All states have a responsibility to protect their citizens; if their leaders are unable or unwilling to do so, they render their countries liable to military intervention – authorized by the Security Council or, failing that (as in the case of Kosovo), by individual countries in “conscience-shocking situations.”

That was the framework, the international state of mind, in which this issue of Dædalus was conceived. Though there would be sharp differences over the wisdom of acting this way or that in particular situations, there was a general sense that human rights had become a prime concern of the international order. National governments, most of all the U.S. government, were under public pressure to act against what Gladstone long ago called horrors – to act unilaterally if need be.

But President Bush has shaken that framework. He set out to destroy the International Criminal Court, on the ground that somehow, some day, an American might be prosecuted before it. He took a dim view generally of treaties and other international obligations limiting American freedom of action; he rejected the Kyoto Agreement on climate change and withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, might have been met by a U.S. call for international justice. Gary Bass, in his essay, makes a compelling case for treating the World Trade Center massacre as a crime against humanity. By seeking an international tribunal of some kind, the Bush administration could have focused the minds of people around the world on the criminal nature of the enterprise.

Instead, President Bush opted for the metaphor, and the reality, of war. His course has turned millions from sympathy with America to hatred. But it was never likely that George W. Bush would look to law, least of all international law, as one way of answering terrorism. Indeed, his administration has followed the events of September 11 with repressive domestic legal measures – including the claim of a right to hold anyone termed an “enemy combatant” indefinitely without access to counsel. With that course, his administration has lost the great moral and political advantage of being able to hold up the United States as an exemplar of respect for law in contrast to the violent lawlessness of the terrorists.

In another way, too, the framework of thinking on human rights has been drastically affected by President Bush’s course of action since September 11. He quickly shifted his emphasis from a war on terrorism to a proposed war on Iraq. And he claimed a right to launch that war unilaterally if it was not authorized by the UN Security Council.

Mr. Bush’s unilateralism raised hard questions for those of us who argued strongly for unilateral intervention, if necessary, to stop the savagery of human rights violators – who called specifically for American intervention against Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia. The disquiet caused by Mr. Bush is indicated by the reaction of Amnesty International to Foreign Secretary Straw’s dossier of human rights outrages by Saddam Hussein.

Professor Stephen Holmes of New York University, writing in the London Review of Books,2 blames the supporters of human rights intervention for laying the groundwork for President Bush’s imperial view of American power and right: “The 1990s advocates of human-

2. The issue of 14 November 2002. He was reviewing Samantha Power’s book and one by David Halberstam, War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton and the Generals.
tarian intervention … have helped rescue from the ashes of Vietnam the ideal of America as a global policeman, undaunted by other countries’ borders, defending civilization against the forces of ‘evil.’ By denouncing the U.S. primarily for standing idly by when atrocity abroad occurs, they have helped repopularize the idea of America as a potentially benign imperial power. They have breathed new life into old messianic fantasies…. By focusing predominantly on grievous harms caused by American inaction, finally, they have obscured public memory of grievous harms caused by American action.”

The human rights movement, in its swift rise to influence, did present a danger of utopian overreaching. But the occasional, and hard-won, instances of American intervention seem to me a long way from what Stanley Hoffmann calls President Bush’s “boastful unilateralism.” There was no great world public recoil from the tardy effort to stop the slaughter of Bosnians; it was seen, rather, as a rare example of a great power acting for unselfish, largely moral reasons. That is hardly ‘imperial’ in the same sense as President Bush’s assertion that America has the duty and right to initiate preemptive war when it perceives a threat.

The essays in this issue explore the pros and cons, the advantages and dangers of taking human rights seriously. For me, one thing is certain. We should not want the twenty-first century to be what Hannah Arendt called its predecessor: “this terrible century.”

– December 6, 2002
The name of our land has been wiped out.
– Euripides, Trojan Women

Not to be a fan of the Greens or Blues at the races, or the light-armed or heavy-armed gladiators at the Circus.
– Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

1

The towers of Troy are burning. All that is left of the once-proud city is a group of ragged women, bound for slavery, their husbands dead in battle, their sons murdered by the conquering Greeks, their daughters raped. Hecuba their queen invokes the king of the gods, using, remarkably, the language of democratic citizenship: “Son of Kronus, Council-President [prytanis] of Troy, father who gave us birth, do you see these undeserved sufferings that your Trojan people bear?” The Chorus answers grimly, “He sees, and yet the great city is no city. It has perished, and Troy exists no longer.” Hecuba and the Chorus conclude that the gods are not worth calling on, and that the very name of their land has been wiped out.

This ending is as bleak as any in the history of tragic drama – death, rape, slavery, fire destroying the towers, the city’s very name effaced from the record of history by the acts of rapacious and murderous Greeks. And yet, of course, it did not happen that way, not exactly: this story of Troy’s fall is being enacted, some six hundred years after the event, by a company of Greek actors, in the Greek language of a Greek poet, in the presence of the citizens of Athens, most powerful of Greek cities. Hecuba’s cry to the gods even casts Zeus as a peculiarly Athenian official – president of the city council.

So the name of Troy wasn’t wiped out after all. The imagination of its con-
querors was haunted by it, transmitted it, and mourned it. Obsessively the Greek poets returned to this scene of destruction, typically inviting, as here, the audience’s compassion for the women of Troy and blame for their assailants. In its very structure the play makes a claim for the moral value of compassionate imagining, as it asks its audience to partake in the terror of a burning city, of murder and rape and slavery. Insofar as members of the audience are engaged by this drama, feeling fear and grief for the conquered city, they demonstrate the ability of compassion to cross lines of time, place, and nation – and also, in the case of many audience members, the line of sex, perhaps more difficult yet to cross.

Nor was the play a purely aesthetic event divorced from political reality. The dramatic festivals of Athens were sacred celebrations strongly connected to the idea of democratic deliberation, and the plays of Euripides were particularly well-known for their engagement with contemporary events. The Trojan Women’s first audience had recently voted to put to death the men of the rebellious colony of Melos and to enslave its women and children. Euripides invited this audience to contemplate the real human meaning of its actions. Compassion for the women of Troy should at least cause moral unease, reminding Athenians of the full and equal humanity of people who live in distant places, their fully human capacity for suffering.

But did those imaginations really cross those lines? Think again of that invocation of Zeus. Trojans, if they worshipped Zeus as king of gods at all, surely did not refer to him as the president of the city council; prytanis is strictly an Athenian legal term. So it would appear that Hecuba is not a Trojan but a Greek. And her imagination is a Greek democratic (and, we might add, mostly male) imagina-

Ameria’s towers, too, have burned. Compassion and terror now inform the fabric of our lives. And in those lives we see evidence of the good work of compassion, as Americans make real to themselves the sufferings of so many people whom they never would otherwise have thought about: New York fire-fighters, that gay rugby player who helped bring down the fourth plane, bereaved families of so many national and ethnic origins. More rarely our compassion even crosses national boundaries: the tragedy led an unprecedented number of Americans to sympathize with the plight of Afghan women under the Taliban.

Yet at the same time, we also see evidence of how narrow and self-serving our sense of compassion can sometimes be. Some of us may notice with new appreciation the lives of Arab Americans among us – but others regard the Muslims in our midst with increasing wariness and mistrust. I am reminded of a Sikh taxi driver describing how often he was told to go home to ‘his own country’ – even though he came to the United
the capacity for sympathetic imagination is our best hope for moral goodness in this area. Peter Singer replies, with much plausibility, that the sympathetic imagination is all too anthropocentric and we had better not rely on it to win rights for creatures whose lives are very different from our own.¹

I shall not trace the history of the debate in this essay. Instead, I shall focus on its central philosophical ideas and try to sort them out, offering a limited defense of compassion and the tragic imagination, and then making some suggestions about how its pernicious tendencies can best be countered— with particular reference throughout to our current political situation.

connexion with that part of the world, would be affected upon receiving intelligence of this dreadful calamity. He would, I imagine, first of all, express very strongly his sorrow for the misfortune of that unhappy people, he would make many melancholy reflections upon the precariousness of human life, and the vanity of all the labours of man, which could thus be annihilated in a moment. And when all this fine philosophy was over, when all these humane sentiments had been once fairly expressed, he would pursue his business or his pleasure, take his repose or his diversion, with the same ease and tranquility, as if no such accident had happened. The most frivolous disaster which could befall himself would occasion a more real disturbance. If he was to lose his little finger tomorrow, he would not sleep tonight; but, provided he never saw them, he will snore with the more profound security over the ruin of a hundred millions of his brethren, and the destruction of that immense multitude seems plainly an object less interesting to him, than this paltry misfortune of his own.

That’s just the issue that should trouble us as we think about American reactions to September 11. We see a lot of ‘humane sentiments’ around us, and extensions of sympathy beyond people’s usual sphere of concern. But more often than not, those sentiments stop short at the national boundary.

We think the events of September 11 are bad because they involved us and our nation. Not just human lives, but American lives. The world came to a stop – in a way that it rarely has for Americans when disaster has befallen human beings in other places. The genocide in Rwanda didn’t even work up enough emotion in us to prompt humanitarian intervention. The plight of innocent civilians in Iraq never made it onto our national radar screen. Floods, earthquakes, cyclones, the daily deaths of thousands from preventable malnutrition and disease – none of these makes the American world come to a standstill, none elicits a tremendous outpouring of grief and compassion. At most we get what Smith so trenchantly described: a momentary flicker of feeling, quickly dissipated by more pressing concerns close to home.

Frequently, however, we get a compassion that is not only narrow, failing to include the distant, but also polarizing, dividing the world into an ‘us’ and a ‘them.’ Compassion for our own children can so easily slip over into a desire to promote the well-being of our children at the expense of other people’s children. Similarly, compassion for our fellow Americans can all too easily slip over into a desire to make America come out on top and to subordinate other nations.

One vivid example of this slip took place at a baseball game I went to at Comiskey Park, the first game played in Chicago after September 11 – and a game against the Yankees, so there was heightened awareness of the situation of New York and its people. Things began well, with a moving ceremony commemorating the firefighters who had lost their lives and honoring local firefighters who had gone to New York afterwards to help out. There was even a lot of cheering when the Yankees took the field, a highly unusual transcendence of local attachments. But as the game went on and the beer began flowing, one heard, increasingly, the chant “U-S-A. U-S-A,” a chant first heard in 1980 during an Olympic hockey match in which the United States defeated Russia. In that context, the chant had expressed a wish for America to humiliate its Cold War enemy; as time passed, it became a general way of expressing the desire to crush an
opponent, whoever it might be. When the umpire made a bad call against the Sox, a group in the bleachers turned on him, chanting “U-S-A.” From ‘humane sentiments’ we had turned back to the pain in our little finger.

With such examples before us, how can we trust compassion and the imagination of the other that it contains? But if we don’t trust that, what else can we plausibly rely on to transform horror into a shared sense of ethical responsibility?

I shall proceed as follows. First, I shall offer an analysis of the emotion of compassion, focusing on the thoughts and imaginings on which it is based. This will give us a clearer perspective on how and where it is likely to go wrong. Second, I shall examine the countertradition’s proposal that we can base political morality on respect for dignity, doing away with appeals to compassion. This proposal, at first attractive, contains, on closer inspection, some deep difficulties. Third, I will return to compassion, asking how, if we feel we need it as a public motive, we might educate it so as to overcome, as far as we can, the problem that Smith identified.

More than a warm feeling in the gut, compassion involves a set of thoughts, often quite complex. We need to dissect them, if we are to make progress in understanding how it goes wrong and how it may be steered aright. There is a good deal of agreement about this among philosophers as otherwise diverse as Aristotle and Rousseau, and also among contemporary psychologists and sociologists who have done empirical work on the emotion.

Compassion is an emotion directed at another person’s suffering or lack of well-being. It requires the thought that the other person is in a bad way, and a pretty seriously bad way. (Thus we don’t feel compassion for people’s loss of trivial items like toothbrushes and paper clips.) It contains within itself an appraisal of the seriousness of various predicaments. Let us call this the judgment of seriousness.

Notice that this assessment is made from the point of view of the person who has the emotion. It does not neglect the actual suffering of the other, which certainly should be estimated in taking the measure of the person’s predicament. And yet it does not necessarily take at face value the estimate of the predicament this person will be able to form. As Smith emphasized, we frequently have great compassion for people whose predicament is that they have lost their powers of thought; even if they seem like happy children, we regard this as a terrible catastrophe. On the other side, when people moan and groan about something, we don’t necessarily have compassion for them: for we may think that they are not really in a bad predicament. Thus when very rich people grumble about taxes, many of us don’t have the slightest compassion for them: for

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2 I am drawing on an analysis of compassion for which I argue at greater length in Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chaps. 6–8.

3 C. Daniel Batson of the University of Kansas should be mentioned with honor here, because he has not only done remarkable empirical work, but has also combined it with a conceptual and analytic clarity that is rare in social science research of this type. See in particular *The Altruism Question* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991). Candace Clark’s sociological study is also exemplary: *Misery and Company: Sympathy in Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
we judge that it is only right and proper that they should pay what they are paying – and probably a lot more than that. So the judgment of seriousness already involves quite a complex feat of imagination: it involves both trying to look out at the situation from the suffering person’s own viewpoint and then assessing the person’s own assessment. Complex though the feat is, young children easily learn it, feeling sympathy with the suffering of animals and other children, but soon learning, as well, to withhold sympathy if they judge that the person is just a crybaby, or spoiled – and, of course, to have sympathy for the predicament of an animal who is dead or unconscious, even if it is not actually suffering.

Next comes the judgment of nondesert. Hecuba asked Zeus to witness the undeserved sufferings of the Trojan women, using the Greek word *anaxia*, which appears in Aristotle’s definition of tragic compassion. Hecuba’s plea, like Aristotle’s definition, implies that we will not have compassion if we believe the person fully deserves the suffering. There may be a measure of blame, but then in our compassion we typically register the thought that the suffering exceeds the measure of the fault. The Trojan women are an unusually clear case, because, more than most tragic figures, they endure the consequences of events in which they had no active part at all. But we can see that nondesert is a salient part of our compassion even when we do also blame the person: typically we feel compassion at the punishment of criminal offenders, to the extent that we think circumstances beyond their control are at least in good measure responsible for their becoming the bad people they are. People who have the idea that the poor brought their poverty upon themselves by laziness fail, for that reason, to have compassion for them.4

Next there is a thought much stressed in the tradition that I shall call the judgment of similar possibilities: Aristotle, Rousseau, and others suggest that we have compassion only insofar as we believe that the suffering person shares vulnerabilities and possibilities with us. I think we can clearly see that this judgment is not strictly necessary for the emotion, as the other two seem to be. We have compassion for nonhuman animals, without basing it on any imagined similarity – although, of course, we need somehow to make sense of their predicament as serious and bad. We also imagine that an invulnerable god can have compassion for mortals, and it doesn’t seem that this idea is conceptually confused. For the finite imaginations of human beings, however, the thought of similar possibilities is a very important psychological mechanism through which we get clear about the seriousness of another person’s plight. This thought is often accompanied by empathetic imagining, in which we put ourselves in the suffering person’s place, imagine their predicament as our own.

Finally, there is one thing more, not mentioned in the tradition, which I believe must be added in order to make the account complete. This is what, in writing on the emotions, I have called the eudaimonistic judgment, namely, a judgment that places the suffering person or persons among the important parts of the life of the person who feels the emotion. In my more general analysis of emotions, I argue that they are always eudaimonistic, meaning focused on the agent’s most important goals and proj-

4 Clark’s empirical survey of American attitudes finds this a prominent reason for the refusal of compassion for the poor.
Martha C. Nussbaum on international justice

Thus we feel fear about damages that we see as significant for our own well-being and our other goals; we feel grief at the loss of someone who is already invested with a certain importance in our scheme of things. Eudaimonism is not egoism. I am not claiming that emotions always view events and people merely as means to the agent’s own satisfaction or happiness. But I do mean that the things that occasion a strong emotion in us are things that correspond to what we have invested with importance in our account to ourselves of what is worth pursuing in life.

Compassion can evidently go wrong in several different ways. It can get the judgment of non-desert wrong, sympathizing with people who actually don’t deserve sympathy and withholding sympathy from those who do. Even more frequently, it can get the judgment of seriousness wrong, ascribing too much importance to the wrong things or too little to things that have great weight. Notice that this problem is closely connected to obtuseness about social justice, in the sense, for example, that if we don’t think a social order unjust for denying women the vote, or subordinating African Americans, then we won’t see the predicament of women and African Americans as bad, and we won’t have compassion for them. We’ll think that things are just as they ought to be.

Again, if we think it’s unjust to require rich people to pay capital gains tax, we will have a misplaced compassion toward them. Finally, and obviously, compassion can get the eudaimonistic judgment wrong, putting too few people into the circle of concern. By my account, then, we won’t have compassion without a moral achievement that is at least coeval with it.

My account, I think, is able to explain the unevenness of compassion better than other more standard accounts. Compassion begins from where we are, from the circle of our cares and concerns. It will be felt only toward those things and persons we see as important, and of course most of us most of the time ascribe importance in a very uneven and inconstant way. Empathetic imagining can sometimes extend the circle of concern. Thus Batson has shown experimentally that when the story of another person’s plight is vividly told, subjects will tend to experience compassion toward the person and form projects of helping. This is why I say that the moral achievement of extending concern to others needn’t antedate compassion, but can be coeval with it. Still, there is a recalcitrance in our emotions, given their link to our daily scheme of goals and ends. Smith is right: thinking that the poor victims of the disaster in China are important is easy to do for a short time, but hard to sustain in the fabric of our daily life; there are so many things closer to home to distract us, and these things are likely to be so much more thoroughly woven into our scheme of goals.

Let us return to September 11 armed with this analysis. The astonishing events made many Americans recognize with a new vividness the nation itself as part of their circle of concern. Most Americans rely on the safety of our institutions and our cities, and don’t really notice how much they value them until they prove vulnerable – in just the way that lovers often don’t see how much they love until their loved one is ill or threatened. So our antecedent concern emerged with a new clarity in the emotions we experienced. At the same time, we actually extended concern, in many
cases, to people in America who had not previously been part of our circle of concern at all: the New York firefighters, the victims of the disasters. We extended concern to them both because we heard their stories and also, especially, because we were encouraged to see them as a part of the America we already loved and for which we now intensely feared.

When disaster struck in Rwanda, we did not similarly extend concern, or not stably, because there was no antecedent basis for it: suffering Rwandans could not be seen as part of the larger 'us' for whose fate we trembled. Vivid stories can create a temporary sense of community, but they are unlikely to sustain concern for long, if there is no pattern of interaction that would make the sense of an 'us' an ongoing part of our daily lives.

Things are of course still worse with any group that figures in our imaginations as a 'them' against the 'us.' Such groups are not only by definition non-us, they are also, by threatening the safety of the 'us,' implicitly bad, deserving of any misfortune that might strike them. This accounts for the sports-fan mentality so neatly depicted in my baseball story. Compassion for a member of the opposing team? You've got to be kidding. “U-S-A” just means kill the ump.

3

In light of these difficulties, it is easy to see why much of the philosophical tradition has wanted to do away with compassion as a basis for public choice and to turn, instead, to detached moral principles whose evenhandedness can be relied on. The main candidate for a central moral notion has been the idea of human worth and dignity, a principle that has been put to work from the Stoics and Cicero on through Kant and beyond. We are to recognize that all humans have dignity, and that this dignity is both inalienable and equal, not affected by differences of class, caste, wealth, honor, status, or even sex. The recognition of human dignity is supposed to impose obligations on all moral agents, whether the humans in question are conationalists or foreigners. In general, it enjoins us to refrain from all aggression and fraud, since both are seen as violations of human dignity, ways of fashioning human beings into tools for one's own ends.

Out of this basic idea Cicero developed much of the basis for modern international law in the areas of war, punishment, and hospitality. Other Stoics used it to criticize conventional norms of patriarchal marriage, the physical abuse of servants, and many other aspects of Roman social life.

This Stoic tradition was quite clear that respect for human dignity could move us to appropriate action, both personal and social, without our having to rely at all on the messier and more inconstant motive of compassion. Indeed, for separate reasons, which I shall get to shortly, Stoics thought compassion was never appropriate, so they could not rely on it.

What I now want to ask is whether this countertradition was correct. Respect for human dignity looks like the right thing to focus on, something that can plausibly be seen as of boundless worth, constraining all actions in pursuit of well-being, and also as equal, creating a kingdom of ends in which humans are ranked horizontally, so to speak, rather than vertically. Why should we not follow the countertradition, as in many respects we do already – as when constitutions make the notion of human dignity central to the analysis of constitutional

rights, as when international human rights documents apply similar notions. Now it must be admitted that human dignity is not an altogether clear notion. In what does it consist? Why should we think that all human life has it? The minute the Stoic tradition tries to answer such questions, problems arise. In particular, the answer almost always takes the form of saying, Look at how far we are above the beasts. Reason, language, moral capacity—all these are seen as worthy of respect and awe at least in part because the beasts, so-called, don’t have them, because they make us better than others. Of course they wouldn’t seem to make us better if they didn’t have some attraction in themselves. But the claim that this dignity resides equally in all humanity all too often relies on the better-than-the-beasts idea. No matter how we humans vary in our rational and moral capacities, the idea seems to be, the weakest among us is light-years beyond those beasts down there, so the differences that exist among us in basic powers become not worth adverting to at all, not sources of differential worth at all. Dignity thus comes to look not like a scalar matter but like an all-or-nothing matter. You either have it, or, bestially, you don’t.

This view has its moral problems, clearly. Richard Sorabji has shown how it was linked with a tendency to denigrate the intelligence of animals; and of course it has been used, too, not only by the Stoics but also by Kant and modern contractarians to deny that we have any obligations of justice toward nonhuman forms of life. Compassion, if slippery, is at least not dichotomous in this way; it is capable of reaching sympathetically into multiple directions simultaneously, capable, as Coetzee said, of imagining the sufferings of animals in the squalid conditions we create for them.

There is another more subtle problem with the dignity idea. It was crucial, according to the Stoics, to make dignity radically independent of fortune: all humans have it, no matter where they are born and how they are treated. It exerts its claim everywhere, and it can never be lost. If dignity went up or down with fortune, it would create ranks of human beings: the well-born and healthy will be worth more than the ill-born and hungry. So the Stoics understood their project of making dignity self-sufficient as essential for the notion of equal respect and regard.

But this move leads to a problem: how can we give a sufficiently important place to the goods of fortune for political purposes once we admit that the truly important thing, the thing that lies at the core of our humanity, doesn’t need the goods of fortune at all? How can we provide sufficient incentive for political planners to arrange for an adequate distribution of food and shelter and even political rights and liberties if we say that dignity is undiminished by the lack of such things? Stoic texts thus look oddly quietistic: respect human dignity, they say. But it doesn’t matter at all what

6 Germany is one salient example. In a forthcoming book, James Whitman describes the way this central notion has constrained legal practices in Europe generally, especially in the area of criminal punishment. Dignity, he argues, is a nonhierarchical notion that has replaced hierarchical orders of rank.


conditions we give people to live in, since dignity is complete and immutable anyway. Seneca, for example, gives masters stern instructions not to beat slaves or use them as sexual tools (Moral Epistle 47). But as for the institution of slavery itself? Well, this does not really matter so much, for the only thing that matters is the free soul within, and that cannot be touched by any contingency. Thus, having begun his letter on slavery on an apparently radical note, Seneca slides into quietism in the end, when his master scornfully says, “He is a slave,” and Seneca calmly replies, “Will this do him any harm? [Hoc illi nocet?]”

Things are actually even worse than this. For the minute we start examining this reasoning closely, we see that it is not only quietistic – it is actually incoherent. Either people need external things or they do not. But if they do not, if dignity is utterly unaffected by rape and physical abuse, then it is not very easy, after all, to say what the harm of beating or raping a slave is. If these things are no harm to the victim, why is it wrong to do them? They seem not different from the institution of slavery itself: will they really do him any harm, if one maintains that dignity is sufficient for eudaimonia, and that dignity is totally independent of fortune? So Seneca lacks not only a basis for criticizing the institution of slavery, but also for the criticism his letter actually makes, of cruel and inhumane practices toward slaves.

Kant had a way of confronting this question, and it is a plausible one, within the confines of what I have called the countertradition. Kant grants that humanity itself, or human worth, is independent of fortune: under the blows of “step-motherly nature” goodwill still shines like a jewel for its own sake. But external goods such as money, health, and social position are still required for happiness, which we all reasonably pursue. So there are still very weighty moral reasons for promoting the happiness of others, reasons that can supply both individuals and states with a basis for good thoughts about the distribution of goods.

The Stoics notoriously deny this, holding that virtue is sufficient for eudaimonia. What I want to suggest now is that their position on human dignity pushes them strongly in this direction. Think of the person who suffers poverty and hardship. Now either this person has something that is beyond price, by comparison to which all the money and health and shelter in the world is as nothing – or she does not have something that is beyond price. Her dignity is just one part of her happiness – a piece of it that can itself be victimized and held hostage to fortune; her human dignity is being weighed in the balance with other goods and it no longer looks like the thing of surpassing, even infinite worth, that we took it to be. There are, after all, ranks and orders of human beings; slavery and abuse can actually change people’s situation with regard to their most important and inclusive end, eudaimonia itself.

Because the Stoics do not want to be forced to that conclusion, they insist that external goods are not required for eudaimonia: virtue is sufficient. And basic human dignity, in turn, is sufficient for becoming virtuous, if one applies oneself in the right way. It is for this deep reason that the Stoics reject compassion as a basic social motive, not just because it is slippery and uneven. Compassion gets the world wrong, because it is always wrong to think that a person who has been hit by misfortune is in a bad or even tragic predicament. “Behold how tragedy comes about,” writes Epic-
tetus, “when chance events befall fools.” In other words, only a fool would mind the events depicted in Euripides’ play, and only fools in the audience would view these events as tragic.

So there is a real problem in how, and how far, the appeal to equal human dignity motivates. Looked at superficially, the idea of respect for human dignity appears to provide a principled, evenhanded motive for good treatment of all human beings, no matter where they are placed. Looked at more deeply, it seems to license quietism and indifference to things in the world, on the grounds that nothing that merely happens to people is really bad.

We have now seen two grave problems with the countertradition: what I shall call the animal problem and what I shall call the external goods problem. Neither of these problems is easy to solve within the countertradition. By contrast, the Euripidean tradition of focusing on compassion as a basic social motive has no such problems. Compassion can and does cross the species boundary, and whatever good there may be in our current treatment of animals is likely to be its work; we are able to extend our imaginations to understand the sufferings of animals who are cruelly treated and to see that suffering as significant, as undeserved, and to see its potential termination as part of our scheme of goals and projects.9

As for the problem of external goods, compassion has no such problem, for it is intrinsically focused on the damages of fortune: its most common objects, as Aristotle listed them in the *Rhetoric*, are the classic tragic predicaments: loss of country, loss of friends, old age, illness, and so on.

But let us suppose that the countertradition can solve these two problems, providing people with adequate motives to address the tragic predicaments. Kant makes a good start on the external goods problem, at least. So let us imagine that we have a reliable way of motivating conduct that addresses human predicaments, without the uneven partiality that so often characterizes compassion. A third problem now awaits us. I shall call it the problem of watery motivation, though we might well call it the problem of death within life.

The term ‘watery motivation’ comes from Aristotle’s criticism of Plato’s ideal city. Plato tried to remove partiality by removing family ties and asking all citizens to care equally for all other citizens. Aristotle says that the difficulty with this strategy is that “there are two things above all that make people love and care for something, the thought that it is all theirs, and the thought that it is the only one they have. Neither of these will be present in that city” (*Pol*. 1262b22-3). Because nobody will think of a child that it is all theirs, entirely their own responsibility, the city will, he says, resemble a household in which there are too many servants so nobody takes responsibility for any task. Because nobody will think of any child or children that they are the only ones they have, the intensity of care that characterizes real families will simply not materialize, and we will have instead, he says, a ‘watery’ kind of care all round (*Pol*. 1262b15).

If we now examine the nature of Stoic motivation, I think we will see that Aristotle is very likely to be correct. I shall focus here on Marcus Aurelius, in many ways the most psychologically profound

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9 See Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, 35: “There are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it.”
of Stoic thinkers. Marcus tells us that the first lesson he learned from his tutor was “not to be a fan of the Greens or Blues at the races, or the light-armed or heavy-armed gladiators at the Circus” (1.5). His imagination had to unlearn its intense partiality and localism; his tutor apparently assumed that already as young children we have learned narrow sectarian types of loyalty. And it is significant, I think, that the paradigmatic negative image for the moral imagination is that of sports fandom: for in all ages, perhaps, such fandom has been a natural way for human beings to express vicariously their sectarian loyalties to family, city, and nation. It was no accident that those White Sox fans invoked the hockey chant to express their distress about the fate of the nation.

The question is whether this negative lesson leaves the personality enough resources to motivate intense concern for people anywhere. For Marcus, unlearning partiality requires an elaborate and systematic program of uprooting concern for all people and things in this world. He tells us of the meditative exercises that he regularly performs in order to get himself to the point at which the things that divide people from one another no longer matter. One side of this training looks benign and helpful: we tell ourselves that our enemies are really not enemies, but part of a common human project:

Say to yourself in the morning: I shall meet people who are interfering, ungracious, insolent, full of guile, deceitful and antisocial….But I,…who know that the nature of the wrongdoer is of one kin with mine – not indeed of the same blood or seed but sharing the same kind, the same portion of the divine – I cannot be harmed by any one of them, and no one can involve me in shame. I cannot feel anger against him who is of my kin, nor hate him. We were born to labor together, like the feet, the hands, the eyes, and the rows of upper and lower teeth. To work against one another is therefore contrary to nature, and to be angry against a man or turn one’s back on him is to work against him.¹⁰

Notice how close these thoughts are to the thought-content of a greatly extended sort of compassion. Passages such as these suggest that a strong kind of even-handed concern can be meted out to all human beings, without divisive jealousy and partiality; that we should see ourselves not as team players, not as family members, not as loyal citizens of a nation, but, most essentially, as members of the humankind with the advancement of our kind as our highest goal.

Now even in this good case problems are lurking: for we notice that this exercise relies on the thoughts that give rise to the animal problem and the external goods problem. We are asked to imagine human solidarity and community by thinking of a ‘portion of the divine’ that resides in all and only humans: we look like we have a lot in common because we are so sharply divided from the rest of nature. And the idea that we have a common work relies, to at least some extent, on Marcus’s prior denigration of external goods: for if we ascribed value to external goods we would be in principle competing with one another, and it would be difficult to conceive of the common enterprise without running into that competition.

But I have resolved to waive those two difficulties, so let me do so. Even then, the good example is actually very complex. For getting to the point where we can give such concern evenhandedly to all human beings requires, as Marcus

¹⁰ II.1, trans. G. Grube (Hackett edition). Cf. also VI.6: “The best method of defense is not to become like your enemy.”
makes abundantly clear, the systematic extirpation of intense cares and attachments directed at the local: one’s family, one’s city, the objects of one’s love and desire. Thus Marcus needs to learn not only not to be a sports fan, but also not to be a lover. Consider the following extraordinary passage:

How important it is to represent to oneself, when it comes to fancy dishes and other such foods, “This is the corpse of a fish, this other thing the corpse of a bird or a pig.” Similarly, “This Falernian wine is just some grape juice,” and “This purple vestment is some sheep’s hair moistened in the blood of some shellfish.” When it comes to sexual intercourse, we must say, “This is the rubbing together of membranes, accompanied by the spasmodic ejaculation of a sticky liquid.” How important are these representations, which reach the thing itself and penetrate right through it, so that one can see what it is in reality. (VI.13)11

Now, of course, these exercises are addressed to the problem of external goods. Here as elsewhere, Marcus is determined to unlearn the unwise attachments to externals that he has learned from his culture. This project is closely connected to the question of partiality, because learning not to be a sports fan is greatly aided by learning not to care about the things over which people typically fight. (Indeed, it is a little hard to see how a Kantian project can be stable, insofar as it teaches equal respect for human dignity while at the same time teaching intense concern for the externals that go to produce happiness, externals that strongly motivate people not to treat all human beings equally.) In the Marcus passage, however, the link to partiality seems even more direct: for learning to think of sex as just the rubbing of membranes really is learning not to find special value or delight in a particular, and this extirpation of eroticism really does seem to be required by a regime of impartiality.

But getting rid of our erotic investment, not just in bodies, but in families, nations, sports teams – all this leads us into a strange world, a world that is gentle and unaggressive, but also strangely lonely and hollow. To unlearn the habits of the sports fan we must unlearn our erotic investment in the world, our attachments to our own team, our own love, our own children, our own life.

Marcus suggests that we have two choices only: the world of real-life Rome, which resembles a large gladiatorial contest (see Seneca De Ira 2.8), each person striving to outdo others in vain competition for externals, a world exploding with rage and poisoned by malice; or the world of Marcus’s gentle sympathy, in which we respect all human beings and view all as our partners in a common project whose terms don’t seem to matter very much, thus rendering the whole point of living in the world increasingly unclear.12

And this means something like a death within life. For only in a condition close to death, in effect, is moral rectitude possible. Marcus repeatedly casts life as a kind of death already, a procession of meaningless occurrences:

The vain solemnity of a procession; dramas played out on the stage; troops of


12 It is significant that this adopted emperor did not, as the movie Gladiator shows us, make a principled rational choice of the best man to run the empire. In real life, Marcus chose his worthless son Commodus, tripped up yet once more by the love of the near.
sheep or goats; fights with spears; a little bone thrown to dogs; a chunk of bread thrown into a fish-pond; the exhausting labor and heavy burdens under which ants must bear up; crazed mice running for shelter; puppets pulled by strings . . . . (VII.3)\textsuperscript{13}

(This, by an emperor who was at that very time on campaign in Parthia, leading the fight for his nation.) And the best consolation for his bleak conclusion also originates in his contemplation of death:

Think all the time about how human beings of all sorts, and from all walks of life and all peoples, are dead . . . . We must arrive at the same condition where so many clever orators have ended up, so many grave philosophers, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates; so many heroes of the old days, so many recent generals and tyrants. And besides these, Eudoxus, Hipparchus, Archimedes, other highly intelligent minds, thinkers of large thoughts, hard workers, versatile in ability, daring people, even mockers of the perishable and transitory character of human life, like Menippus. Think about all of these that they are long since in the ground . . . . And what of those whose very names are forgotten? So: one thing is worth a lot, to live out one’s life with truth and justice, and with kindliness toward liars and wrongdoers. (VI.47)

Because we shall die, we must recognize that everything particular about us will eventually be wiped out: family, city, sex, children – all will pass into oblivion. So really, giving up those attachments is not such a big deal. What remains, and all that remains, is truth and justice, the moral order of the world. So only the true city should claim our allegiance.

Marcus is alarming because he has gone deep into the foundations of cosmopolitan moral principle. What he has seen is that impartiality, fully and consistently cultivated, requires the extirpation of the eroticism that makes life the life we know – unfair, uneven, full of war, full of me-first nationalism and divided loyalty.\textsuperscript{14} So, if that ordinary erotic humanity is unjust, get rid of it. But can we live like this, once we see the goal with Marcus’s naked clarity? Isn’t justice something that must be about and for the living?

4

Let me proceed on the hypothesis that Marcus is correct: extirpating attachments to the local and the particular delivers us to a death within life. Let me also proceed on the hypothesis that we will reject this course as an unacceptable route to the goal of justice, or even as one that makes the very idea of justice a hollow fantasy. (This is Adam Smith’s conclusion as well: enamored as he is of Stoic doctrine, he thinks we must reject it when it tells us not to love our own families.) Where are we then?

It looks as if we are back where Aristotle and Adam Smith leave us: with the unreliability of compassion, and yet the need to rely on it, since we have no more perfect motive.

This does not mean that we need give up on the idea of equal human dignity, or respect for it. But insofar as we retain, as well, our local erotic attachments, our relation to that motive must always remain complex and dialectical, a difficult conversation within ourselves as we ask how much humanity requires of us, and how much we are entitled to give to our

\textsuperscript{13} Translation from Hadot/Chase.

\textsuperscript{14} One might compare the imagery of ancient Greek skepticism. Pyrrho, frightened by a dog (and thus betraying a residual human attachment to his own safety) says, “How difficult it is entirely to divest oneself of the human being.” Elsewhere he speaks of the skeptic as a eunuch, because he lacks the very source of disturbance.
own. Any such difficult conversation will require, for its success, the work of the imagination. If we don’t have exceptionless principles, if, instead, we need to negotiate our lives with a complex combination of moral reverence and erotic attachment, we need to have a keen imaginative and emotional understanding of what our choices mean for people in many different conditions, and the ability to move resourcefully back and forth from the perspective of our personal loves and cares to the perspective of the distant. Not the extirpation of compassion, then, but its extension and education. Compassion within the limits of respect.

The philosophical tradition helps us identify places where compassion goes wrong: by making errors of fault, seriousness, and the circle of concern. But the ancient tradition, not being very interested in childhood, does not help us see clearly how and why it goes especially wrong. So to begin the task of educating compassion as best we can, we need to ask how and why local loyalties and attachments come to take in some instances an especially virulent and aggressive form, militating against a more general sympathy. To answer this question we need a level of psychological understanding that was not available in the ancient Greek and Roman world, or not completely. I would suggest (and have argued elsewhere) that one problem we particularly need to watch out for is a type of pathological narcissism in which the person demands complete control over all the sources of good, and a complete self-sufficiency in consequence.

Nancy Chodorow long ago argued that this narcissism colors the development of males in many cultures in the world. Recent studies of teenage boys in America, particularly the impressive work of Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson in their book *Raising Cain*, have given strong local support to this idea. The boys that Kindlon and Thompson study have learned from their cultures that men should be self-sufficient, controlling, dominant. They should never have, and certainly never admit to, fear and weakness. The consequence of this deformed expectation, Kindlon and Thompson show, is that these boys come to lack an understanding of their own vulnerabilities, needs, and fears – weaknesses that all human beings share. They don’t have the language to describe their own inner worlds and are by the same token clumsy interpreters of the emotions and inner lives of others. This emotional illiteracy is closely connected to aggression, as fear is turned outward, with little understanding of the implications of aggressive words and actions for others. Kindlon and Thompson’s boys become the sports fans who chant “U-S-A” at the ump, who think of all obstacles to American supremacy and self-sufficiency as opponents to be humiliated.

So the first recommendation I would make for a culture of respectful compassion is a Rousseauian one: it is, that an education in common human weakness and vulnerability should be a very profound part of the education of all children. Children should learn to be tragic spectators and to understand with subtlety and responsiveness the predicaments to which human life is prone. Through stories and dramas, they should learn to decode the suffering of others, and this decoding should deliberately lead them into lives both near and far, including the lives of distant humans and the lives of animals.

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As children learn to imagine the emotions of another, they should at the same time learn the many obstacles to such understanding, the many pitfalls of the self-centered imagination as it attempts to be just. Thus, one should not suppose that one can understand a family member, without confronting and continually criticizing the envy and jealousy in oneself that pose powerful obstacles to that understanding. One should not imagine that one can understand the life of a person in an ethnic or racial group different from one’s own, or a sex different from one’s own, or a nation, without confronting and continually criticizing the fear and greed and the demand for power that make such interactions so likely to produce misunderstanding and worse. What I am suggesting, then, is that the education of emotion, to succeed at all, needs to take place in a culture of ethical criticism, and especially self-criticism, in which ideas of equal respect for humanity will be active players in the effort to curtail the excesses of the greedy self.

At the same time, we can also see that the chances of success in this enterprise will be greater if the society in question does not overvalue external goods of the sort that cause envy and competition. The Stoics are correct when they suggest that overvaluation of external goods is a major source of destructive aggression in society. If we criticize the overvaluation of money, honor, status, and fame that Seneca saw at Rome and that we see in America now, then we may encourage people to pursue other, less problematic external goods, including love of family, of friends, of work, even, to a certain extent, of country. If people care primarily for friendship, good work, and – let’s even hope – social justice, then they are less likely to see everything in terms of the hockey match and more likely to use Marcus’s image of the common project. Because my vision is not a Stoic one, there will still be important sources of good to be protected from harm, and there will still be justified anger at damage to those good things. But a lot of occasions for anger in real life are not good or just, and we can do a lot as a society to prune away the greedy attachments that underpin them.

After Raising Cain, Kindlon wrote a book on rich teenagers in America. It is an alarming portrait of the greed and overvaluations of a certain class in our nation, and its tales of children who humiliate others because they don’t go on the same expensive ski vacations or have the same expensive designer clothes are a chilling illustration of how overvaluation is connected to destructive violence. There is a great deal to say about how education could address such problems, but I shall not go into that here.

Instead, I want to turn back to Euripides, reflecting, in concluding, on the role of tragic spectatorship, and tragic art generally, in promoting good citizenship of the sort I have been advocating here. Tragedies are not Stoic: they start with us ‘fools’ and the chance events that befall us. At the same time, they tend to get their priorities straight.

Thus, the overvaluations I have just mentioned are usually not validated in tragic works of art. The great Athenian tragic dramas, for example, revolve around attachments that seem essentially reasonable: to one’s children, city, loved ones, bodily integrity, health, freedom from pain, status as a free person rather than a slave, ability to speak and persuade others, the very friendship and company of others. The loss of any of

these is worthy of lamentation, and the tragic dramas encourage us to understand the depth of such loss and, with the protagonists, to fear it. In exercising compassion the audience is learning its own possibilities and vulnerabilities – what Aristotle called “things such as might happen” – and learning that people different in sex, race, age, and nation experience suffering in a way that is like our way, and that suffering is as crippling for them as it would be for us.

Such recognitions have their pitfalls, and I have identified some of them in talking about The Trojan Women. We always risk error in bringing the distant person close to us; we ignore differences of language and of cultural context, and the manifold ways in which these differences shape one’s inner world. But there are dangers in any act of imagining, and we should not let these particular dangers cause us to admit defeat prematurely, surrendering before an allegedly insuperable barrier of otherness.

When I was out in the rural areas of Rajasthan, visiting an education project for girls, I asked the Indian woman who ran the project (herself an urban woman with a Ph.D.) how she would answer the frequent complaint that a foreigner can never understand the situation of a person in another nation. She thought for a while and said finally, “I have the greatest difficulty understanding my own sister.”

There are barriers to understanding in any human relationship. As Proust said, any real person imposes on us a “dead weight” that our “sensitivity cannot remove.” The obstacles to understanding a sister may in some instances be greater than those to understanding a stranger. At least they are different. All we can do is trust our imaginations, and then criticize them (listening if possible to the critical voices of those we are trying to understand), and then trust them again. Perhaps out of this dialectic between criticism and trust something like understanding may eventually grow. At least the product will very likely be better than the obtuseness that so generally reigns in international relations.

As Euripides knew, terror has this good thing about it: it makes us sit up and take notice. Tragic dramas can’t precisely teach anything new, since they will be moving only to people who at some level already understand how bad these predicaments are. But they can awaken the sleepers by reminding them of human realities they are neglecting in their daily political lives.

The experience of terror and grief for our towers might be just that – an experience of terror and grief for our towers. One step worse, it could be a stimulus for blind rage and aggression against all the opposing hockey teams and bad umpires in the world. But if we cultivate a culture of critical compassion, such an event may, like Hecuba’s Trojan cry, possibly awaken a larger sense of the humanity of suffering, a patriotism constrained by respect for human dignity and by a vivid sense of the real losses and needs of others.

And in that case, it really would turn out that Euripides was right and Hecuba was wrong: the name of the Trojan land was not wiped out. It lives, in a work of the imagination to which we can challenge ourselves, again and again.
Since the end of the Cold War, the world has been awash in hot wars. Most have been waged within, rather than between, states.¹ The Yearbook of the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) annually tabulates what it terms “major armed conflicts” – those resulting in more than one thousand battle deaths per year. Over the eleven years from 1990 to 2000 there were fifty-six such conflicts; only three were interstate (Iraq-Kuwait, India-Pakistan, and Ethiopia-Eritrea). The average number of conflicts in any one year was about twenty-eight; the average conflict lasted two years.²

Typically, these civil wars have killed many more civilians than armed combatants; in addition, they have created even larger numbers of refugees. In an effort to extend humanitarian help, outsiders in recent years have attempted to intervene – in Yugoslavia, in Somalia, in Cambodia, and in Rwanda.

¹ This is a revised and condensed version of an earlier work by the authors entitled “Send in the Troops: A UN Foreign Legion,” Washington Quarterly 20 (1) (Winter 1997). That piece in turn was drawn from a longer study by the same authors entitled Peace Operations by the United Nations: The Case for a Volunteer Force, published by the Committee on International Security Studies of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Unfortunately, the results have been mixed. In cases where no vital strategic interests are at stake, many nations, including the United States, have been slow to act and reluctant to expose their military personnel to the risk of casualties. Even when troops have been deployed, the duration of their deployment has often been limited by ‘exit strategies’ and a stipulation that they will remain under national control. In order to keep outside ground troops out of harm’s way, these outside forces are often, in effect, disarmed and ordered to use their weapons only in self-defense. The desire to avoid casualties in any case leads to a strong preference for employing air and naval power.

We believe that the most realistic, effective, and politically feasible alternative to this unsatisfactory state of affairs would be to create a modest standing UN military force. As we envision it, this force would be composed entirely of volunteers from member states – a sort of ‘UN Foreign Legion.’

Such a force, numbering roughly fifteen thousand and backed up by larger forces remaining under national control, would dramatically improve the world community’s rapid response capability when faced with humanitarian crises or civil unrest. Encouraging its creation would constitute an important expression of U.S. global leadership at a critical moment in the development of multilateral institutions.

A half century ago, the establishment of the United Nations raised hopes that it might constitute an effective instrument for meeting the kinds of challenges we have just described. A Military Staff Committee, with representatives from the five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5), was organized and charged with creating a plan for a UN military force that might “take such action by air, sea, or land . . . as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.” Planning began, but the committee was unable to agree on force levels or composition. As the Cold War developed, the UN effort was aborted. Since then, UN military efforts have been limited almost exclusively to peacekeeping – and then only when both the contesting parties and the P-5 members have been able to reach an agreement on UN intervention.

With the end of the Cold War, the likelihood of agreement among the P-5 has dramatically improved. Russia, for example, acquiesced in the U.S.-led Desert Storm effort against Iraq and, more recently, in the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. There has been a revival of interest in increasing the UN’s intervention capabilities, particularly in conflicts where enforcement may be an issue. Some proposals simply earmark selected national military units for UN service; others create a standing UN force, based either on the rotating commitment of national units to a UN command, or on individuals volunteering for service (as they do for the French Foreign Legion).

In our view, the last option – an all-volunteer foreign-legion type force under UN control – would likely offer the best hope for responding effectively to humanitarian crises. To test this hypothesis, we will consider whether the availability of such a force might have made significant differences in the nature and effectiveness of some past UN interventionary efforts, specifically in four cases of intrastate conflict – those in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cambodia, and Rwanda.

Earlier discussions have generally focused on quick reaction capability as the

3 Charter of the United Nations (San Francisco: The United Nations, 26 June 1945), art. 42.
The principal rationale for the development and maintenance of an all-volunteer force under UN control. At present, however, months usually pass between the Security Council’s vote and the assembly and organization of the contingents for an appropriate force. This also means that Security Council members – especially the United States because of its special role in providing logistic capacity for long-range deployments – in effect vote twice: once in the formal resolution and then, in practice, in their willingness to contribute troops, matériel, civilian personnel, and financial support.

Certainly, the ready availability of armed forces – whether volunteers or troops provided by member states – is essential to the UN’s ability to act decisively. But equally vital is the ability of the UN to make a quick decision – and that, of course, is determined by the political calculations of the member nations, particularly the Security Council’s P-5 members.

This brings us to the single greatest comparative advantage that a volunteer force would have over reliance on national forces earmarked for UN service (or ‘seconded’ to it). The advantage lies in the fact that member nations would be more likely to deploy a volunteer force in actions involving a significant risk of casualties. When public sensitivity to casualties runs high – as it does in many modern democracies, including the United States – national leaders often feel compelled to follow public opinion. They then decide against intervention of any kind, or severely limit the scope of intervention, or authorize intervention only after a drawn-out debate whose duration is liable to cost lives in the affected region.

In at least two other important respects, an all-volunteer force would be preferable to relying on seconded national forces. First is the issue of command and control. When nations commit their forces to UN or other multinational operations, they insist – none more so than the United States – on retaining ultimate authority over those forces, including the right to withdraw them peremptorily, or to exercise a veto over particular operations if they judge troop employment unwise or inconsistent with national interests. This problem would not arise with a volunteer UN force, except to the extent that the physical deployment of the volunteer force might depend on national forces such as logistical and air support.

A second reason to prefer a volunteer UN force is the question of capability in terms of equipment and, especially, training. The ad hoc assembly of national units is a poor basis on which to build a capable military force. Developing nations, often eager to supply troops as a way of financing their own armies, present a particular problem in this respect. Yet the UN system often must use these troops, even if the more militarily competent nations were willing to offer all the forces needed – which they rarely are.

In many situations of intervention, a long-term presence of some force will be needed to help maintain peace during a process of social and political reconstruction. The scale of the proposed UN volunteer force discussed below, however, is far too small to allow it alone to provide long-term deployments. Thus the likely need for the long-term presence of peacekeeping forces would persist.

In what follows, we will briefly review the history of four UN peacekeeping operations – in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cambodia, and Rwanda – and attempt in general terms to assess the differences that a
standing UN force might have made on the outcomes.4

The conflict in Yugoslavia, and especially in Bosnia, is probably the richest mine we have for a counterfactual analysis of the utility – and limitations – of a standing UN volunteer force. From the beginning, serious problems hampered the efforts of the international community to mitigate conflict in Yugoslavia and prevent escalation.

Germany and Austria were particularly sympathetic to Croatian and Slovenian aspirations for early independence within the boundaries they had as republics in the Yugoslav federation. Most of the rest of the world community believed, in contrast, that the maintenance of some kind of Yugoslav federation, or at least confederation, offered the best hope for peace and stability in the region. Russia, not surprisingly, was much less critical of the Serbs than were the other major powers, and the United States was much more so.

Debates persisted about whether the lead agency for international intervention should be the United Nations, the European Community/Union (EC/EU), or NATO – or even, possibly, the Western European Union (WEU) or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). There were also differences about how to organize the international effort. Britain espoused a sharper demarcation than did the United States in force requirements and training for peacekeeping, on the one hand, and for peace enforcement on the other. Given these differences – and, in the later stages of the war, differences between the government of Serbia and the local Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, not to mention ever-increasing animosities whipped to a frenzy by the nationalist leaders of the contesting factions – cease-fire and

mediation efforts by the intervening powers proved fitful at best.

With memories still fresh of the Vietnam War and World War II, when Yugoslav partisans tied down some twenty German and Allied divisions for many months, outside powers were not eager to risk significant casualties in an effort to try to enforce a solution to the conflict. Britain and France accordingly introduced peacekeeping forces only after the Serbs and Croats had agreed to a ceasefire, by which time most of the Krajina had fallen to the Serbs.

Much later, in 1999, the fighting moved on to the Albanian-majority province of Kosovo. Serbia resisted the efforts of the Kosovo liberation movement, one part of which sought the renewal of the autonomy the province had formerly enjoyed, another part of which wanted the Kosovo Liberation Army to lead an armed campaign for independence, or possibly to join Albania in creating a Greater Albania. After negotiations between Serbia and the ‘Contact Group’ – France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – failed, NATO, without UN authorization and against the objections of Russia, initiated a bombing campaign against a variety of economic and military targets in Serbia and against Serbian military forces in Kosovo.

Nearly three months later, partly because of the bombing, partly because Serbia lost Russia’s support, Serbia agreed to withdraw its large forces – about forty thousand military, paramilitary, and police – from Kosovo. The Security Council then authorized a NATO-led force of some fifty thousand. After the Serbs had withdrawn and the NATO force had started its deployment, the great majority of the eight hundred thousand refugees who had fled during the Serbian repression and the bombing returned.

Had a UN volunteer force been available early on, at the very beginning of the Serbian attacks on Croatia and Bosnia, there would likely have been less sensitivity about casualties. As a result, it might have been possible to introduce the force earlier with salutary effects, particularly if it had had a mandate to engage in some enforcement actions. Such a force would have strengthened the hands of Lord Carrington, acting for the EC/EU, and of Cyrus Vance, acting for the UN, and a peaceful resolution of the conflict might have resulted. Or, had the need arisen, the UN force might have taken effective enforcement actions against Serb forces in Croatia or later in Bosnia when all sides, but particularly the Bosnian Serbs, repeatedly flouted UN injunctions proscribing attacks against ‘safe areas’ and interference with the delivery of humanitarian relief.

The war in Somalia had its genesis in the chaotic struggle for power between clan leaders that erupted after the fall of the Siad Barre government in January of 1991. In response to looting by gangs and the prospect of famine unless order was restored, the UN became engaged early in 1992. In March of that year, it succeeded in brokering a cease-fire between the principal clan leaders in Mogadishu. It dispatched fifty unarmed peacekeepers to monitor compliance with the cease-fire and authorized the formation and deployment in April of a five-hundred-troop Pakistani battalion to protect the delivery of humanitarian relief supplies.

Unfortunately, key governments, notably the United States, showed a general lack of support for the operation. Logistical and financial problems, as well as negotiations toward an agreement with Somali clan leaders for the introduction of the force, also posed difficulties. By September of 1991, when the UN force was fully deployed, the situation in
Mogadishu had so degenerated that UN troops could not safeguard the delivery of food and other relief supplies. With impunity, Somali clan leaders were able to frustrate the conciliation efforts of the UN secretary-general’s special representative in the field. In short, the first phase of operations in Somalia was a story of too little too late.

As the horrors of starvation and the breakdown of public order in Somalia became apparent on the nightly news, President George H. W. Bush, responding to public pressure, authorized the Marine Corps to lead a thirty-eight-thousand-troop intervention in December of 1992, with the limited objective of facilitating humanitarian relief efforts. As intended, this phase of operations lasted only a few months, but succeeded in saving many lives.

Although some U.S. forces remained in Somalia, the UN took over the major interventionary responsibility in May of 1993 with a weaker force charged with a broader ‘nation-building’ mandate. Unfortunately, the expanded mandate was clearly beyond UN capabilities. When eighteen Americans and a number of Pakistani troops were killed later in the year, U.S. public opinion turned strongly against continued involvement, and President Bill Clinton announced that U.S. forces would be withdrawn by the end of March of 1994. This third phase ended a year later, without accomplishing any of its objectives. There were further difficulties in Somalia with unity of command; national forces failed to respond to orders from field commanders because of conflicting instructions from their capitals. Such problems would not have arisen with an all-volunteer UN force.

Had a force of several thousand well-trained UN volunteers been available for deployment in early 1992, the humanitarian relief mission could quite plausibly have been accomplished in less than a year without the Marine Corps intervention. Achieving the expanded objectives that the UN favored but the United States resisted, however, would have required a much larger force for a much longer period of time – and substantial commitment by the world community for nonmilitary support, also for many years. As it is, Somalia remains a failed state – a case for UN trusteeship.

The UN intervention in Cambodia grew out of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, which was meant to end two decades of terrorism and civil war by producing a unified – and freely elected – Cambodian government. The Security Council has characterized the operation as “a major achievement of the United Nations.” UN troops repatriated three hundred sixty thousand refugees and displaced persons from Thai border regions. In addition, a technically free and fair election was held with an extraordinarily high level of participation.

But, in fact, the UN’s Cambodia mission must be judged a failure. Despite the high voter turnout, the UN was unable to protect opposition parties from a centrally directed government campaign of terror and intimidation. At best, 10 percent of the nation’s roughly three hundred fifty thousand armed combatants were demobilized. Most significantly, the Khmer Rouge was able to sabotage the goal of national unification: although it had been a party to the Paris Peace Agreement – and a major cause of the ruthlessness of the nation’s long civil war – it refused to participate in the election and to permit UN access to the parts of the country it controlled.

Might things have gone better if the UN had had an all-volunteer military force at its disposal instead of having to
rely on seconded troops? Many of the sixteen thousand troops that were actually deployed were ill-equipped and ill-disciplined – problems that would not have plagued a well-trained volunteer force. Also, the force could probably have been deployed soon after the Paris accords – not eight months later, as was the case. Such earlier deployment would have made it possible to make considerably more progress in the disarmament mission. According to observers in the field, rapid deployment might also have helped to deter disorder.

Perhaps the most interesting question is whether, with a volunteer force, the UN would have been able to compel the Khmer Rouge to comply with the Paris Peace Agreement. Perhaps doing so would have been unwise, given the Khmer Rouge’s military capabilities and ideological fanaticism, and given the possibility of negative reactions from China and other Southeast Asian states. Perhaps the Paris consensus might not have survived, and perhaps one or more outside parties would have resumed their support of the Khmer Rouge.

At least one moral of the story is clear: If the broader nation-building objectives of the UN intervention were to be realized – particularly in the absence of a resolution of the Khmer Rouge problem – the UN would doubtless have had to maintain a substantial military presence in Cambodia for a number of years, as well as provide resources for the civil components of the UN mission. The Cambodian mission, then, highlights the reasons why the international community must take seriously the need not only for an enhanced volunteer UN military force, but also for a well-qualified UN ‘peace corps’ able to help reconstruct war-ravaged societies.

From the perspective of the international community, which had recently been stung by the failure of humanitarian intervention in Somalia, the genocidal war between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda could not have come at a worse time or place: Africa, in April of 1994. At the time, a UN Assistance Mission (UNAMIR I) with a force of twenty-five hundred troops was already in Rwanda. Yet the immediate Security Council reaction was not to increase its strength, but to reduce it – to a mere three hundred troops. Moreover, the Security Council, ignoring the secretary-general’s call for strengthening the force and increasing active intervention, limited UNAMIR I’s mandate to brokering a cease-fire and assisting in relief efforts.

A month later, the UN belatedly authorized a fresh deployment of fifty-five hundred troops for UNAMIR II, again with a limited mandate. But as late as August, the UN force had not yet reached its authorized strength. After the fiasco in Somalia, there was little disposition in the world community to incur the costs of trying to stop the genocide. France was the exception; it deployed a force in Rwanda during the period of June 22 to August 22, which had some success in protecting the southwestern part of the country. (More than any other advanced industrial state, France has been willing to engage in peace enforcement operations. Relying largely on its Foreign Legion, French political leaders may not have been as sensitive as others to the risk of casualties.)

Of the cases we have considered, Rwanda provides the best example of the likely utility of a standing UN quick reaction force. Had such a force been available when the secretary-general proposed the strengthening of field capability in late April, the Security Council may well have authorized its deployment instead of voting to reduce the UNAMIR I force. Assuming U.S. logistic support – not an unreasonable assump-
tion—the larger force could have been deployed in sufficient time to save hundreds of thousands of lives. And, considering the experience of the French, such a UN force would most likely have experienced few casualties. As it was, over a period of four and a half months, and out of a population of about eight million Rwandans, eight hundred thousand died, two million became refugees, and two million became internally displaced persons.

This review suggests that the world community could have, and in some instances likely would have, responded to each of these four crises with greater effectiveness had a well-trained and equipped all-volunteer UN force been available. Of course, the fact that interventionary forces were deployed in most of these cases for protracted periods of time—in Yugoslavia, the clock is still running—raises serious questions about the necessary size and mission of an effective UN military force.

Would a relatively small rapid deployment force be sufficient to realize UN objectives? Might a volunteer UN force be effectively supplemented by seconded national units, so that the UN force could be relieved soon enough to respond to other crises? We believe the answer to both questions is a qualified “yes.”

The situations we have examined fall somewhere on the force spectrum between ‘classic peacekeeping’ and enforcing the UN Charter’s Chapter VII prohibition of aggression. Monitoring a truce line in situations where conflict has ceased and the parties have agreed to accept the intervening force usually requires a thousand troops. But stopping aggression—as the UN tried to do in Korea and Iraq—is an altogether more daunting task, requiring several hundred thousand troops.

In the intermediate situations that we have been reviewing, an intervening force will typically have a shifting variety of tasks, including:

- Preventive deployments to forestall violence between communities or states;
- Monitoring or supervising a tense situation, stalemate, cease-fire, or settlement;
- Establishing, monitoring, or supervising cantonment areas, demilitarized zones, and buffer zones between warring parties, which may involve interposition by the field force;
- Support, supervision, and implementation of a process of disarming and demobilizing the warring factions;
- Protection and support of humanitarian assistance efforts;
- Noncombatant evacuation under threat;
- Establishing protective zones;
- Protection and support of national reconstruction and reconciliation efforts, including the conduct of elections;
- Helping to restore and maintain general civil order; and
- Enforcing sanctions.

All of these tasks would have to be performed in situations where the threat of armed resistance is real and present. If it is to help achieve a political resolution of the underlying conflict, a UN military force will need to be capable of fulfilling all three of the ultimate political functions of armed force—compulsion, deterrence, and reassurance. The force must be sufficient to compel each side to stop the violence, to deter those who might resort to violence, and to reassure the general public that it need neither fight nor flee.
The most detailed and persuasive analysis of what a UN rapid reaction force should be is that of Carl Conetta and Charles Knight. 5 Examining the troop requests submitted by the commanders of the UN operations in Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Somalia, Mozambique, Haiti, and Rwanda between 1992 and 1994, Conetta and Knight concluded that meeting those requests would have required a force capable of continuous deployment of fifteen thousand troops in the field. This level of deployment would in turn have required a total force of 43,750 personnel, whose operating costs would have been about $3.5 billion per year.

We believe that the size and cost of such a force are much too large to propose to the international community. In our judgment, the size of the recommended force must fall somewhere between the smallest force that could reasonably perform the required tasks and the largest and most expensive force that member states, particularly the major powers, would allow the UN to command. We believe a force of fifteen thousand, of which eleven thousand would be deployable – half of that for long periods – meets these criteria. The organization and personnel of this force are shown in the two tables that follow.

A rough estimate of the annual cost of operating the force described is $1.25 billion to $1.5 billion per year. About 25 percent of this is the annual cost of equipment and facilities. These figures should be compared with UN peacekeeping expenditures of $2.5 billion in 2000. Much of the expenditure for a new voluntary force would be a substitute for, not a net addition to, current peacekeeping costs. In addition to marshalling the force itself, the UN would need to maintain a substantial military base where the force would train and be stationed when not deployed. The base should be large enough to accommodate visits from detachments of national units from various countries for joint training with this UN force. Preparing and maintaining a base would add another substantial element of cost. But with the downsizing of military forces in many countries, facilities should be available, and at costs far lower than those of creating a new base.

Wherever the force were based, it would have to be moved to the site of its operation for any intervention. Providing it with an organic logistic capacity to make this possible would be prohibitively expensive; it would have to rely on national capabilities to provide logistic capacity. In effect, this means relying on the United States, which has provided most of the logistic support for the forces that have been seconded to the UN by member states. 6


6 This is an important constraint. Any air force supply operation involves the risk of accident. If
The number and scale of UN interventions in recent years makes plain that the standing force we envisage could not meet all UN objectives on its own. It would require backup forces of some kind. This UN standing force might be capable of two simultaneous missions, but no more, and its operational concept should require an assessment of the success of an operation after no more than six months from initial deployment. If the intervention succeeds in damping violence and moving the conflict to the political arena, then a smaller peacekeeping force drawn from member states could replace the standing force. If not, the Security Council would be faced with the decision to either replace the standing force units with larger and perhaps more heavily armed national units or withdraw from the conflict altogether. Our plan would thus be incomplete without a provision for backup forces, included in most proposals for a rapid reaction force. These consist of national units designated for UN service in both peacekeeping and combat modes, trained and exercised to a common standard and doctrine.

For both political and operational reasons, these backup forces should be organized and deployed regionally and should consist of units designated from the national forces of cooperative states in the region. These forces would train and exercise together on a regular basis, and the UN standing force HQ would play an advisory and standard-setting role in this training process. The contributing states would benefit from the upgrading of the capabilities of their armed forces. Meanwhile, they would have to be persuaded that doing so is politically worthwhile – that an investment in cooperative rather than competitive security is desirable.

But would the advantages of the regional forces’ proximity in terms of operational ease outweigh the potential disadvantage of their having a direct interest in the conflict and its outcome? This difficult question goes to the heart of how best to balance the cooperative and competitive paths to peace and security. How one answers this question will determine, in part, how one thinks about not only the creation of regional forces, but also the very idea of a UN military force.

### Table 1
Tactical and Support Units for a Volunteer UN Military Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 brigade HQs</td>
<td>(340 staff and support personnel each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 motorized infantry battalions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 light mechanized infantry battalions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cavalry squadron</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 light armored cavalry squadron</td>
<td>(37 light tanks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 armored scout helicopter companies</td>
<td>(18 aircraft each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 field artillery batteries (8 guns each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 air defense companies</td>
<td>(12 mounted air defense systems each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 combat engineer companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 signal companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 field intelligence companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 MP companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 civil affairs companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 field logistics bases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schematically, appropriate coverage and operational considerations would suggest the creation of at least six such regional forces: one each for Africa, Latin America (including the Caribbean), West Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and Europe. The scale of national forces varies widely in the different regions, both in relation to each other and to the proposed UN standing force, so that the appropriate size for a regional force would also vary. Neither the UN standing force nor the national regional forces could, or should, be used to engage the national armies of states with substantial military power. The political feasibility of establishing such a regional force also varies greatly among the different regions. In both West and South Asia, for instance, major countries are in a state of ongoing hostility that would make a regional force hard to create. Perhaps the region in which such a force is most needed and might do the most immediate good is Africa; yet the possibility of creating a competent force there in the near future is not bright.

If we think of a battalion with a strength of some seven hundred fifty or one thousand as the smallest combat unit that can be effectively deployed as a constituent of a larger multinational force, then an ideal regional force might have up to twenty-five combat battalions plus independent supporting units of transport, supply, engineering, military police, medical, and sanitation troops. These would form the pool from which a force could be drawn when needed.

Withdrawning the standing force and replacing it with elements drawn from the committed backup forces would make it possible for the former to continue to serve its deterrent function in other potential conflicts. In such a replacement, the HQ element of the standing force could remain for some time to act as the memory store for the incoming forces, ensuring continuity of action.

The creation of a UN standing force would require further upgrading of the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The capabilities and organization of the department have been substantially improved in the last several years, but much more needs to be done. Further changes should involve two levels of the UN: the Security Council and secretary-general, and the DPKO in relation to other parts of the organization. At the higher level, the Military Staff Committee or its functional equivalent must be reactivated, enlarged to include representatives from member states that are substantial contributors to ongoing field operations, and capable of functioning full-time whenever an operation is in progress. The DPKO in turn would need to add the administrative capacities required to maintain its military force, including recruitment,

Table 2
Personnel Required for a Volunteer UN Military Force

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Units</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit-assigned command-and-combat personnel</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support personnel organic to tactical units</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field logistics base</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacements</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total deployable</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nondeployable Personnel</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central staff</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base support and central logistics</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainees</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Nondeployable</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                                           | 15,000 |

training, procurement, and logistics. The current UN system, whereby procurement depends on the approval of the undersecretary of the Department of Administration and Budget – an entirely separate UN department – is unworkable. The budget function must become an integral part of the DPKO’s operations.  

Creating the capabilities described above would in many instances make it possible for the international community to respond to crises and undertake peacemaking and enforcement operations more quickly. This could be expected to increase the likelihood of realizing several of the potential objectives of such interventions: saving lives and reducing human suffering, facilitating political settlements between contestants, and perhaps undertaking nation-building activities. It would also have a broader deterrent effect, which in some cases would make diplomatic intervention alone effective in preventing armed conflict. And it would provide a strength to Security Council resolutions that is now lacking.

The advantages of early deployment should not, however, be exaggerated. In few, if any, of the above instances would the existence of such a force on its own have made much of a difference. (Rwanda may be an exception.) Fully capitalizing on a UN standing force’s advantages will depend on various additional reforms the UN would have to undertake. Such reforms include improving staff work, quickening force deployment decision-making processes, more clearly defining mission mandates, and improving command-and-control procedures, including arrangements for civil-military coordination.

The UN cannot maintain a standing force on the basis of current financing arrangements, which are a mixture of voluntary contributions and special assessments for each operation. Instead, the support of both the standing force and traditional peacekeeping operations should be made part of the regular budget. Some larger operations – in particular, any relatively large-scale Chapter VII activities – might be best handled by special assessments. Together with the necessary strengthening of the DPKO, the creation of a standing force might result in an annual cost for peacekeeping operations (excluding large-scale Chapter VII activities) of $5–$6 billion, about twice their current level.

To put this number in some context, it is worth noting that world military expenditures in 2001 were about $835 billion. Of this, the U.S. share was about 39 percent. The other big spenders – thirteen countries with military budgets of $10–$60 plus billion – had a 41 percent share; the share of the other 157 countries amounted to only 20 percent.  

The creation of a volunteer UN force would require a mobilization of political will at a time when many members of the UN, including the Security Council P-5, view the organization with a mixture of skepticism and hostility. This attitude is strongest in the United States, but it is widely shared. After all, the majority of UN member states are developing countries that are among the more likely targets of outside intervention.

The most widespread objection to an all-volunteer UN force – aside from the

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7 See Partners for Peace, published by the United Nations Association of the United States, for a fuller discussion.

economic costs – has been the lack of confidence in UN decision-making, and often a specific lack of confidence in UN secretaries-general. We see little basis for such concern. Developing and approving a mandate for UN operations will, for as far into the future as we can imagine, be a Security Council responsibility, with the P-5 members, at least, having veto power. Although secretaries-general will presumably have executive powers, we see no need for these powers to be greater – or otherwise different – than those needed for the management of UN operations under the present arrangement of relying on seconded forces.

In the present political mood of the United States the proposal outlined in the preceding pages may well appear to be sheer fantasy. But the underlying reality of violent intrastate conflict remains, and we cannot simply persist in looking the other way; the ‘CNN effect’ and the activities of a host of nongovernmental organizations prevent such an option.

The U.S. stakes in enhancing rather than undermining the capacities of the UN are of two kinds. The first is that the United States is the one power with global involvements; serious conflict anywhere is likely to involve the United States if it persists, and even more likely to involve the country if it spreads. Yet the United States has neither the capacity nor the mandate to act alone as a global policeman.

The second reason why the United States has a stake in strengthening the UN is its deep commitment to securing a liberal world order based on a global free market. The United States sees such an order as the key to achieving a minimum harmony of interests between rich and poor countries, slowly diminishing the gap between rich and poor nations through free trade and growing prosperity. Such an order cannot flourish in a world rent by widespread violent conflict.

If the United States cannot alone bear the burden of securing international order, then it must persuade others to help. The UN, backed by regional organizations – what might be called the formal international system – offers the best instrument for achieving this order, for only the formal international system has the political legitimacy to police the world.
How did the world begin? How old is it? Do mysterious and invisible forces determine its fate? Surprisingly enough, such questions are now at the forefront of scientific research.

Over the past century, old ideas about the cosmos and our place in it have been dramatically overturned. We now know that the Sun does not occupy the center of the universe, and that in addition to our own Milky Way, space is filled with hundreds of billions of other galaxies. Even more astonishingly, we know that the universe itself is expanding everywhere, and that as space expands, galaxies are being swept apart from each other at colossal speeds.

In the last few years, tantalizing hints have begun to appear that the expansion of the universe is even accelerating. These results imply the existence of a mysterious force able to counter the attraction of gravity. The origin and nature of this force currently defy explanation. But astronomers have reason to hope that ongoing research will soon resolve some of the deepest riddles of nature.

It was Edwin Hubble, a Carnegie Astronomer based in Pasadena, California, who first learned that the universe was expanding; in 1929, he discovered that the farther away from our Milky Way galaxies are, the faster they are moving apart. A few years before, Albert Einstein in his general theory of relativity had published a mathematical formula for the evolution of the universe. Einstein’s equations, like Hubble’s observations, implied that the universe must once have been much denser and hotter. These results suggested that the universe began with an intense explosion, a ‘big bang.’

The big bang model has produced a number of testable predictions. For example, as the universe expands, the hot radiation produced by the big bang will cool and pervade the universe – thus we should see heat in every direction we look. Big bang theory predicts that by today the remnant radiation should have cooled to a temperature of only 3 degrees above absolute zero (corresponding to a temperature of -270 degrees Celsius). Remarkably, this radiation has been detected. In 1965, two radio astronomers, Arnold Penzias and Robert Wilson, discovered this relic radiation during a routine test of communications dishes, a discovery for which they were awarded the Nobel Prize.

The current expansion rate of the universe, known as the Hubble constant,
determines the size of the observable universe and provides constraints on competing models of the evolution of the universe. For decades, an uncertainty of a factor of two in measurements of the Hubble constant existed. (Indeed, determining an accurate value for the Hubble constant was one of the main reasons for building the Hubble Space Telescope.) However, rapid progress has been made recently in resolving the differences. New, sensitive instruments on telescopes, some flying aboard the Hubble Space Telescope, have led to great strides in the measurement of distances to galaxies beyond our own.

In theory, determining the Hubble constant is simple: one need only measure distance and velocity. But in practice, making such measurements is difficult. It is hard to devise a means to measure distances over cosmological scales accurately. And measuring velocity is complicated by the fact that neighboring galaxies tend to interact gravitationally, thereby perturbing their motions. Uncertainties in distances and in velocities then lead to uncertainties in their ratio, the Hubble constant.

Velocities of galaxies can be calculated from the observed shift of lines (due to the presence of chemical elements such as hydrogen, iron, oxygen) in the spectra of galaxies. There is a familiar analogous phenomenon for sound known as the Doppler effect, which explains, for instance, why the pitch of an oncoming train changes as the train approaches and then recedes from us. As galaxies move away from us, their light is similarly shifted and stretched to longer (redder) wavelengths, a phenomenon referred to as redshift. This shift in wavelength is proportional to velocity.

Measuring distances presents a greater challenge, which has taken the better part of a century to resolve. Most distances in astronomy cannot be measured directly because the size scales are simply too vast. For the very nearest stars, distances can be measured using a method called parallax. This uses the baseline of the Earth’s orbit, permitting the distance to be calculated using simple, high-school trigonometry. However, this technique currently can be applied reliably only for relatively nearby stars within our own galaxy.

In order to measure the distance of more remote stars and galaxies, astronomers identify objects that exhibit a constant, known brightness, or a brightness that is related to another measurable quantity. The distance is then calculated using the inverse square law of radiation, which states that the apparent brightness of an object falls off in proportion to the square of its distance from us. The effects of the inverse square law are easy to see in everyday life – say if we compare the faint light of a train in the distance with the brilliant light as the train bears down close to us.

To get a sense of the (astronomical) scales we are talking about, the nearest star to us is about 4 light-years away. One light-year is the distance that light can travel within a year moving at the enormous speed of 186,000 miles per second. At this speed, light circles the Earth more than 7 times in 1 second. For comparison, the ‘nearby’ Andromeda galaxy lies at a distance of about 2 million light-years. And the most distant galaxies visible to us currently are about 13 billion light-years away. That is to say, the light that left them 13 billion years ago is just now reaching us, and we are seeing them as they were 13 billion years ago, long before the Sun and Earth had even formed (4.6 billion years ago).

Until recently, one of the greatest challenges to measuring accurate distances was a complication caused by the pres-
ence of dust grains manufactured by stars and scattered throughout interstellar space. This dust, located in the regions between stars, absorbs and scatters light. If no correction is made for its effects, objects appear fainter and therefore apparently, but erroneously, farther away than they actually are. Fortunately, dust makes objects appear not only fainter, but also redder. By making measurements at more than one wavelength, this color dependence provides a powerful means of correcting for the presence of dust and allowing correct distances to be derived.

Currently, the most precise method for measuring distances is based on the observations of stars named Cepheid variables. The atmospheres of these stars pulsate in a very regular cycle, on timescales ranging from 2 days to a few months. The brighter the Cepheid, the more slowly it pulsates, a property discovered by astronomer Henrietta Leavitt in 1908. This unique relation allows the distance to be obtained, again using the inverse square law of radiation – that is, it allows the intrinsic brightness of the Cepheid to be predicted from its observed period, and its distance from Earth to be calculated from its observed, apparent brightness.

High resolution is vital for discovering Cepheids in other galaxies. In other words, a telescope must have sufficient resolving power to distinguish individual Cepheids from all the other stars in the galaxy. The resolution of the Hubble Space Telescope is about ten times better than can be generally obtained through Earth’s turbulent atmosphere. Therefore galaxies within a volume about a thousand times greater than accessible to telescopes from Earth could be measured for the first time with Hubble. With it, distances to galaxies with Cepheids can be measured relatively simply out to the nearest massive clusters of galaxies some 50 to 70 million light-years away. (For comparison, the light from these galaxies began its journey about the time of the extinction of the dinosaurs on Earth.)

Beyond this distance, other methods – for example, bright supernovae or the luminosities of entire galaxies – are employed to extend the extragalactic distance scale and measure the Hubble constant. Supernovae are cataclysmic explosions of stars near the end of their lives. The intrinsic luminosities of these objects are so great that for brief periods, they may shine as bright as an entire galaxy. Hence, they may be seen to enormous distances, as they have been discerned out to about half the radius of the observable universe. Unfortunately, for any given method of measuring distances, there may be uncertainties that are as yet unknown. However, by comparing several independent methods, a limit to the overall uncertainty of the Hubble constant can be obtained. This was one of the main aims of the Hubble Key Project.

This project was designed to use the excellent resolving power of the Hubble Space Telescope to discover and measure Cepheid distances to galaxies, and to determine the Hubble constant by applying the Cepheid calibration to several methods for measuring distances further out in the Hubble expansion. The Key Project was carried out by a group of about 30 astronomers, and the results were published in 2001. Distances measured using Cepheids were used to set the absolute distance scale for 5 different methods of measuring relative distances. The combined results yield a value of the Hubble constant of 72 (in units of kilometers per second per megaparsec, where 1 megaparsec corresponds to a distance of 3.26 million light-years).
with an uncertainty of 10 percent. (The previous range of these measurements was 40 to 100 in these units.) Unlike the situation earlier, all of the different methods yield results in good agreement to within their respective measurement uncertainties.

The Hubble constant is the most important parameter in gauging the age of the universe. However, in order to determine a precise age, it is important to know how the current expansion rate differs from past rates. If the universe has slowed down or speeded up over time, then the total length of time over which it has been expanding will differ accordingly. Is the universe slowing down (as expected if the force of gravity has been retarding its expansion)? If so, the expansion would have been faster in the past before the effects of gravity slowed it down, and the age estimated for the universe would be younger than if it had always been expanding at a constant rate.

Indeed, this deceleration is what astronomers expected to find as they looked further back in time. The calculation for a Hubble constant of 72 and a universe with a slowing expansion rate yields an age for the universe of about 9 billion years. This would be fine, except for one not-so-small detail from other considerations: the measured ages of stars.

The best estimates of the oldest stars in the universe are obtained from studying globular clusters, systems of stars that formed early in the history of our galaxy. Stars spend most of their lifetimes undergoing the nuclear burning of hydrogen into helium in their central cores. Detailed computer models of the evolution of such stars compared with observations of them in globular clusters suggest they are about 12 or 13 billion years old – apparently older than the universe itself. Obviously, this is not possible.

The resolution of this paradox appears to rest in a newly discovered property of the universe itself. A wealth of new data over the past few years has begun to revolutionize cosmology. Probably the most surprising result is the increasing evidence that instead of decelerating as expected, the universe is accelerating! One implication is the existence of a form of energy that is repulsive, acting against the inward pull of gravity. Astronomers refer to this newly discovered universal property of the universe as ‘dark energy.’

Before the expansion of the universe was discovered, Einstein’s original mathematical equation describing the evolution of the universe in general relativity contained a term that he called the cosmological constant. He introduced this term to prevent any expansion (or contraction) of the universe, as it was thought that the universe was static. After Hubble discovered the expansion, Einstein referred to the cosmological constant as his greatest blunder. He had missed the opportunity to predict the expansion.

However, a recent discovery suggests that, although the universe is expanding, the term in Einstein’s equation may have been correct after all: it may represent the dark energy. In a universe with a Hubble constant of about 70, and with matter contributing one-third and dark energy providing approximately two-thirds of the overall mass plus energy density, the resulting estimated age for the universe is 13 billion years, in very good agreement with the ages derived from globular clusters.

It is too soon yet to know whether the existence of dark energy will be confirmed with future experiments. But to the surprise of an initially skeptical community of astronomers and physicists,
several independent observations and experiments are consistent with this theory. Perhaps most exciting is the prospect of learning more about an entirely new form of mysterious energy, a property of the universe that to date has evaded all explanation.

The dark energy observed is smaller by at least 10 billion, billion, billion, billion, billion times than the best theories of elementary particle physics would predict from first principles. Hence, by studying the behavior of the universe, astronomers are posing new challenges to fundamental physics. It is often the case in science that as old questions are resolved, novel, perhaps even more exciting, questions are uncovered. The next decade promises to be a fruitful one in addressing profound questions about the nature of the universe we live in.

Allen Funt was one of the great psychologists of the twentieth century. His informal demonstrations on Candid Camera showed us as much about human psychology and its surprising limitations as the work of any academic psychologist. Here is one of the best (as I recall it many years later): he placed an umbrella stand in a prominent place in a department store and filled it with shiny new golf-cart handles. These were pieces of strong, gleaming stainless-steel tubing, about two-feet long, with a gentle bend in the middle, threaded at one end (to screw into a threaded socket on your golf cart) and with a handsome spherical plastic knob on the opposite end. In oth-