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Business and Bleeding Hearts: Why Multinational Corporations Have a Responsibility to Encourage Cosmopolitan Concern

Abstract: When it comes to fulfilling our basic duties to distant others, we in the affluent world face a motivation gap; we consistently fall short of bearing even moderate costs for the sake of helping others secure basic minimums to which they are entitled. One response to the motivation gap is to cultivate in affluent populations a greater concern for distant others; cultivating such concern is the goal of ‘sentimental cosmopolitanism.’ Two approaches to sentimental cosmopolitanism currently dominate the literature, a compassion-based and a complicity-based approach, respectively. In this paper I argue for the promise of reciprocity as an alternative motivator of cosmopolitan concern. I further argue that a sense of obligation to distant others, grounded in our participation in an ongoing system of reciprocal exchange, can be cultivated within a thus-far overlooked sphere of cosmopolitan sensitization, namely the market. I make the case for the market as an appropriate site for cosmopolitan sensitization, and further argue that multinational corporations are, for several reasons, well-positioned to bear the political responsibility of sensitizing affluent populations to the significance of their participation in a cooperative economic scheme shared with distant others. This paper, then, makes a novel contribution to debates on cosmopolitan sentiment, as well as to the emerging literature on corporations’ political responsibilities.

Keywords: *multinational corporations; political responsibility; reciprocity; sentimental cosmopolitanism; trade*

‘By insisting that he could re-educate people who had matured without acquiring appropriate moral sentiments by invoking a higher power than sentiment, the power of reason, Plato got moral philosophy off on the wrong foot. He led moral philosophers to concentrate on the rather rare figure of the psychopath, the person who has no concern for any human being other than himself. Moral philosophy has systematically neglected the much more common case: the person whose treatment of a rather narrow range of featherless bipeds is morally impeccable, but who remains indifferent to the suffering of those outside this range, the ones he or she thinks of as pseudohumans’ (Rorty, 1993: 123-124).

Introduction

There is little debate, at least amongst philosophers, that we in the affluent world have duties to distant others far beyond those which we are currently willing to fulfil. When it comes to fulfilling such duties we face, as others have put it, a motivation gap (see e.g. Hobbs, 2021; Lenard, 2010; Long, 2009). In response to this motivation gap, recent decades have seen a number of accounts of how we ought to further ‘sensitize’ people in the affluent world to be more concerned about distant others, thereby enhancing our willingness to bear costs for their sake (see e.g. Lawford-Smith, 2012; Nussbaum, 1997, 2001; Woods, 2012). These accounts represent different kinds of ‘sentimental cosmopolitanism’ (Long, 2009). An underlying commitment of sentimental cosmopolitanism is that our affective attachments are not brute, immutable facts; as Martha Nussbaum puts it, ‘since compassion contains thought, it can be educated’ (2001). But cultivating the compassion of affluent populations is not the only available means of plugging the motivation gap; as I hope to show below, the compassion-based approach, at least when taken on its own, greatly understates the motivational resources at our disposal.

An overlooked area where cosmopolitan sensitization might be pursued is within the market. As any trip to the supermarket will confirm, companies typically seek to differentiate themselves and their products from competitors on the basis of price and quality, but rarely in terms of their concern for, or connection with, distant others.¹ Yet however much we are discouraged from thinking about it, markets and our buying choices therein connect us with the lives of many thousands, even millions of workers across the globe in an interconnected web of commerce and cooperation. Indeed, multinational corporations (MNCs) and the supply-chains they coordinate are perhaps the current world’s most consequential examples of ongoing, intensive global cooperation. This makes MNCs particularly well-positioned to bear political responsibilities to sensitize people in the affluent world to their interconnectedness with distant others, or so I will argue. As well as advancing debates on cosmopolitan sensitization, then, this paper represents a novel contribution to the growing literature on corporations’ political responsibilities (see e.g., Hussain and Moriarty, 2018; Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Wettstein and Baur, 2016).

¹ Though, insofar as there is an emerging trend of companies advertising themselves in part on the basis of their ethical credentials, in areas ranging from sustainability to body positivity, the arguments of this paper provide theoretical support for at least some of these efforts.

The argument will proceed as follows. I start by noting a broad consensus amongst philosophers about what, at a minimum, global distributive justice requires, and how the state-system and the partial affinities it encourages hinder our full realization of even this basic minimum. Following this, I will discuss the role that the two most prominent accounts of cosmopolitan sensitization, grounded in compassion and complicity respectively, can conceivably play in moving us to fulfil our duties to distant others. After noting some limitations facing each approach, I make the case for markets as a promising site of cosmopolitan sensitization, wherein our relationship with distant others can be framed in terms of an ongoing set of reciprocal relations. I further argue that multinational corporations bear a political responsibility for sensitizing affluent populations to their interconnectedness with distant others, and I make some tentative remarks about how they might fulfil such a responsibility. I then consider two potential objections to my arguments, before recapitulating key points.

States, Basic Minimums, and the Motivation Gap

Long-standing and wide-ranging disagreement amongst global justice theorists on some issues should not distract us from the considerable areas of broad consensus. Such areas of consensus tend to cluster around what Henry Shue (1980: 18) has referred to as the depths of morality, rather than its heights; while our comprehensive visions of what justice entitles us to may differ wildly, we are nonetheless likely to agree on a set of basic goods and liberties to which we are all entitled, the deprivation of which would be morally unconscionable (see e.g. Sen, 2009; see also Bufacchi, 2012). Helena De Bres has recently provided a concise summary of the current state of play in the global justice literature which underscores these points:

‘At this point in the debate over global distributive justice, most philosophers writing on the subject endorse all of the following claims. While some principles pertaining to the distribution of resources apply exclusively within the state, other such principles apply across state borders; we have urgent duties to help alleviate global poverty and secure all people’s human rights, including social and economic rights; morality requires extensive redistribution of resources from the citizens of rich to the citizens of poor countries, along with major reform of existing international institutions; the current global distribution of socioeconomic goods is ethically outrageous’ (De Bres, 2016: 161-162).²

² I take the correctness of this summary, both as a recapitulation of what the majority of global justice theorists believe, and as a set of independent moral claims, as axiomatic for the remainder of this paper.

Global extreme poverty and its extent is perhaps the clearest case of such an ethical outrage. In monetary terms, the threshold of extreme poverty is set at \$1.90 a day - less than you'd typically spend on a run-of-the-mill birthday card. Despite the modesty of this threshold, around one in every ten people in the world live below it; the International Labour Organisation has recently estimated that close to 40% of all workers in low-income countries live in extreme poverty despite being (at least occasionally) employed (ILO, 2019). As it happens, focusing only on the \$1.90 threshold risks underselling the extent of global poverty: for every ten cents we raise that threshold, about 100 million additional people would be categorised as living in extreme poverty. This effect continues until you reach about \$3.50 (Aguilar and Sumner, 2019: 2).

Notwithstanding agreement that the status quo represents a grave moral failure, there are significant impediments to re-shaping the world in line with our moral commitments. Among the most important is that humanity is divided up into two hundred or so separate states, each with more or less exclusive jurisdiction over its own territory. When it comes to having access to basic minimums, few facts matter more than which of these states we're born into. Branko Milanovic has recently attempted to quantify the value of the 'citizenship premium' that people in affluent states receive by dint of their birth; he finds, for example, that 'just by being born in the United States rather than in Congo, a person would multiply her income by 93 times' (2016: 133).

Territorial boundaries do not just explain the contours of global affluence and deprivation; they also constrain our efforts to mitigate such deprivation. Despite their relatively intensive internal redistributive policies, affluent populations seem wholly unwilling to support comparable redistribution externally.³ In many ways, this differential treatment of co-nationals and distant others is entirely predictable. The state-system facilitates greater group-identification with fellow-citizens relative to identification with outsiders; arguably, the system is predicated upon this amplified affective identification (see e.g. Axelsen, 2013; Ulas, 2017). From a very young age, everything from our education system to our media, and even our built environment encourages us to see our national community as one towards which political commitment and affective ties are legitimate, praiseworthy, perhaps even owed. Even though citizens of the affluent world, myself included, are aware that there are far more grievous injustices

3 While it is a crude measure, Overseas Development Aid (ODA) figures are illustrative here. In 2019, according to the OECD only six states (Turkey, Norway, Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark, UK) met the long-standing UN target of providing 0.7% of their Gross National Income to ODA (see OECD, 2021). The UK has recently voted to scale back its ODA commitments (see Mason, 2021).

befalling people in other parts of the planet, we are inured to the prioritisation of national problems, celebrations, and agendas, as if it's the most natural thing in the world. This unjustifiably insular focus is part of the reason why even the most modest demands of global equity go unmet; most of us would not, after all, tolerate such appalling and chronic immiseration in our own countries. Put another way, we in the affluent world⁴ face a motivation gap; existence of the duties we owe to distant others is not matched by a willingness to fulfil such duties.⁵

Concern and Cosmopolitan Sensitization

For ease of expression, let's simplify and call the affective sentiments which we feel (to varying extents) for our significant others, our fellow nationals, and distant others our (level of) 'concern.' Closing the motivation gap involves increasing our concern for distant others relative to our co-nationals. A successful response to the motivation gap will be one which cultivates the right sort of concern for distant others, and cultivates it to a sufficient level, so that we are willing to bear the costs of helping distant others realize at least basic minimums in a range of vital goods. Let us call the process through which we work to influence our fellow citizens' sentiments so that they are sufficiently concerned with distant others 'cosmopolitan sensitization,' or 'sensitization' for short. Finally, let us call all those communicative actions we take where such sensitization is our goal 'prompts.'

In general terms, there is ample evidence to suggest that we can enhance people's concern for distant others through sensitizing prompts. Reysen and Katzarska-Miller (2013), for instance, have found that there are two proximal antecedents which predict people's sense of what we can call cosmopolitan concern;⁶ their normative environment, and global awareness. 'Normative environment' captures the extent to which people are surrounded by, or embedded in, social environments wherein they believe that others think cosmopolitan concern is desirable or important. 'Global awareness' captures a person's felt sense that they both understand, and are interconnected with, others across the world. The presence of cosmopolitan concern predicts action taken for the sake of distant others (for a useful literature review, see McFarland et al., 2019).

4 I focus on 'the affluent world' not because we are obviously less concerned with distant others than people in the non-affluent world, but because it is the affluent world that can most easily bear moderate costs to help distant others secure their basic entitlements.

5 Given the concern with people's inadequate compliance with their duties, this paper is a contribution to non-ideal theorising about justice; for the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory, see Valentini (2012).

6 While they use the term 'global citizenship', I think this term has potentially misleading connotations.

Through altering people's normative environment, and increasing their felt sense of global understanding and interconnectedness, then, we can enhance their concern for others in a way which motivates them to act.⁷ On the face of it, this would appear to speak in favour of a policy of saturation, where we would like to see sensitization pursued in all areas of people's social environments. To an extent, I think this 'saturation thesis' is plausible. Given the urgency of what is at stake (*inter alia*, people's access to basic minimums), and the size of the motivation gap in question, it would be unduly timid to restrict sensitization to just one or two spheres of our social environment. The more areas where we can sensitize affluent populations, the better.

There are, however, at least two reasons not to embrace 'full saturation,' so to speak. First, we ought to be careful about how we frame our connection to distant others; how we see our connection will shape the sorts of actions we are willing to pursue or support for others' sake (see below). Consequently, we should not pursue sensitization within a social environment which, for whatever reason, would not be conducive to providing prompts of the right kind. Saturation, then, ought to be tempered by a certain logic of contextual appropriateness. Second, and relatedly, if we frame this issue not solely in terms of whether more rather than less sensitization is desirable, but we also consider whether anyone has a *responsibility* to provide sensitizing prompts, the saturation thesis again appears too quick. It is hard to see why the organisers of jazz festivals, accountancy conferences, or local sports competitions should be charged with providing prompts to enhance their participants' and attendees' concern for distant others, even where they could do this effectively. This suggests that, alongside contextual appropriateness, we ought to consider agential appropriateness, i.e. whether a given agent has the right sort of role responsibility, or connection with distant others, to be tasked with sensitizing work in the affluent world.

Surprisingly, the questions of where we should pursue sensitization, and who is responsible for providing its prompts, has been the subject of little principled discussion. Where authors in the sentimental cosmopolitan literature have picked out certain spheres for engaging in sensitization, though, their selection has typically conformed to the above-mentioned logics of appropriateness. Edu-

7 Sufficiently effective sensitization need not convert everyone into ardent cosmopolitan activists. While the existence of a cosmopolitan 'avant-garde' (Ypi, 2012) who are actively committed to realizing a more globally equitable world is important, it is equally important, and perhaps more realistic, that large swathes of the affluent world's population are concerned enough for distant others that they don't begrudge prioritising them in an increasing number of cases, and, thus, that they do not resist reforms which would improve the lot of (deprived) distant others.

cators and higher-learning institutions, for instance, are plausibly tasked with expanding students' horizons, and this may naturally include expanding students' knowledge of, and sense of connection to, distant others (see Nussbaum, 1997, for the most influential defence). As well as educational institutions, sentimental cosmopolitans have often attributed a sensitizing role to those modes of communication most associated with storytelling of various kinds, such as art and literature, but also journalism (see e.g. Nussbaum, 1997; Rorty, 1993; Woods, 2012). These communicative mediums are conducive to not only conveying the relatability of distant others, but also, in the case of journalism especially, tracing the ways in which our actions have global import. In addition, NGOs whose *raison d'être* is to encourage us to be more generous to distant others, either with our money or our time, occupy a position which makes them natural sensitizers of affluent populations (e.g. Hobbs, 2021; Woods, 2012).

I believe the focus on this rather limited set of sensitizing contexts, and sensitizing agents, is explained by the nature of the two most prominent accounts of how our connection with distant others should be framed, i.e. in terms of compassion and complicity, respectively. On what we might call the traditional approach to sentimental cosmopolitanism, cultivating concern for distant others is a matter of evoking our compassion, or empathy.⁸ At least since the time of Rousseau, it has been argued that through cultivating an appreciation for our shared potential to suffer, we can extend our compassion out beyond our immediate circle. By relating to others in terms of their inward suffering rather than their outward trappings, 'we discern more plainly a nature like our own' in them (Rousseau, 1928: 182), thereby helping us to see past surface differences which may otherwise produce discomfort, negative judgement, even dehumanisation. Though Rousseau himself was no friend of cosmopolitanism (see 1928: 7), these ideas have recently been revived as a means to cultivating greater concern for those outside our borders. By seeing distant others as vulnerable, pitiable humans like ourselves, every bit as subject to the throes of fortune and cruelty, we may thus keep open the window of cosmopolitan helping across diverse human communities (Nussbaum, 1997: 85; see also e.g. Lu, 2000; Nussbaum, 1997, 2001; Rorty, 1993).

In favour of this traditional approach, empirical research has shown that 'empathic arousal is fundamental to many kinds of helping' (Penner et al., 2005: 14.4; see especially the work of Batson, e.g. Batson and Shaw, 1991); moreover, empathy's efficacy as a motivator has recently been tested and corroborated

8 I use the terms 'compassion' and 'empathy' interchangeably throughout.

(albeit in a fairly artificial experimental environment) in the specific context of cosmopolitan helping (Faulkner, 2018). Yet the empathy-based approach to cultivating concern is not without issue. For one thing, I believe it would be hard to sustain either the claim that we are not already deeply aware of the plight facing many distant others, or that the reason we don't help distant others is because we fail to recognise them as fully human and every bit as vulnerable as ourselves. If I'm right about this, it suggests that there is a fairly tight limit to how much of a role any further appeals to empathy can play in plugging the motivation gap. Moreover, it has been argued - plausibly in my view - that framing distant others in terms of their suffering and vulnerability, and prompting our concern on that basis, frames distant others in an objectionable as well as unhelpful way. Rather than seeing distant others as being capable of action like ourselves, the criticism goes, it suggests that they are objects of pity, and that they are to be first and foremost seen as moral patients rather than agents in their own right (Woods, 2012). And, insofar as this approach appeals to compassion alone, it produces only a fairly thin sense of connection to distant others (see e.g. Lenard, 2010). Doubtless, concern for others' suffering may encourage us to come to their aid in discrete instances of hardship. Motivationally speaking, however, most of us are rarely moved to act on the basis of pure altruism (Oliver, 2019); thus, it is doubtful that compassion alone can provide the sort of durable motivational ballast which could undergird the long-term political transformation needed to ensure people everywhere have secure access to basic minimums (see Hobbs, 2021).

Rather than focusing on the 'thin' ties of empathy and common humanity, others have proposed a 'thick' sentimental cosmopolitanism, which encourages us to act for distant others not on the basis of fellow-feeling alone, but rather because we are implicated in their suffering (Dobson, 2006; Hobbs, 2020; Lawford-Smith, 2012; Linklater, 2007). In a world like ours, we are deeply interconnected with the lives of others far beyond our borders, and the sorts of inequitable systems of governance we uphold and support, so the argument goes, make us complicit in wrongdoing on a global scale (see Pogge, 2002, for a particularly influential analysis). On such thick cosmopolitan accounts, the motivation to act for distant others ought to come from a desire to rectify our wrongdoings, a place of shame or guilt for upholding an unjust set of practices, or perhaps anger at those who willingly uphold such practices (Hobbs, 2020). Either way, the sensitizing prompts we are to be confronted with ought to 'lay bare the chains of causal responsibility that bind us to the lives of distant "strangers"' (Dobson, 2006: 178).

But there are reasons to be sceptical about the thick cosmopolitan approach too, or at least such versions of it. For starters, the causal chains that tie us to instances of global injustice, which are often the result of complex, interconnected factors, can be tricky to draw neatly. This makes the relevant sensitizing prompts exceedingly difficult to communicate effectively, persuasively, and at scale; there is likely an inverse relationship between scale and persuasiveness when transmitting prompts of this sort. Additionally, the motivational credentials of the complicity-based approach are, at best, shaky. Attributing guilt to people is not obviously going to encourage them to act for others; it is just as likely to make them defensive, thereby inhibiting rather than facilitating collective remedial action (see Young, 2011: 75-93). This is particularly true in cases where the targets of our sensitizing prompts have a felt sense of their own innocence, and the causal chain between them and a particular injustice is circuitous or otherwise tenuous. Recent experiments lend support to such doubts (see e.g. Faulkner, 2017).

I would not suggest abandoning efforts to sensitize people either through a sense of empathy or complicity. Empathy is likely a *sine qua non* of motivating concern for distant others, even if it needs to be supplemented with a view of distant others as purposeful agents whose lives are connected with ours. Motivating people through increasing awareness of our complicity in injustice is not only necessary to help us identify ways in which we can help (and stop hindering) others, but is likely to be particularly effective at motivating greater action on the part of agents who are already concerned with the plight of distant others, and have a felt sense of responsibility for what their co-nationals do on the international stage. From the above, however, there is reason to hope that empathy and complicity don't exhaust our motivational repertoire. As it happens, I believe they don't, and that there is a very promising alternative avenue through which to pursue cosmopolitan sensitization of a different kind. It is to this we now turn.

Markets, Multinationals, and Reciprocity

In this section, I will argue that the market is a promising site within which cosmopolitan sentiment can be cultivated, that multinational corporations (MNCs) have a political responsibility⁹ to play a role as sensitizers, and that, through their sensitizing prompts, MNCs ought to cultivate within us a sense

9 I follow Young (2011) in using the term 'political responsibility' to capture those responsibilities which are based upon forward- rather than backward-looking considerations, and which involve taking communicative action intended to shape, encourage, or contribute to collective action aimed at rectifying injustice.

of ongoing reciprocity between ourselves and distant others. This involves encouraging an awareness that we in the affluent world are deeply interconnected with distant others, as we are on the above-discussed thick cosmopolitan accounts. This interconnection, however, is framed not in terms of our negative impact upon the lives of distant others, but rather in terms of their having a positive impact upon ours.

First, consider the market as a site of cosmopolitan sensitization. Recalling the ‘saturation thesis’, if we are right about the size of the motivation gap as well as about the importance of plugging that gap, we should be seeking to increase our level of concern through sensitizing prompts in any social context where doing so would be contextually and agentially appropriate. I believe that the market is not only an appropriate context within which to provide sensitizing prompts, but it is a particularly promising one. Note, first, that the market is not just one aspect of our social environment; it is among the very most pervasive and consequential aspects. Not only that, but it is probably the single most consequential context within which our own actions and decisions affect distant others, albeit often in a mediated fashion. While typically our politics, social networks, family, and media environment are all decidedly local, our economy is truly global. Wherever you are reading this, you are probably surrounded by goods worked upon by thousands upon thousands of workers across complex global supply chains, with materials sourced from every corner of the planet. In this sense, it is no coincidence that many of the most prominent arguments to the effect that we bear demanding obligations to distant others are premised in large part upon our global economic interdependence (see e.g., Beitz, 1999; Moellendorf, 2009; Pogge, 2002). So, it is hardly absurd to think that through the market, too, we can further cultivate a concern for distant others.¹⁰

But, in making the case for markets as promising sensitizing environments, it is to the following consideration that I attach most weight; markets are a particularly suitable context within which we can emphasize, and appeal to, a concern for others *on the basis of reciprocity*. By reciprocity, I simply mean our tendency to treat people well when we have been treated well, and to treat them badly when we have been treated badly – to give as good as we get, so to speak.

¹⁰ There is in fact a long tradition of seeing in the expansion of international exchange the seed of a better world, one in which nationalist fervour would be transcended by more irenic and fraternal dispositions on the part of trading states; see Hirschman (1997), Mazower (2012: 38-48). The arguments of this paper can be viewed as a call to make more salient the salutary features of international trade in the minds of those who benefit from it. This, it goes without saying, does not preclude criticism of many features of contemporary trade practice.

As a potential motivator of cosmopolitan concern, reciprocity has been largely neglected.¹¹ This is strange, because reciprocity is widely acknowledged to be an extraordinarily strong driver of our behaviour and is, as Adam Oliver has recently detailed, ‘perhaps humanity’s most fundamental and widespread social norm’ (2019: xiii). While our actions are highly influenced by social context, many people’s behaviours, both in experimental settings and in real-life scenarios, are often better explained by (and, often, predicated upon the expectation of) our reciprocal tendencies than they are either by pure altruism, or by models of rational self-interest (see e.g. Gintis et al., 2003).

In everyday life, we are liable to think of reciprocity in dyadic terms; you send me some cookies, so I bake you a cake. But reciprocity is not confined to such dyadic interactions, and a focus on such interactions might even be misleading. This is because we also reciprocate people’s contributions within collective contexts, and this sort of reciprocity is quite different. We are, for instance, reliably willing to bear costs to ourselves in order to reward co-operators and punish free riders within such contexts, even where we have no reasonable expectation of personally recouping the costs of doing so; this tendency is referred to as ‘strong reciprocity’ (Gintis et al., 2003). Strong reciprocity and its motivational robustness helps to explain how we have somehow managed to build and sustain complex shared institutional arrangements such as the modern state and the global economy, under which millions of strangers cooperate by and large peacefully and without endemic free riding (an extraordinary accomplishment, given our evolutionary history; see Seabright, 2010). Note another important difference between dyadic and collective reciprocity. When you receive favourable treatment within a dyadic interaction, you can easily engage in ‘balancing reciprocity’ (see Kolm, 2008), where your reciprocation of my good deed is meant to put an end to any sense of outstanding obligation between either of us; your debt is paid off, so to speak. In collective contexts, however, we cannot simply ‘pay off’ once and for all whatever we owe to other participants. ‘Paying off’ what we receive from an ongoing cooperative scheme must, naturally, itself be an ongoing process; reciprocity thus requires us to uphold and contribute to the cooperative scheme, so that our fellow participants benefit from it in kind.¹²

11 The closest analogue within the sentimental cosmopolitan literature to my argument here is Hobbs’ brief discussion (2021: 18-19) on trade unions as a site of potential sensitization, where he notes that sensitization through transnational union networks foregrounds distant workers’ agency, and that union relationships are typically framed in terms of equality and reciprocity. See also Gould’s (2007) work on solidarity as a basis of transnational concern.

12 The motivational genius of the social contract tradition is, I believe, that it leverages these reciprocal tendencies of ours, rather than appealing to our egoism or altruism, as a basis for just social relations; we are happy to uphold just institutional arrangements, and to be constrained for the sake of others by them, so long as we, too, benefit from the arrangements in question.

Highlighting our ongoing economic cooperation with distant others is conducive to portraying them as contributors to our own prosperity and our way and standard of life, and to whom something is therefore owed in return.¹³ This, I take it, is (from a motivational perspective) a welcome addendum to, if not a wholesale improvement upon, depictions of distant others either as moral patients to be empathised with, or as victims of our own injustices. Of course, we are not in reciprocal relations with everyone outside our border, whether through exchange or otherwise; we trade more with neighbouring states than distant ones, some states are far more economically open than others, and some states occupy a marginal position in the global economy. On the face of it, this represents a problem, insofar as it suggests that the reciprocity-based approach to plugging the motivation gap could enhance our concern for some outside our territory, but very far from all.

Luckily, our motivational impulses are not nearly so fine-grained; there is no reason to think that plugging the motivation gap would require enhancing people's sense of reciprocal obligation to each specific state (or individual, for that matter).¹⁴ Progress is attainable simply through making the general idea of participation in a shared global economy, and the existence of reciprocal obligations on that basis, salient to affluent populations. Cultivate a general sense of reciprocal obligation to distant others, and we have put in place conditions which make it increasingly feasible for politicians, activists, and other actors in the affluent world to wield the language and motivational force of reciprocity to good effect. To see this, we can imagine a politician's potential defence of their taking a more equitable stance within trade negotiations than their state has previously taken, where this involves foregoing some domestic economic gains. To defend such a policy, the politician need not explain what each beneficiary country of this new stance has done for us; they need only say, for example, 'states across the developing world have played an important role in creating the prosperity which we today enjoy; it's time for us, now, to repay this favour, by playing an important role in creating their future prosperity.'

13 It might be suggested that, insofar as we purchase the goods made by distant others, we already 'pay them back,' and therefore reciprocity will not be a sound basis for motivating further cosmopolitan helping. I believe our strong intuitive disapproval of exploitation in developing countries, as seen for example in the case of sweatshop labour, tells against this objection. Indeed, the efficacy of reciprocity as a motivator of action may well explain why anti-sweatshop movements have had significant success in mobilising populations in the affluent world (see e.g. MacDonald, 2014: Chs. 2 and 3).

14 Indeed, the nationalist project itself wouldn't have gotten very far off the ground if we were so keenly attuned to whose specific participation within the cooperative scheme we were benefitting from, and if we were only willing to bear the costs of policies which benefitted those specific participants.

If I'm correct that markets are a context wherein cosmopolitan sensitization would be appropriate, is there any agent that has a political responsibility to provide sensitizing prompts? I believe there are several good reasons to think multinational corporations (MNCs) are appropriate bearers of such sensitizing responsibilities.¹⁵ Here, I give three. First, MNCs are, by definition, constituted by workforces, and operating amongst stakeholders, in several countries. Indeed, MNCs' activities almost certainly represent the most significant and intensive forms of ongoing cooperation across borders in our world today. An MNC that is appropriately concerned with and responsive to its workers and stakeholders would have to take a non-parochial view of the world; it would have to care about what was happening in several countries at once. This, at the very least, gives MNCs an advantage in seeing past the objectionable excesses of national prioritisation, insofar as their activities are predicated upon continued cooperation across borders, and the regulatory conditions which facilitate such cooperation. Moreover, the transnational nature of MNCs gives them the ability to communicate the grievances, needs, and moral worth of distant others from some of the MNCs' locations directly into our own domestic spaces. To capture this, let's say that MNCs are constitutively well-positioned to bear the above-described political responsibility.

Relatedly, that MNCs are constituted by international workforces makes them particularly well-positioned to see and communicate the benefits of international cooperation in general, and the benefits of an open economy more specifically. In simple terms, international trade is good because it leads to a more efficient division of labour, as we and our international partners can each specialise in the production of the goods that we're well-suited to producing, and trade for the rest, thereby enhancing global productivity (see e.g. Wolf, 2004; for a more formal treatment, see Krugman et al., 2015; for a philosophical analysis, see James, 2012). Important distributive issues notwithstanding, in the aggregate trade enhances our own national wealth (which, in turn, correlates strongly with many measures of well-being), as well as that of the distant others we trade with; indeed, trade (alongside complementary domestic policies) is perhaps the only effective, reliable, and peaceful means by which badly-off states can substantially improve their material condition (see e.g. Panagariya, 2019; see also Irwin, 2005). That MNCs are at the coalface of global exchange, and can thus so plainly see its benefits, plausibly entails that they, in turn, have a responsibility

¹⁵ While the vast differences between the tens of thousands of extant MNCs should not be overlooked in a final analysis of how much responsibility each of them bears, I take it that making the general case for some MNCs' bearing cosmopolitan responsibilities is the more fundamental philosophical task, so that's the one I focus on here. For ease of expression, above I talk of 'MNCs' as shorthand for 'the decisions-makers within MNCs.'

to convey to us its benefits and the cooperatively created nature of the benefits we receive. To capture this, let's say MNCs are epistemically well-positioned to bear sensitizing responsibilities.

Finally, MNCs are not just passive beneficiaries of the international economy; they are also, along with states, its primary organisers.¹⁶ Whereas trade was historically conducted on the basis of a make-here, sell-there model, today a great deal of trade is organised within complex supply-chain networks that often span many countries before a finished good is ready to sell on the market.¹⁷ As a result, the power of MNCs, who operate as the central nodes that coordinate activity within these complex supply-chain networks, has been greatly augmented (Chen, 2018). This doesn't just affect the myriad producers within MNCs' supply-chains; countries seeking to enhance their trade performance must be increasingly cognisant of the interests of MNCs when formulating their economic policies (see e.g. MacDonald, 2014; Danielson, 2019). Thus, MNCs increasingly determine who benefits from the opportunities of an open international economy, pitting states and producers in the global economy against each other, albeit often unwittingly. As Waheed Hussain has recently argued (2018, 2020), where people must compete with one another to secure basic human goods, as many in the global economy do, this does something morally corrosive to each of the agents involved in the competition; it gives them good reasons to want others to fail to secure those basic human goods.¹⁸ Because of its material benefits, even to many of its losers, the idea of abandoning the competitive market system altogether would be a disproportionate reaction to this moral problem. The more measured response to the ills of competition would be to ensure that the costs of losing are not too high for participants (Hussain, 2018, 2020; see also James, 2012; Wolff, 2001). Of course, MNCs cannot themselves avoid pitting people from across the globe against one another, and they cannot by themselves reduce the costs to those people when they lose out. In order to rectify, or at least mitigate, the morally corrosive upshots of their activity, then, MNCs must work to make it easier for political institutions to ensure that the prosperity and material security that trade makes possible are more widely shared. Reducing the motivation gap is a part of that. To capture this, let's say

16 MNCs have also played an influential role in shaping the international economy through their influence upon states at the governmental level of trade; see, for a particularly notorious example, Sell (2003).

17 Apple's iPhone supply chain, for example, involves 785 suppliers spanning 31 countries (Clarke and Boersma, 2017: 115).

18 Note that to have *good reason* to want others to be deprived does not entail that you actually do want them to be deprived (Hussain, 2020).

that MNCs are morally well-positioned to bear the above-described political responsibility.

Sensitizing Prompts

At this point, I hope I've established that markets are a promising site through which cosmopolitan sentiment could be cultivated, that MNCs have a special responsibility to sensitize their prospective consumers in the affluent world, and that they ought to do so in a way which encourages those consumers to see themselves as being part of a cooperative system, upheld by reciprocal relations between themselves and distant others. If I have done so convincingly, I take it that this paper has been successful. Despite this, I am aware that some readers may be wondering how, precisely, MNCs could go about fulfilling this responsibility. So, in this section I will make some tentative remarks concerning the sorts of options available to MNCs, before highlighting two real-world examples which are suggestive of what MNCs could do to cultivate a sense of reciprocal involvement between consumers and distant others.

First, a general note; the arguments above suggest that MNCs of all different kinds, in a wildly diverse range of industries with significantly different consumer bases, have a responsibility to use their position to prompt our concern for distant others. The diversity of MNCs inevitably means that the way in which each MNC best fulfils its responsibilities will often be very different; some will seek to do it through advertising campaigns, others through reaching their loyal customer base through their mailing list, others through funding the awareness campaigns of others, and others still through providing reading material about partnered charities when sending out subscription services. It is for each MNC to determine the approaches available to them that would have the most salutary effects on us. Depending on whether it worked, cosmopolitan sensitization could involve something as simple as attaching a tag to certain products (e.g. 'made with care, by [insert name] in [insert country]'), accompanied by an appropriate picture.

For concrete examples, let me first mention a company that strikes a near but suggestive miss, before discussing an industry (or, more accurately, a sub-sector of an industry) that does pretty well in cultivating cosmopolitan sentiment within a reciprocity-based framework. The near miss goes to Innocent Smoothies, who a few years ago ran an advertising campaign called 'Chain of Good' (Innocent Drinks, 2016). One of the campaign's ads begins by observing that everything is connected, before introducing Mark, who buys an Innocent Smoothie. While Mark only chooses this because he is hungover and needs some

refreshment, the ad shows us how, because Innocent donate 10% of their profits to charity, Mark's purchase has started the titular 'Chain of Good', resulting in a mother in Peru being able to buy a solar panel, thereby giving her electricity, allowing her to operate an electric wool spinner, allowing her to sell woollen goods at the market, which helps her earn more money, so she can spend more time playing football with her kids. Another ad has a similar structure, but focuses on a chain of good starting, again, from Mark's purchase, which helps provide a family in Uganda with a cow which, after several intermediate steps, allows the parents to send their child to school, so that he can pursue his dream of becoming an engineer.

It's a pretty engaging ad campaign, which contains plenty of humour and a very cute alpaca wearing a scarf, but it also contains a serious moral message, insofar as it sensitizes us to how we, and our purchasing decisions, are connected to distant others in important ways. What makes this a near miss, rather than a successful instantiation of what I'm arguing for, is that the chain of good being depicted is purely one-way - *from Mark, towards* the people in Peru and Uganda. Mark is, as one of the ads puts it, the 'hero' of the story, who gets to feel good about improving the lives of distant others. What would have made the ad more effective, at least from the perspective of cosmopolitan sensitization, would be if Mark's purchase were itself depicted as possible only thanks to, say, the hard work of fruit growers and pickers in other parts of the world. Rather than portraying consumption as a catalyst for a unidirectional chain of good, it ought to be seen as a single link in a broader cycle, as people throughout the world reciprocate and pay forward the benefit that they have received from the work of others.

An industry where several companies have gotten closer to what I have been arguing for, where relations between the affluent and non-affluent world are framed in terms of reciprocity, is the speciality coffee industry. On a typical speciality coffee website, you will find not only information about the tasting notes and origin of the coffee, but very often information about the farmers who grew it, whether they are part of a co-operative, how long they have been growing coffee, and so on (see e.g. CLO Coffee, 2022; Pact Coffee, 2022; Union Hand-Roasted Coffee, 2022).¹⁹ Often, the specific growers are named, and this

¹⁹ Of course, we would be naïve if we took all this at face value and let the careful presentation of ethical partnership mask the underlying asymmetries of power within coffee supply-chains. A degree of hypocrisy and deceit is, unfortunately, the inevitable price to pay for a social environment where adherence to, and promotion of, moral norms is deemed important. But note that even hypocritical or deceitful advertising of this kind serves to reinforce the notion that certain virtues and outlooks (in this case, to do with global concern) are desirable. Moreover, the more companies seek to identify themselves with cosmopolitan causes and outlooks, the more vulnerable they make themselves to reputational damage if they don't live up to such a reputation (see Levy, 2021).

information is often accompanied by pictures of the farm or washing station, or the farmers themselves at work. Many such websites also have very visible sections regarding the sourcing ethos of the company, as well as information about their pricing model (e.g. whether they are committed to fair trade, direct trade, or some other business model), and their sustainability policies; the visibility of this information implies that these are things that a consumer should care about and value, thereby contributing to a more cosmopolitan normative environment. Finally, the language of ‘partnership’ is also very frequently used by such companies, language which suggests a degree of equality, respect, and dignity for the distant growers and producers, further reinforcing the sense that we are implicated in a reciprocal, rather than a purely instrumental, relation with those distant others (CLO Coffee 2022; Pact Coffee, 2022; Union Hand-Roasted Coffee, 2022).

Before moving on, it’s important to emphasize that any individual instance of an MNC fulfilling its sensitizing responsibilities will likely have little effect upon the fulfilment of our collective duties to distant others. This being the case, it might be easy to dismiss the examples mentioned above as perhaps the emotive equivalent to rearranging the deckchairs of the Titanic while swathes of the world sink in continued immiseration. But even if one ad campaign won’t save the world, substantive motivational change may well occur where many MNCs take up their political responsibilities, and where these efforts are matched by those of other agents within alternative spheres of potential cosmopolitan sensitization.²⁰ Even then motivational change alone won’t do anything, as such; it is ultimately up to politicians, activists, and ourselves to ensure that this more fertile motivational landscape yields positive political reform. The proposals of this paper should be evaluated on the basis of whether they would reduce the motivation gap; they should not be seen as a cure-all, or even as a cure-anything, unless our enhanced concern for distant others is subsequently mobilised for good purpose.

Objections

Before concluding, I’ll consider what I take to be the most pressing objections to the arguments above. The first has to do with the appropriate role that cor-

²⁰ A helpful parallel case to bear in mind might be the representation of women in our media landscape. The significance of any objectionable depiction of a woman, whether it commodifies, demeans, or otherwise minimises them, can only be properly appreciated when considered as part of a broader social environment wherein certain tropes are constantly reinforced, internalised, and consequently acted upon. Similarly, discrediting objectionable tropes will be the work of many hands across many contexts.

porations, and market actors more generally, should have in societies, particularly in relation to the democratic political process. Despite the structural interdependence of our political and economic systems (see James, 2012: 23), we are often liable to frame these two spheres as playing entirely different roles in a broader division of societal labour - the economic sphere being the realm of private gain and legitimate self-interest, the political sphere being the realm of shared pursuit of the common good. According to this view, corporations' role is to pursue profit, and it is up to actors in the political sphere to set conditions up so that corporations' profit-pursuing behaviour nonetheless conduces to societal welfare (for a canonical statement, see Friedman, 1970; see also Jensen, 2002). Implicit in this picture is the idea that market actors, and the market more generally, ought to be subservient to (and thus ought not to impede) the democratic decisions of the citizenry (see Christiano, 2010). One way of putting this is to say that corporations, including MNCs, should see themselves as 'functionaries' (see Hussain and Moriarty, 2018), who serve the polity, without having a legitimate role in shaping the polity. From this vantage point, my proposal has the directionality of legitimate influence backwards, insofar as I suggest that MNCs should be using their influence in order to motivate the demos to live up to certain standards.

There are several possible responses to this. First, while I do not foreclose the possibility that MNCs have more demanding political responsibilities than the ones I argue for here, the modesty of the above proposals should be emphasized. For starters, many corporations already advertise their commitment to sustainability, women's empowerment, diversity, and countless other things often entirely unrelated to the content of the corporation's products or service. Most of us don't, I believe, find this morally objectionable. Moreover, engaging in the sort of sensitization I argue for above does not involve interference in the decision-making of political institutions, or even in the decision-making of consumers.

This, however, is quite a conciliatory response, and I think I'd be ceding too much ground if I left the matter at that. A more robust defence of MNCs' sensitizing responsibilities rests on two considerations. On the one hand, there is the unavoidably political nature of the market. Given the above-noted structural interdependence between our politics and our economy, the billions of quotidian decisions which people make within the market impact, or at least have the potential to impact, nearly everything which is of great consequence to the realization of justice. We are, through our consumption and investment decisions, contributing to the world of the future. It is for this reason that economists are

often wont to frame the market as a ‘voting machine,’ where our purchases are akin to votes about what goods should continue to be produced, who should gain more wealth, what resources ought to be further exhausted, and so on (see Malleon, 2014: 93-96; see also Friedman, 2020).²¹ And, as I’ve noted above, it is through the market that we are most intimately linked with distant others in non-affluent parts of the world. In that sense, occluding the political nature of our market activity from view in effect serves to reinforce the very insularity which we have a duty to transcend. Given this, we should retire the idea that ordinary market decisions (whether of consumers or of corporations) should be sheltered from any scrutiny or standards of responsibility (for a similar point, see Berkey, 2021). Markets are not a morality-free zone, and MNCs should no longer uphold the comforting but illusory idea that they are.

On the other hand, any intellectual heft that the ‘division-of-labour’ idea has is premised upon the political system being both functional and at least reasonably just. But the whole argument of this paper is premised upon the existence of a major justice gap. As we’ve seen, there are structural reasons why political decision-making in affluent countries unjustly neglects the urgent needs of distant others. To suggest that MNCs have no political responsibilities because states already have a set of democratic procedures in place would be to fetishize that set of procedures, to the detriment of those goals which such procedures ought to be bringing about. It would also represent an objectionable failure to appreciate just how far many affluent countries are from living up to even the modest international commitments they have made. Where primary agents of justice consistently fall short of meeting their duties, as states do in the context of their global duties, it reasonably falls to secondary agents of justice, such as corporations, to pick up some of the slack (see O’Neill, 2001).

The second objection I’ll consider concerns an injustice we might commit by framing our relationship with distant others in terms of ongoing reciprocal relations within a cooperative scheme. Advocates of the complicity-based approach to cosmopolitan sentiment, in particular, might suggest that by focusing on the positive contribution that distant others make to us, and encouraging concern on that basis, we are downplaying our complicity in the injustices many of them face. In this sense, corporations pursuing cosmopolitan sensitization may not just be guilty of whitewashing their own brand, but whitewashing our own col-

²¹ The plausibility of this analogy does not entail that markets are democratic; if every dollar is analogous to one vote, markets (when judged in isolation from counterbalancing institutions) represent an audaciously plutocratic form of decision-making in any world that resembles our own.

lective conscience. And, while this criticism is most obviously linked to the complicity-based approach, even advocates of a compassion-based approach may think we do something wrong when we view distant others through the lens of their productive contributions, rather than through the moral gravity of their suffering.

I believe that there is something to this objection. There is, undoubtedly, a sense in which we would wrong deprived distant others by ignoring their plight, on the one hand, and by denying any involvement in their plight on the other; both would evince a callous disregard for the worth of distant others' lives. Equally, to the extent that neither the suffering of distant others nor our contribution to that suffering seems to adequately motivate us to act for their sakes, this in itself is to be deeply regretted.

But I have not argued that our relationship with distant others should be portrayed only in terms of reciprocity. I have argued that we should be framing our relationship in such terms where doing so is appropriate, and the market is a particularly appropriate place for such framing. I have nonetheless noted that the empathy-based and the complicity-based approaches both get something right, and ought to play a role in the normative environments of people in the affluent world. But failing to include reciprocity-based sensitization amongst our prompts would itself be objectionable, for what it would leave out about distant others - it would again frame them as moral patients to whom things happen, but who are not capable agents and contributors to our own societies, like we are to theirs.

Additionally, on a more practical note, a great deal rides on ensuring that we in the affluent world fulfil our outstanding duties to distant others, particularly to those deprived of the basic minimums to which they're entitled. Insofar as this is true, I think it would put an excessive valuation on our own moral purity if we were to reject the admissibility of appealing to one good, motivationally compelling reason for helping distant others, on the basis that there were other, more virtuous motivations to which we could instead appeal.²² The urgency of the interests at stake gives us reason to care more about whether we successfully fulfil our duties to distant others than about the specific motives which underpin our success (for a similar point, see Lichtenberg, 2014: 234). If the reciprocity-based approach would be more compelling, motivationally speaking,

²² Though I don't believe acting for distant others on the basis of our reciprocal involvement is necessarily less virtuous than acting on the basis of either our compassion or our complicity.

than the alternative approaches, then this very fact would be the best argument in its favour.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that markets are an overlooked and promising avenue through which to enhance cosmopolitan sentiment, that multinational corporations (MNCs) in particular have a responsibility to promote cosmopolitan sentiment through their communication with consumers in the affluent world, and that they should do so in a way which highlights our interconnection and reciprocal involvement with the non-affluent world. While the fulfilment of such political responsibilities will not in itself make affluent states more just, it may make the citizens of such states more amenable to the further pursuit of global justice.²³

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