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### Journal Item

How to cite:

Gabay, Clive (2008). Anarcho-cosmopolitanism: the universalisation of the equal exchange. *Global Society*, 22(2) pp. 197–216.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

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Version: [\[not recorded\]](#)

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1080/13600820801887181>

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content content=a791513806 db=all jumptype=rss>

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# Anarcho-Cosmopolitanism: The Universalisation of the Equal Exchange

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*This paper concerns itself with the values which make up what has been labelled 'ethical cosmopolitanism' – that which entails a universal scope of ethical concern. Conceptions of this ethic have underpinned the development of a 'global civil society' and associated humanitarian and activist campaigns. However, such cosmopolitan campaigns have illustrated the ways in which the dismissals of difference and importance of embeddedness have caused suffering to the supposed beneficiaries of such campaigns. This is because of the unrecognised power relations that exist between moral agents, which result in 'unequal exchanges', that is, the exchange of physical, material and mental resources from positions of unequal negotiating positions, driven by power differentials and hierarchy. A theory of the 'equal exchange' is developed upon which to base alternative cosmopolitan practices. Such a theory is grounded in Anarchist thought, which it is argued provides the most stringent philosophical underpinning for such a cosmopolitan theory.*

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\* I am grateful to Helen Yanacopulos, Giles Mohan and the two anonymous referees for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper. Special thanks also to Daniella Gabay for her continued support and advice through the development of these ideas.

Cosmopolitan practice has undergone a revival since the 1970's, when the humanitarian crisis in Biafra challenged traditional notions of neutrality around the sovereignty of states to deal with their own internal affairs. Whereas previously, states had to justify their interference in the affairs of other states<sup>1</sup>, today, NGOs, activist groups and individuals seem empowered to bypass their own governments altogether in the affairs of other states. Aided by advances in communications and cheaper travel, the logic goes that activists and campaign donors are brought ever closer to the situations they seek to assuage. In this way they are able to engage more directly with issues that, during the Cold War, were almost entirely the preserve of states.

This globalising world that we live in has given birth to a new cosmopolitan ethic, whose proponents march with placards exclaiming their innate commonality with distant others. This commonality reduces distance and assumes that the benevolence of activists and donors will be met with matching levels of gratitude by the recipients of our efforts. Terms such as *transnational* or *global* civil society abound, reaffirming the sameness of all who appear to be under its banner, and underpinned by a cosmopolitan ethic which frames these values and allows activists and donors to see themselves in the suffering of distant others. This is what Toni Erskine labelled *ethical cosmopolitanism* – that which entails a universal scope of ethical concern<sup>2</sup>.

However, a cosmopolitan ethic that dismisses difference is troublesome, and requires analysing. For whilst the development of a universal scope of ethical concern is a worthwhile exercise, recent examples of major cosmopolitan campaigns appear to bring into question the value of cosmopolitan ethics as presently conceived by major currents within the self-dubbed global civil society. The 2005 Make Poverty History

campaign (known as the One campaign in the United States) sees this dynamic at work. At a basic level this campaign encouraged the assumption that middle class activists could march around Edinburgh, send some carefully crafted and mass distributed emails to politicians, and that transformative social change would result. By dismantling difference, the cosmopolitan ethic of global civil society actually encourages those with the most power to effect change – the relatively wealthy – to retreat into what they are most comfortable doing; throwing some money at the problem, going on a march and then retreating back into the very practices that sustain so many of the socio-economic injustices prevalent all over the world today.

The results of the ‘Make Poverty History’ campaign aside (and the 2007 G8 summit in Germany certainly brought them into sharp relief), this kind of campaigning is based on an assumption that people act ethically in the face of distant suffering, rather than just in their own self interest. When the power differentials and hierarchies that exist in the current global socio-economic order are as pronounced as they are, the damage that results from campaigns predicated on such notions of cosmopolitan sameness and ethical action can be quite damaging. The challenge therefore is not to retreat into some kind of pre-historic tribal relativism but to develop a cosmopolitan ethic that instead retains its universal scope of ethical concern, but simultaneously elevates difference and otherness (including power differentials) to a position where it can be used to promote such a universal ethic. The search for a political philosophy that seeks to diffuse power and reduce hierarchy wherever possible is not a hard one, but requires serious consideration of a tradition mostly overlooked in the academic literature on globalisation and cosmopolitanism – Anarchism. More than any other political philosophy, it is strains of thought within Anarchism that can provide the

bedrock on which to base a cosmopolitan ethic that seeks to use the local and what is different to unite rather than divide. It is therefore to Anarchism that this paper will turn in an attempt to develop a cosmopolitan ethic that seeks to overcome selfish self-interest.

The paper will set the background for such a discussion by highlighting tensions within current cosmopolitan thought and practice, using the example of the humanitarian aid response to the 2004 Asian Tsunami, and then moving on to some of the main debates within cosmopolitan theory, particularly those that concern themselves with the way people should relate to distant and needy others. These debates have important contributions to make to the development of a relevant cosmopolitan ethic. However, it will be shown that in each case such theorists fail to develop a universal scope of ethical concern, instead falling victim to either overly particularistic or overly universalistic interpretations of cosmopolitan ethics. This has important connotations, for it will be argued that a universal cosmopolitan ethic requires a transcendental core that simultaneously incorporates the particular. The aim of this paper therefore is to uncover approaches to cosmopolitan ethics that can underpin it in this way. With this in mind the paper will consider the work of Rami Nashashibi on 'Ghetto Cosmopolitanism'<sup>3</sup>. Informed by the highly partial and communitarian experiences of ghetto inhabitants, it will be argued that ghetto cosmopolitanism nonetheless represents a potentially universal cosmopolitan ethic, that of the equal exchange. The equal exchange involves agents exchanging facets of their subjective possessions (physical or emotional) from an equal negotiating position. In order to develop an underpinning ethical framework for this concept debates over the role of relativism and universalism in everyday life will be revisited.

Having argued that none of the ethical cosmopolitan theories considered provide a satisfactory cosmopolitan framework in which to place the equal exchange, the paper will instead turn to values drawn from Anarchist theory to develop an *anarcho-cosmopolitanism*. It will show how this can provide a suitable context in which the concept of the equal exchange can be universalised, providing suggestive examples for how such a concept could be operationalised.

### *Gift-Giving as an Unequal Exchange*

Benedikt Korf's account of the charitable giving that took place after the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 is revealing in its symbolic representation of the ethics that drives contemporary activism and the behaviour of those in a position to assist distant and needy others.<sup>4</sup> This section of the paper will visit some of Korf's findings in order to highlight the troubled and contested nature of the cosmopolitan ethics that underpin many international humanitarian and activist campaigns. Later, such conceptions of cosmopolitanism will be posited against the more radical definitions which will be developed here.

Whilst some labelled the public response to the Tsunami as a "paradigmatic case of generosity" evaluation reports that surfaced over the following year were to reveal that "... post-tsunami aid has achieved ambivalent results, and that recipients of aid felt excluded from the reconstruction process, reduced to passive observers".<sup>5</sup> One report found that it was television coverage rather than extensive consultation that formed the basis for many funding decisions, whilst even those receiving aid were often left out of the decision-making process.

Whilst this reveals problems with donor practices, Korf then develops a critique of the action of individual giving. Korf argues that the act of giving can be humiliating for the recipient. Specifically in relation to those who were at the end of the Tsunami gift chain, “It was humiliating, because the marketing of gift delivery by media and aid agencies reinforced those affected by the Tsunami as ‘pure’ victims, as ‘bare life’ – passive recipients devoid of their status as fellow citizens on this planet” However, at the same time as rendering individuals as passive, de-humanised recipients of unconditional aid, the act of giving releases an emotional expectation for reciprocity within the gift-giver.<sup>6</sup>

This expectation of something in return, even on the emotional level (that which allows the gift-giver to feel good about themselves) becomes increasingly apparent throughout any cosmopolitan ethic that relies on individuals to give of themselves unthinkingly. We shall return to this at a later stage, but for now it is important to note how being the dominant partner in an exchange where one recipient is posited as powerless and unable to give back, actually reinforces dominant systems and practices. Taken to the international stage, such practices can be seen in donor relations with governments, and the way in which such processes can reinforce power relationships dating back to the colonial era. Indeed, Peter Van de Veer argues that cosmopolitanism has its roots in the victory of reason over parochialism in the Western enlightenment, and that as such cosmopolitanism can be viewed as Western engagement with the rest of the world, that engagement historically being a colonial one.<sup>7</sup> Colonial forces have given ‘progress’, ‘culture’ and the like to the ‘uncivilised’ world, a world unable to give anything back in return, except for an acceptance of the dominant socio-economic order (and the resource exploitation that has entailed). This

analysis also translates to individual giving, where such giving becomes an effective practice of symbolic domination, because "... in extending a gift, a donor transforms his or her status in the relationship from the dominant to the generous. In accepting such a gift (i.e. one that cannot be reciprocated) a recipient acquiesces in the social order that produced it: in other words he or she becomes grateful" <sup>8</sup>

So in fact, rather than the gift being pure and devoid of implications for the recipients (and for the purposes of this paper, it is useful to see the term 'gift' as being one that encapsulates not only financial, but also material and mental resources), a process of 'gratitude-staging' ensues, entailing a reciprocity that reproduces symbolically the economic, political and moral domination of the West.<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Tsunami, this 'gratitude-staging' took place as the public in the West ... "insisted in being shown how their generosity [materialised] in new schools, happy children, new boats with fishermen going out in them again" Private charities originating from Western countries ... "had to compete for public attention through media coverage and they had to defend their 'brand', because they all needed to produce these images of unconditional gratefulness and 'success'" <sup>10</sup> This led charities and agencies to base their actions more on the demands of their domestic publics than the needs of local communities. The unequally distributed aid this engendered fuelled social jealousy and tension between those displaced by the Tsunami and those displaced by civil war.<sup>11</sup>

The example of post-Tsunami giving is emblematic of a cosmopolitan practice that ignores the particularistic nature of human behaviour, because as observed, such practice is in fact based at least as much upon the psychological needs of

comparatively resource-rich individuals as it is on the material needs of distant sufferers. In effect, such practices reinforce the existing socio-economic hierarchies and differentials in power which drive many of the problems such campaigns seek to address.

An approach that pushes aside the particular to detrimental affects can also be found in the cosmopolitan ethics advocated by Peter Singer, who argues for a practice which prioritises the universal over the subjective, by advocating that any income we have which does not need to be spent on necessities be donated to charities working with those in the world in most need. This implicitly rejects the prioritisation of the particular as a subject of concern for the development of a universal cosmopolitan ethic. At most, it recognises the particular as something that must be overcome and discarded, rather than something that could be channelled for the benefit of humanity.

The impartiality that Singer seeks out in human relations attempts rightfully to overcome the negative aspects of subjectivity which have underscored the poor record of identity-based political programmes in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, but is guilty of throwing the ‘baby out with the bathwater’, for as Bernstein argues “appeals to ‘universal truths’ can have cruel consequences”<sup>12</sup>

For Singer, **behaviour inspired by the subjective and partial experiences of the individual agent is something to be fought against**. He takes his critics to task for failing to notice that if individuals can show compassion for their compatriots (who in many countries consist of many races, faiths, etc), then it is no great leap for them to show compassion to anyone, regardless of nationality or similarity. If, Singer argues,

we theorise that individuals are likely to act kindly towards their diverse compatriots, then "... impartialism is not beyond our physical powers. It is not even ... beyond our moral powers. Each of us, individually, is capable of acting impartially, even if most of us, most of the time choose not to do so"<sup>13</sup> However, Singer makes a crucial error. He rightly identifies that his critics are mistaken but for the wrong reason. Rather than them failing to recognise the potential for the extension of kindness from the near stranger to the distant stranger, they actually overplay the degree to which individuals are kind even to the near stranger. Public debates on everything from crime, education, health and multi-culturalism betray the reality that societies struggle to come to terms with many of their supposedly fellow compatriots. To try and argue for a cosmopolitan ethic that ignores the way the partial impacts on our behaviour, at best treating it as something that must be overcome, somewhat misses the point. Given our behaviour is so highly constrained by our subjective existence, and the way we experience our lives as individuals, such processes must be treated more critically and centrally in any attempts to develop a cosmopolitan ethic that can incorporate a universal scope of ethical concern.

The dangers ignoring the partial have been illustrated by the example of post-Tsunami giving, which reveals the damage that can be caused when a cosmopolitan ethic devoid of partiality is allowed to develop and influence practices of giving and aid. The end result is an exchange between giver and recipient which humiliates the recipient and involves little if any negotiation over the content and use of the 'gift'. As such we could call it an un-equal exchange. Singer's assumption that individual agents are just able to choose the manner of their giving without any noticeable

implications for the recipients of such giving ignores the negative impact of unequal exchanges fed by unacknowledged individual and societal embeddedness.

Such forms of giving are patronising and remove humanity and civility from the non-dominant partner. At the very best such modes of exchange could be called humanitarian cosmopolitanism, although as we have seen this can quickly crumble into exploitative or colonial cosmopolitanism.

Both Korf and Singer however agree on one point, that rather than 'giving' we should see ourselves as obliged to part with our wealth for the good of distant others; that those less fortunate than ourselves are entitled to a better life. We therefore move from giving as a power-enforcing gift to reciprocity as right.<sup>14</sup> However, whilst in terms of aid to the poor and vulnerable this reciprocity as a right may have resonance, in terms of creating a cosmopolitan ethic whose end is to develop a world citizenry, this theory also falls short. According to Andrew Kuper, Singer's solution of simply donating all of our excess income to NGO's merely reinforces or strengthens existing power relations and social hierarchies. Even more critically, Kuper argues that Singer reaches his conclusions based on a form of narcissism devoid of political philosophy, for "... where we do not share our everyday lives with people, we interact with them through a complex and differentiated web of political and economic relations".

According to Kuper, this web of relations requires a political philosophy to help us negotiate our responses to competing claims on our time, resources and ethical concern.<sup>15</sup> However, by simply reversing the exchange relationship, which could be argued to be open to any or no philosophical justification, those obliged to give now become the powerless partners in the exchange. The same lack of negotiation and

consultation identified in post-Tsunami aid allocation is also apparent here. Indeed, it is not so far fetched to imagine that such a conception of cosmopolitanism would end up being similarly humiliating for those obliged to give, as for those who are now obliged to reciprocate. Additionally, such a theory still rests on the presentation of the recipient as the unfortunate and uncivilised victim, thus feeding what Korf himself has identified as the perpetuation of symbolic domination.<sup>16</sup>

The search for a philosophical grounding to a cosmopolitan ethic that avoids the pitfalls of the unequal exchange is what this paper will now set out to do. As previously mentioned, it is the Anarchist tradition that appears to resonate most closely with many of the themes discussed, but before assessing its strengths in this regard, it is important to outline what such an ethic would be for, rather than simply what it would be against.

### *Ghetto Cosmopolitanism and the equal exchange*

The concept of the equal exchange to be developed here will be based on the embeddedness which it will be shown is so central to the development of a universal scope of ethical concern. The centrality of embeddedness to a universal cosmopolitan ethic has already been partially revealed, insofar as it is the lack of such embeddedness from other conceptions of cosmopolitanism which has left them inadequate and dangerous. A more positive approach to this issue will be tackled in the next section; however in this section we shall explore the origins and the structure of equal exchange.

Rami Nashashibi's research into urban Chicago communities has conceptualised an interesting phenomenon which he calls *Ghetto Cosmopolitanism*. Nashashibi has been studying the interaction between Muslim and Black identities in the ghettos of Chicago, as expressed through Palestinian communities originating in Ramallah and Black communities in those areas. In particular he has looked at the role that Hip-Hop has played in the *cosmopolitanisation* of Muslim and Black identities in the ghetto. The rise of Hip Hop has provided Palestinians in Chicago with a narrative that parallels their own experiences, and, linked as they are to a global Diaspora, this narrative has gained global significance for Muslim communities all over the world. Indeed, Nashashibi cites studies showing that urban Muslim communities globally have appropriated Hip-Hop as a means of expressing their experiences in the face of rising Islamophobia, fear and suspicion directed against them.<sup>17</sup> This reflects the rise of Hip Hop amongst urban Black communities in the late 1970's and 1980's.

Whilst Muslim Hip-Hop artists make reference to Black American symbolism in their lyrics, the music of ... "the Bronx-based Rap legends, the Brand Nubians, spills from the car speakers of Chicago-raised Palestinian Muslim youth cruising Ramallah's center."<sup>18</sup> This illustrates how Hip Hop has taken on cosmopolitan features.

However, this does not complete the Ghetto Cosmopolitan picture. To do this, Nashashibi illustrates the simultaneous inculcation of Palestinian Islamic culture into the identities of Black gangs in the Chicago ghetto. Nashashibi argues that Islam has become a major narrative in the development of Hip Hop, providing urban reference points for many Hip Hop artists. These references range from Halal restaurants to ... "rappers that look to places like Brooklyn and Harlem as spatial representations of the Holy Muslim cities of Mecca and Medina."<sup>19</sup> Beneath the level of the formal Hip Hop

scene, Nashashibi also presents evidence of well-established Black gangs in the Chicago ghetto interacting and debating Islamic issues with Palestinian members of the same urban landscape.<sup>20</sup>

Thus it is that we are presented with Ghetto Cosmopolitanism. It is apparent that Ghetto Cosmopolitanism represents a potential opening that may provide us with an ethical position in which to frame a more equal cosmopolitanism to that advocated by Peter Singer. In Nashashibi's example, two groups of people have exchanged aspects of their identities from equal negotiating positions for mutual benefit. They have been able to negotiate from equal standpoints of power because of their parallel experiences in place, space and time. They have thus been able to relate to each other in ways often lacking from contemporary theories and practices of cosmopolitanism.

The argument here is that it is this equal exchange that provides the basis for an ethical cosmopolitanism that at once satisfies need and empowers all participants in the exchange. However, given the highly embedded and essentialist positions of Nashashibi's ghetto communities, it would be presumptuous at this stage to present the equal exchange as the **solution** to the problems identified in Singer's cosmopolitan theories, and illustrated by the case of post-Tsunami giving. In order to develop this argument further it is important to consider firstly the role of embeddedness in the development of a universal ethic, and secondly the ways in which that ethic could be taken out of Nashashibi's ghettos. The paper will therefore now revisit arguments over the place of relative experience and partiality within human existence and cosmopolitanism, in order to try to universalise the concept of the equal exchange, complete with its notions of the partial. Such concepts, especially those that are

communitarian, are often posited in opposition to cosmopolitan ideals. However, to discover an underpinning cosmopolitan framework in which to place this equal exchange (in order to develop a cosmopolitan ethic of universal relevance) an attempt will be made to reconcile some of these positions.

*Final Vocabularies, the Unreality of Impartiality and the Relativist Menace*

In their introduction to *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, Stephen Vertovec and Robin Cohen argue that cosmopolitan ethics face a range of enemies, including ...“a paradoxical combination of post-modern relativism (which celebrates identity) and fundamentalism (which celebrates exclusivity [which] are ... reactions to the ultra state practices of transnational communities, movements and networks”<sup>21</sup> This reveals the tension within cosmopolitanism between the embracing of the universal and the turning outward to the relative and embedded ‘other’. Identity and exclusionary practices are parts of the actually existing every day experience for most people, including those engaged in the practices of the transnational communities, networks and movements that Vertovec and Cohen rightfully identify as contributing factors to an increase in identity-based politics. Indeed, it is entirely possible to be at once part of a transnational and highly exclusionist community, for example a transnational diaspora, thus embodying this cosmopolitan tension. Our lived experiences are relative to a host of external stimuli, and thus we are highly subjective agents. Whilst the goal of overcoming the exclusionary tendencies of the relative and subjective to unite humanity is a goal most share, doing this does not necessarily require a rejection of the relative and subjective from any such theory of unity, and thus Vertovec and Cohen’s tension could be considered to be false. Indeed, it is a

valuable exercise to consider how relativity and subjectivity can in fact contribute to a non-exclusionist cosmopolitan ethic, and what values such an ethic would require in order to uphold the practice of the equal exchange.

Richard Rorty explains that all human beings ... “carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs and their lives.” These words help us to describe our deepest values and commitments. Rorty calls them a “final vocabulary”, final in the sense that if doubt is cast on them the agent has no non-circular argument with which to develop new understandings – “These words are as far as [s]he can go with language; beyond them there is helpless passivity or resort to force”<sup>22</sup>

Rorty uses this concept to criticise liberal theorists who believe that their basic liberal convictions can be justified rationally, and that they can develop non question-begging answers to questions such as ‘why not be cruel’, or more relevant to this paper, ‘why care for the distant stranger’? If we accept that no universal justifications for these questions can be provided, then the case for a cosmopolitan ethic of any kind rapidly disintegrates.

However, the assuredness with which Rorty asserts his claims to final vocabularies **can be questioned** for two reasons. Firstly, it could be argued that Rorty falls into his own trap, for it is probable that he cannot develop any non-circular justifications for his own arguments in this regard (although perhaps that is the point), thus making his theories as questionable as those he seeks to criticise. Secondly, as Richard Bernstein

argues, one could argue that people can, and indeed do simply change their minds, once presented with a compelling reason to do so.<sup>23</sup>

Whilst these two criticisms certainly question the finality of Rorty's arguments, the lessons to be drawn from them retain relevance for those seeking to develop a cosmopolitan ethic. If we accept that people are constrained by their 'final vocabularies', which in themselves are reflections of the behavioural and psychological partiality on which such vocabularies are based, then we must also accept that the Singerian call to transcend such partiality, or finality, is doomed to fall on the swords of relativity and subjectivity. This was amply illustrated in the case of post-Tsunami aid giving.

The problem for a cosmopolitan ethic then is how to enact an ethically equal exchange. As far as Korf and Singer are concerned they fail to do this. One could argue that both fail to break out of their 'final vocabularies', constrained as they are by subjective Western liberal justifications for rights and justice. A cosmopolitan ethic that moves beyond such constraints needs to develop a method of equal exchange that takes partiality into account in order for it to be sustainable and effective. It will only do this by finding justifications that at once can be partial and universal. Indeed, an exchange theory that does not take partiality into account may well be inherently unequal since it can be argued that partiality contributes (not alone) to helping us appreciate the fundamental equality inherent in all people. However, as we have seen from Richard Rorty, such partiality is problematic if we cannot move beyond it. We will now turn to Richard Bernstein's theory of 'horizontal justifications' to see if it is possible to develop a cosmopolitan ethic that takes these

factors into account, which moves beyond what Bernstein has called the ...“bogy of the relativist menace”.<sup>24</sup>

As has already been argued, a sense of the partial must be incorporated into cosmopolitan thinking in order for it to engender an actually cosmopolitan and equal exchange between different individual or communal agents. The danger of course (and one often promoted by politicians of varying hues) is that we descend into a relativist morality where nothing matters – Bernstein’s ‘relativist menace’. Bernstein presents the problem thus: “Underlying and pervading much of this talk is ... a picture ... where the differences in cultures, traditions, languages, etc. are taken to be ‘radically’ incommensurable so that meaningful communication among them is impossible”.<sup>25</sup> This is a place where our ‘final vocabularies’ permit us only to communicate meaningfully with those who have had similar relative experiences as us. Such a premise is the death knell for cosmopolitanism.

However, Bernstein is concerned with how the moral agent justifies **their** actions. For instance, a pure relativist would justify **their** inaction in the face of a distant other’s distress by the picture that Bernstein paints above. For Bernstein though, the incommensurability blamed on relativism and partiality is indicative of a failure to attempt to understand those who are different – “After all, if what we take to be ‘other’ is totally incommensurable with our own conceptual schemes and forms of life, then it is pointless to even pretend to understand and critically evaluate what is so different”<sup>26</sup>

The image of lots of moral agents running around unable to communicate with each other due to their limiting final vocabularies is therefore a false one. It is at this point though that one could extend Bernstein's argument, for while he accuses those who recognise their partiality and enact it to the extreme of ethical laziness, it could equally be argued that those who develop ethical standpoints *without* a recognition of the partial are also ethically lazy. For as we have seen from the Tsunami example, acting without this recognition gives the partial and relative even more power to destroy our attempts to communicate with and act for distant others.

Bernstein proposes a way of justifying our ethical actions in a manner that incorporates our relative experiences and simultaneously allows us to relate to distant others. He argues that thinking of final vocabularies implies a vertical way of justifying our actions, in as much as our beliefs would need to be grounded on a solid bedrock. One doubt and the whole edifice would come crumbling down. Instead Bernstein proposes a conception of justification that is 'horizontal', whereby our ethical justifications consist of an ever-shifting collection of beliefs that slip in and out along a horizontal spectrum according to our own individual experiences. In this way the overall framework survives, or evolves, without completely crumbling.<sup>27</sup> To illustrate this he cites Charles Peirce's cable metaphor, which suggests that our ethical justifications should not be like a chain, which is no stronger than its weakest link, but rather like a cable, ...“ whose fibres may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected”<sup>28</sup> Such a moral outlook would seem to be relevant to underpinning a cosmopolitan ethic that can promote the equal exchange of Nashishibi's Ghetto Cosmopolitanism, for if we accept that our identities are ever shifting, then we can understand that to exchange a part of them fairly and

equally would not result in the whole edifice of our 'selves' crumbling down. It is this fear that one could argue feeds the kind of **subconsciously** self-serving attitudes of individual donors cited in Korf's Tsunami example, and would inhibit the potential for the practice of the equal exchange.

### *The Rooted/Embedded Cosmopolitans*

Bernstein's horizontal justifications have clear resonance with theories of cosmopolitanism that do take some elements of the partial into account, and therefore provide a possible framework for the equal exchange. Theories of rooted or embedded cosmopolitanism do acknowledge the relative experiences of individual moral agents. They do acknowledge the horizontal nature of our identities and the ways in which aspects of them shift in and out of contention depending on a number of variables. Indeed, if one accepted the relevance of such theories there would be no need to search further for a philosophical bedrock on which to frame the equal exchange. However, it is important to assess the extent to which these theories can actually engender the equal exchanges necessary to the cosmopolitan ethic we are trying to develop.

Janna Thompson, arguing against the static conception of identity applied by communitarians, claims that peoples' identities may be formed against their community of birth, or at least take into account a range of other identity forming variables – "An adequate conception of identity must...allow that a person can become critical of her community. This means we are not stuck with the conservatism inherent in a position which gives special moral and political status to communities of

birth”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Toni Erskine argues that embedded cosmopolitanism allows the moral agent to be simultaneously embedded in a number of communities to which they belong. This allows them to develop ...“ a critical edge that begins to answer the charge of conservatism levied against proponents of embedded moral perspectives.”<sup>30</sup>

From these arguments it is possible to identify the horizontal (to borrow from Bernstein) nature of identity. Indeed, Thomson argues that far from rejecting the particularities of community, lessons need to be drawn from the communitarians, in the way that the community lends legitimacy to institutions and actions - "World citizenship requires the creation of a new political identity, and cosmopolitanism must concern itself with how this identity might be constructed" <sup>31</sup>

So far, so cosmopolitan. But how does this translate regarding the equal exchange we are searching for? Can the world citizenship that Thomson argues for (which it is argued here must inculcate the types of negotiation and respect that an equal exchange requires) be constituted by a set of horizontally formed identities devoid of an overarching value system, or at least a common denominator?

Donatella Della Porta claims that it is partiality alone that can unite a cosmopolitan community. In her work on the global justice movement and the Social Forum events, Della Porta argues that activists have developed multiple and tolerant identities, in that they can simultaneously root themselves in their own experiences yet respect the subjectivity of others. Rather than conceiving of itself as a single movement, activists have defined themselves as ...“ a movement of movements [which] emphasises the positive aspects of heterogeneous, multiply faceted identities that reflect social

complexity while, as activists often stress, respecting their subjectivity ... They develop especially around common campaigns on objects perceived as concrete and nurtured by an evangelical search for dialogue.”<sup>32</sup>

Della Porta argues that this form of rooted cosmopolitanism has helped to create a transnational community of cosmopolitans, participating in equal exchanges of knowledge, resources and the like. However, to take Della Porta’s own focus on the European Social Forum as an example, Paul Kingsnorth’s reporting of the ESF in London highlights a very different dynamic at work from Della Porta’s multiple and tolerant identities. Kingsnorth complains of the attempts to dominate both the planning and operational stages of the ESF by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and indeed local government – ...“ with [Mayor of London] Ken Livingstone’s Greater London Authority (GLA), which put an estimated £400,000 towards the event, it was a potent and frustrating [time] for many... the Socialist Workers Party in particular had worked from the very start to make the London forum ‘their event’, run to ‘their agenda’”.<sup>33</sup>

As illustrated, Della Porta’s definition of a multiple identity is one which can tolerate heterogeneous bases. Clearly however, the SWP do not reciprocate this sense of toleration nor do they necessarily fit into this categorisation. Neither, it must be said, do religious fundamentalists or free marketeers, both of whom are driven by the same global forces that drive the activism identified by Della Porta. It is also unlikely that they share a sense of cosmopolitanism with the secular and anti neo-liberal activists common at the social fora.

Erskine identifies this problem of free-floating horizontally constituted individuals and communities as the main gap still apparent in rooted or embedded cosmopolitan theory. “In the absence of overlapping associations that would foster acknowledgement of the moral standing of the other, the scope of ethical concern is truncated”. For in a situation where multiple identities are reduced or made incompatible, the risk would be that the resulting plethora of divisions would relegate any attempts to forge a common understanding.<sup>34</sup>

It seems then that embedded and rooted theories of cosmopolitanism do not provide an adequate ethical framework into which the cosmopolitan equal exchange can be placed. In fact, in order to arrive at such a framework, which can incorporate both an independent universalism whilst still maintaining a particularistic standpoint, we will have to look at an as yet unexplored (by cosmopolitan theorists) value system. For as far as Anarchist theory provides us with a ‘system’, it is within these theories that we can find the cosmopolitan values that will unite the positive aspects of universalism and partiality. This theory will neither humiliate by the reduction of difference, nor erect insurmountable obstacles through the glorification of that same concept. The following section will therefore provide the bedrock in which an ethic of the universalised equal exchange can be grounded, by highlighting the aspects of Anarchist thought most relevant to the actual practice of such an ethic. The bedrock this provides will be called *anarcho-cosmopolitanism*.

### *Anarchism and Cosmopolitanism*

Traditionally, Anarchist theory has been concerned with the reduction of undue *power over* the individual, and the development of the individual's *power to*. This has involved the reduction of hierarchy wherever possible. The empowerment of the individual has meant the negation of the state, and all forms of statist government, driven by an inversion of Hobbes' nasty, brutish and short perspective on the state of nature. Dissenting schools have developed around the relative merits of different methods to achieve these ends. However, throughout, the analysis of power remains fairly constant, differing mainly in how far a particular perspective may suspect different conditions of incubating undue and dominance-based power relations.

Anarchism has unsurprisingly been chastised by the political establishment, but has also been repressed by the radical left, where trade unions and other forces for social change have differed with anarchists over issues of representation (mostly around notions of the vanguard in traditional Marxist thought). This hostility from both wings of political orthodoxy suggests that Anarchism may bring something new to bear on issues of progressive thought, like cosmopolitanism. Additionally, some Anarchists have proved prescient in evaluating other forms of radical and socially progressive thought, with Michael Bakunin predicting the dangerous concentration of power and subsequent demise of Marxist vanguard-ism prior to the practical manifestation of Marxist thought in Russia and China.<sup>35</sup> That no other progressive political system of thought could do this suggests Anarchism is worthy of serious analysis in relation to thinking around social relations.

This analysis of power, and the attempt of Anarchism to empower the individual unambiguously (as opposed to those political philosophies that seek to empower the

individual in the framework of a higher entity – state, party, deity) translates directly to the notion of the cosmopolitan equal exchange, in which individual agents must be empowered with an equal negotiating position from which freely and autonomously to exchange material or emotional resources.

Max Stirner (not a self confessed Anarchist, but an inspiration to many subsequent Anarchists) defined revolution thusly: “...insurrection leads us no longer to let ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and sets no glittering hopes on 'institutions'. It is not a fight against the established ... it is only a working forth of me out of the established ... Now, as my object is not an overthrow of the established order but my elevation above it, my purpose and deed are not political or social but ... directed toward myself and my ownness alone”<sup>36</sup>

For Stirner the imitation of any institution, or simply the mission to destroy it, would inevitably concentrate power unjustly. Thus the only way to overcome such unjust power relations was to rise above them personally – there could not even be a revolutionary programme as such, as this would similarly fall foul of power’s insidious designs on human behaviour to dominate. In this Stirner echoed the early Anarchist thinker William Godwin, who argued that there was little point in forming revolutionary associations or movements for change as these would simply generate factionalism and retard the revolutionary process (which for Godwin was the inevitable culmination of historic progress).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Godwin went so far as to frown upon any but the most necessary associations in his utopian vision – thus it was that sport, theatre and other forms of group entertainment were viewed as counter revolutionary.<sup>38</sup> However, whilst such principles do provide a sense of the centrality

of the individual to any cosmopolitan ethic, it is clear that a Stirner-ist or Godwin-ist approach would leave little room for the universalisation of such an ethic. In Anarchist traditions though, dissent exists about the degree to which a total lack of structure is desirable. Indeed, anarcho-feminists were the first to highlight what Jo Freeman dubbed the “Tyranny of Structurelessness”. Freeman noted that in anarcho-feminist groups, where such groups were “structureless”, they tended to be dominated by small cliques with vested interests. Hierarchy and domination subsequently followed, thus rendering these particular Anarchist projects anything but Anarchist in the sense of reducing hierarchy and unequal power relations. Freeman proposed the following compromise – “Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of 'structurelessness', it will be free to develop those forms of organisation best suited to its healthy functioning. This does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and blindly imitate the traditional forms of organisation. But neither should we blindly reject them all. Some traditional techniques will prove useful, albeit not perfect”<sup>39</sup>

An example of the application of such principles is exemplified in Michael Albert’s economic proposal, ‘Participatory Economics’ (also known as Parecon), which sets out a societal vision where each workplace is owned in equal part by all citizens and where workers and consumers make production and consumption decisions through democratic councils (whereby individuals have a say equal to the impact a decision would have over them). Furthermore, divisions of labour are removed by all jobs being shared, so that all individuals receive an equal complement of empowering roles in their working lives.<sup>40</sup> Albert bases his theory on several distinctly Anarchist principles, these being equity (people being rewarded for the time and effort they

expend, rather than what they produce), self management (people having autonomy over the conditions they live and work in), diversity (people having several paths to fulfilment) and solidarity (people cooperating, rather than competing with each other).<sup>41</sup> These values are clearly anarchist in that they attempt to negate undue *power over* and promote *power to* equally. This has important implications for cosmopolitan practice, as it is evidence of a mode of institutionalisation and universalisation that does not seek to usurp power from other institutions or people, but rather seeks to affect an anarchism in practice. That neither Godwin (probably) and Stirner (certainly) would advocate such a level of organisation does not reduce the usefulness of their perspectives on power and the pursuit of power. However, it is elsewhere in anarchist thought that we find a basis for this type of more organised yet *power-less* action, one that is relevant to the pursuit of a philosophical underpinning for the equal exchange. It is in this *applied* Anarchism then, that we see the beginnings of anarcho-cosmopolitanism.

While unequal power relations have inhibited the cosmopolitan programme, Anarchist theory provides us with a clear analytical framework of why that would be – the concentration and use of power cannot be utilised for a public good. According to anarchist theory power is only effective when it is shared by all equally, and we have already seen the relevance of this to the equal exchange. However, it also carries relevance for its universalisation, for if we can accept that each individual is rooted in their own particularity and subjectivity, yet those very concepts confer no undue power to any one particular interpretation of our lived experience, then we can begin to see how the equal exchange can be taken out of Nashashibi's ghettos and into the realm of relationships with distant others.

As documented by Marx, the full impact of the industrial revolution had brought increased alienation upon the working classes. However, Petr Kropotkin also recognised the increased interdependence that industrialisation had wrought and its potential for a new form of revolutionary practice – mutual aid. Kropotkin formulated the concept of mutual aid to advance a way in which self sustaining and autonomous communities could interact with each other in a mutually beneficial and equal manner in a future society. However, rather than simply waiting for or plotting a revolution (as Bakunin argued), Kropotkin claimed that the principle of mutual aid could be enacted immediately, thus creating Anarchist relations amidst the current order.<sup>42</sup>

Mutual aid is an important development for a cosmopolitan ethic, because it enshrines and universalises the mutuality (that is the exchange) of providing assistance to strangers, near and far. However, this is only one half of it, for if mutual aid is enacted from unequal positions of power, the exchange will be in danger of looking like Benedikt Korf's description of post-Tsunami aid giving – exploitative and divisive.

The task then is to discover how mutual aid can be enacted within a framework that retains the concept's universality, but allows for an equal exchange based on a recognition of each individual's partiality that translates into the equalisation of power relations. Such a framework can once again be found in Anarchist theory, and the practice of those inspired by Anarchist ideas.

Writing at a similar time to Kropotkin, Gustav Landauer argued that the State was merely a form of relationship, and that like any other relationship it could be reshaped or negated at any point of an individual's choosing (much like Stirner had written 70 years previously). Landauer argued that individuals should only concentrate on what

they could do now, in their immediate surroundings and contexts. In this way they would redefine their relationships with their environment, communities and themselves. Thus a point would finally be reached where enough people had negated their relationship with the State for the State to become irrelevant and wither away – “New institutions must be created almost out of nothing, amid chaos; that is alongside rather than inside existing social institutions ... let us destroy ... by the gentle ... and binding reality that we build”.<sup>43</sup>

Godwin argued that relationships with the State were inherently unjust and exploitative, because the State demanded an unending commitment from the individual to it, which the State could alter or discard at any time of its choosing, without the same right being conferred upon the individual.<sup>44</sup> However, whereas Godwin appeared to believe that any long term associations were likely to result in such exploitation and inequality, Landauer believed that alternative institutions and relationships could be developed to provide a framework for anarchist practice *alongside* existing exploitative institutions. As these alternative practices and institutions grew, the state would become increasingly irrelevant, as greater numbers of individuals withdrew their consent from the state to govern over them. A parallel can be found here with the current condition in which those engaging in cosmopolitan practice find themselves. Whereas Singer would argue that individuals should enter into traditional structures of inter and trans-national aid (NGOs and aid agencies), with what this paper has argued is the subsequent risk of partaking in unequal exchanges, the perspective outlined here would suggest that individuals should attempt to build new structures and relationships with each other in which the equal exchange can be developed and universalised.

Indeed, it is possible to see this theory in practice throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the actions of non-violent resistance movements. Anti-apartheid activists in South Africa developed street and neighbourhood committees to take control of municipal services and direct political action. These committees served to channel the de-legitimisation of the Apartheid regime by providing alternative institutions to which people could give their consent. In an echo of Gustav Landauer, leading ANC activist Walter Sisulu claimed that it was possible to create ...“people’s power now, in the process of struggle ... [people were] beginning to exert control over their own lives ... to govern themselves, despite being under racist rule”<sup>45</sup>

More explicit Anarchist influence can be found in Gandhi’s philosophy of *satyagraha* and *Swaraj*. *Satyagraha* was Gandhi’s method of non-violent resistance whilst *Swaraj* connoted rule of the self (on an individual basis, not to be confused with collective notions of self-rule as it relates to governance). Gandhi held that there was little point in removing the British if ordinary Indians were not ready to rule themselves, and so as well as organising direct resistance to British rule, Gandhi embarked on a programme of promoting austerity and traditional Indian methods of production and exchange.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, there is evidence that Gandhi was explicitly influenced by Anarchist thought. William Godwin was a close confidant of the English poet Shelley (Shelley often subsidised the older and poorer Godwin), and Shelley was known to have been influenced by Godwin, having contacted him as a young student to praise Godwin’s work *Political Justice*, in which Godwin explicitly rejects violence as a mode of social revolution.<sup>47</sup> In the aftermath of the Peterloo massacre in 1819 Shelley

wrote “The Mask of Anarchy”, a diatribe against state violence and an exhortation for the oppressed to engage in non-violent resistance –

*“And if then the tyrants dare  
Let them ride among you there,  
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew, -  
What they like, that let them do  
  
With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay  
Till their rage has died away”<sup>48</sup>*

The method of looking assailants in the eye whilst passively resisting has been utilised by non-violent resisters in countless situations, and it was Gandhi who knew Shelley’s writings and quoted them, basing some of his mottos and subsequent programmes on them. <sup>49</sup>

More contemporary Anarchist thinkers have reached similar conclusions on the necessity of building alternative institutions and relationships. Paul Chatterton has defined the space that separates individuals from each other in everyday life as “uncommon ground”. Individuals need to find a common ground, which is both spatial and social – a place where difference is recognised but not essentialised. Chatterton argues that traditional spaces of protest and activism are unable to provide this common ground, because they require set rules of engagement and characterised definitions of the targets of their protest. Echoing Landauer’s call for alternative

institutions and relationships, and placing what is different amongst us at the centre of his argument, Chatterton claims the following: “Learning, acting and talking together on uncommon ground can only really be achieved through a genuine desire to be free from institutional constraints and social norms and foster solidarity, mutual aid and an ethic of care amongst disparate individuals. Such practices eschew experts and blueprints, and can help seek out collectively defined escape routes from isolation and silence. This form of ethics, based upon working and learning collectively, makes use of the uncommon ground found in everyday encounters. It is a resource for seeking out commonalities with other groups and working jointly to find solutions.”<sup>50</sup> The manner in which Chatterton’s uncommon ground is utilised as a way to develop a common ground of understanding and interaction resonates strongly with a theory of anarcho-cosmopolitanism which seeks to use the particular as a means of developing a universal ethic where difference is recognised, understood and used as a way of seeing what is equal in all of us.

In both South Africa and India, it was necessity driven by a lack of alternative choices which drove social groups into the realm of Anarchist practice, even if for most it may have been **merely intuitive**. How such levels of necessity can be wedded to today’s global issues in the minds of the public is not in the scope of this paper; however, one could argue that autonomy, collectivism and mutual aid becomes highly intuitive to people very quickly **given the right social conditions and collective frames**. It is also apparent that the theories and examples elucidated here provide a method, inspired and rooted in **A**narchist theory, which can encapsulate the notion of the equal exchange in cosmopolitan practice – the construction of structures and relationships which circumvent the avenues of the state and traditional NGOs and which bring

individuals into contact with distant strangers for the mutual benefit of all. We will now look at how this anarcho-cosmopolitanism could be operationalised.

### *Anarcho-Cosmopolitanism in Practice*

Anarcho-cosmopolitanism could be operationalised in any number of ways. To return to the 2004 Asian Tsunami as an example, a practice of anarcho-cosmopolitanism would have witnessed the building of community capability to transmit its needs in the aftermath of the disaster. With so many aid agencies working in the area this should not have posed too great a problem. Such needs could then have been communicated directly to those publics who were in a position to assist. Affected communities may have wished to go beyond recipient status, in which case such messages could have been communicated quickly and effectively. Furthermore, there have been examples of tourists who were in the affected areas subsequently raising funds to assist directly those communities where they were staying. In an increasingly physically inter-connected world this informal model could be developed as an automatic ethical response to distant need (as long as it inculcates the requisite power-equalisation and mutuality to ensure that such assistance does not become exploitative or misdirected).

Modern technology to encourage face-to-face encounters can also be used to promote a cosmopolitan equal exchange. For example, a new web-based microfinance initiative attempts to transform potential charitable donors into financial lenders. By posting pictures and background information on small-business owners in low-income countries, the website encourages visitors to lend small amounts of money, which will

be paid back by the recipient over a twelve to eighteen month period. The money returned can then be kept by the investor or reinvested in another business (which is what the website encourages investors to do).<sup>51</sup> This practice equalises the power relationship in cosmopolitan exchanges by removing the donor-recipient relationship, and allowing an equal exchange to occur. Such a practice serves to universalise the kind of equal exchange identified by Nashashibi in the ghettos of Chicago by dispersing power amongst all participants in the exchange, ensuring that the benefits of the exchange is enjoyed mutually, and operationalising that exchange in a manner which strengthens human relationships rather than abstract organisational or state-based relationships. Clearly then, such an exchange could be based on Anarchist principles.

To take another contemporary example of a supposedly cosmopolitan phenomenon, the 2005 UK 'Make Poverty History' campaign encapsulated three objectives around which to organise campaigning activities. 'Make Trade Fair', 'Drop the Debt' and 'More and Better Aid' provided a framework under which campaign adherents could organise. However, rather than organise into meaningfully negotiated activities, individuals were instead encouraged to sign up to top-down initiatives set by a number of NGOs who had formed the 'Make Poverty History' coalition. Thus, whilst huge numbers of people bought white wrist bands to show solidarity and raise money for the affiliated NGOs, or sent emails to politicians,<sup>52</sup> very few appeared to organise activities with a measurable impact and instead passed on full responsibility for this to the national coalition. However, a cosmopolitan practice informed by Anarchist principles, whilst not necessitating the withdrawal of the large-scale protests and symbols of affiliation, would have looked markedly different. For example, the 'Make

Trade Fair' objective would have required committed individuals in the UK to take small-scale collective action (small-scale to ensure the validity of the necessary negotiations between activists). By forming neighbourhood committees (similar to those developed in Apartheid South Africa) they could have then contacted small producers directly in those countries most in need, negotiating an adequate level of exchange for their goods. These goods could then be imported to local shops and retailers. To ensure duplication did not occur, and to provide a national voice when negotiating contracts with large retailers, a system of national coordination could have been developed, but this would be driven from below, rather than by NGO professionals with dubious and varying degrees of accountability.

Naturally, anarcho-cosmopolitanism could not necessarily have achieved all of the 'Make Poverty History' campaign's objectives. Clearly, in order to drop the debt, those national governments maintaining it would have to change their policies. However, the ethics of anarcho-cosmopolitanism could have a significant impact on the governance and organising of cosmopolitan campaigns, like 'Make Poverty History'. **It encourages cosmopolitan practitioners and campaigners to question their practices in an attempt to reduce hierarchical relationships as much as possible, and to assess the degree to which both parties to an exchange are empowered through and by the process.**

### *Conclusion*

This paper has raised questions over how distance and suffering is engaged with on an individual and collective level in current cosmopolitan debates and campaigns. By

reducing the embeddedness of our every day lives to something either to be ignored or overcome, many contemporary cosmopolitan practices actually exacerbate the differences that exist between people, especially those relating to power and equality. This is because for the powerful it is always an easy option to embrace the other (when they deem them embraceable) and shower them with a perceived benevolence. This benevolence however, more often than not says more about who we are and what we want than about the nature of the problem that requires our attention in the first place. It is the narcissism of our embeddedness, rather than the embeddedness itself that must be overcome if we are to develop a cosmopolitan ethic that truly represents a universal scope of ethical concern. Recognising the nature of our embeddedness can help us to achieve this position, for it will allow us to see the true nature of the power relations and hierarchies that currently divide us from those who are socio-economically distant from us. Only then can we begin to devise alternative campaigns and programmes which will elevate all those involved – ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ – to equal positions of negotiation and power within the ensuing exchange. It has been argued that Anarchist theory provides the philosophical grounding for such a process, for it is in Anarchist theory that one can at the same time find both the centrality of the individual and the collective, and the necessary power-neutral and hierarchy-flattening methods of defining the relationship between the two.

Ultimately, anarcho-cosmopolitanism is a panacea neither for the problems of helping those less fortunate, nor to debates over the nature of cosmopolitanism. However, it does provide a useful paradigm through which to shape our actions. Rather than giving all our spare income to Oxfam, as Peter Singer has advocated, anarcho-cosmopolitanism would have us consult extensively with those at the receiving end of

our donation, not only so we can give appropriately, but also so that we may empower recipients, by ourselves in turn becoming recipients of their knowledge, culture or physical gifts. Rather than wholly losing our identities to impartiality (an impossibility), it allows us to incorporate new elements, as we would replace old wires with new in Charles Pierce's cable metaphor.<sup>53</sup> Anarcho-cosmopolitanism also closes the gap identified by Erskine in rooted cosmopolitanism, because it does not seek to find the 'overlapping associations'<sup>54</sup> also apparent in Nashashibi's Chicago ghetto. Rather, it illustrates how we might retain a partial identity, yet still eschew domination over strangers and display care for them instead, through the rejection of power relationships and embracement of mutual aid. Thus Anarcho-cosmopolitanism opens up possibilities for the universalisation of the equal exchange, a truly cosmopolitan practice, because it promotes both respect for (a desire to help and be compassionate) and respect of (a desire to learn and accept) what is different and the same in strangers.

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