Introduction: Smith's oikeiōsis

The idea of the *kosmou politēs* is very old, dating back at least to the ancient Stoics. But the idea that we might inhabit a realm beyond our own particular clans, nations, and states has re-emerged at various points throughout history, and with particular salience at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Cosmopolitanism has become a signifier of our times – the word is everywhere – though it has come to mean many things. The description "cosmopolitan" evokes a lifestyle that is enlightened, urban and worldly, one able to navigate the languages, tastes and cultures of the world's great cities with ease and panache. For many Americans the word conjures up images of Helen Gurley Brown's ideal of the independent, liberated "Cosmo" woman of the 1970s, an image reinvented for the 1990s in the wildly successful HBO television series "Sex in the City" and its celebration of "girl talk" over a pink martini-like libation known as a Cosmopolitan. The Cosmo woman's independence consisted in thinking for herself, experiencing her sexuality, and moving through the world loosened from the stifling conventions of domesticity and submissive femininity.

In modern ethical discourse, from Immanuel Kant to Martha Nussbaum and Kwame Anthony Appiah, the cosmopolitan ideal has embodied an imperative that we think for ourselves, that we become increasingly conscious of why we do what we do, that we resist giving ourselves over wholly to the conventions of time and place. *Sapere aude* – "dare to know" – Kant urged us, because one must cultivate independence of mind, or what Kant called "maturity," before one can recognize one's place in a larger, universal human community and begin the rational process of expanding the scope of one's moral concern beyond the confines and prejudices of place which are accidental, arbitrary and morally irrelevant from a cosmopolitan perspective.[1]

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[1] On Kantian maturity see Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?," in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 54–60.

Of course practitioners of identity politics and communitarians of diverse and colorful stripes promptly rejected the resurgence of ethical cosmopolitanism in the 1990s for this very reason – that in emphasizing our membership in a universal/cosmo polis, it seems to ask us to deny the earthy texture of our political, social and cultural selves; that it is thus too rationalist, too smug and imperialist, or perhaps just too optimistic for so flawed a species as we.[2] An entire "anti-cosmopolitan" – or perhaps "new cosmopolitan" – literature has cropped up in the last decade oriented around such challenges.[3]

Many who are troubled by the ethical cosmopolitan denial of particularity but who are nevertheless, in David Hollinger's words, "determined to maximize species consciousness, to fashion tools for understanding and acting upon problems of a global scale, to diminish suffering regardless of colour, class, religion, sex and tribe," have attempted to reconceptualize a non-foundationalist or "postmetaphysical" cosmopolitanism, one with a weak or minimalist ontology, that seeks bridges while simultaneously affirming deep diversity and the integrity of cultural identity.[4] Others have sought to reframe the debate altogether, noting that identity *itself* has become complex and fragmented in our age of information, mobility and commodification. We are "mixed-up selves" living in a "mixed-up world," Jeremy Waldron writes (of himself), and conventional categories of culture and cosmopolitanism therefore no longer suit us very well.[5] Conceptualizing the intellectual landscape between reactionary localism and vapid universalism, between

[2] Martha Nussbaum emphasizes repeatedly that the cosmopolitan project does not entail that we surrender our "local identifications, which can be a source of great richness in life." She embraces a "concentric" model of Stoic cosmopolitanism for this reason. See notably Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), pp. 3–17; and Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[3] The first and perhaps defining debate was presented in Martha Nussbaum *et al.*, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," *Boston Review*, October/November 1994; condensed Nussbaum, *Love of Country*.

[4] A defining collection in this movement was Pheng Chea and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998). See also the special edition of *Public Culture* devoted to the new cosmopolitanism: Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., *Cosmopolitanism*. In *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2000). A very recent example, already much discussed, is Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Bonnie Honig, in the same volume, doubts that Benhabib succeeds in her "postmetaphysical" mission, and posits an "agonistic cosmopolitical" alternative. See Honig, "Another Cosmopolitanism?," pp. 102–127. David Hollinger's essay, "Not Universalists, Not Pluralists: The New Cosmopolitans Find Their Own Way," is an excellent example of how the "new cosmopolitanism" has arrayed itself against what it sees as the "polemically unmodified" cosmopolitanism of Martha Nussbaum and her "non-modified comrades": in Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds., *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 227–239. The quoted text above comes from p. 230.

[5] Jeremy Waldron, "What Is Cosmopolitan?," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2000), pp. 227–243, at p. 228. Note, however, that this complexity does not make the universalist ethical

"Jihad" and "McWorld" as Benjamin Barber put it, is where the debate in ethical cosmopolitanism has landed today, and it shows no real sign of resolving or slowing.[6]

But cosmopolitan debate is not limited to questions about ethics and culture. Cosmopolitanism has taken more explicitly political directions too, connected more or less overtly with the universalist ethical project associated with Kant. Political theorists influenced by Jürgen Habermas and his theory of communicative action are concerned less with identity or the scope and substance of our duties *per se*, and more with democratic procedures for talking about these things among others in a global setting. Cosmopolitan democrats like David Held, Daniele Archibugi, Andrew Linklater, Richard Falk and many others (the literature is flourishing) stress the superiority of democratic values to any particular ethnic conception of identity or nationality, and seek to expand democratic discourse ethics and institutions to the international realm – an agenda which a range of communitarian and identity-oriented critics have dismissed as presumptuous and imperialistic, and an implausible and potentially dangerous aspiration for world governance.[7]

Despite the vast and contentious ways that cosmopolitanism is articulated, re-articulated and challenged, however, one thing is very clear. Just as no early twentieth-century thinker would have neglected the impact of Marxism on the world, and no post-war thinker the impact of totalitarianism, we are all reflecting today on the directions that cosmopolitan currents are carrying individuals, groups, societies and states. We are dizzy with the pace of changes taking place around us, and are first beginning to make some sense of it. I have come to believe that Adam Smith's moral psychology has something to say to us today as we work to sort it out.

SMITH'S OIKEIŌSIS

Given the explosion of scholarship on Smith's thought in recent years, at the very moment that global and cosmopolitan issues have come to dominate public consciousness and academic discourse in the humanities and social sciences, it is surprising that we have no substantial interpretation of Smith's

project impossible for Waldron. Focusing on the reasons beneath cultural practices, and the accessibility of such reasons, Waldron ultimately aligns himself with the Kantian orientation and against the "practitioners of identity politics."
[6] Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995).
[7] Several recent collections illustrate the range of positions in this discussion: Daniele Archibugi and David Held, eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy: An Agenda for a New World Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995); David Held and Tony McGrew, eds., *Governing Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); and Daniele Archibugi, ed., *Debating Cosmopolitics* (London: Verso, 2003).

4   *Introduction*

moral philosophy for a global age.[8] What might it mean, for example, to
extend his well-known ideas of "sympathy" and "spectatorship" to distant
strangers?[9] Or to characterize his international political economy as "cos-
mopolitan"?[10] Or in a global context to say that Smith's jurisprudence has
universal significance?[11] On reflection, it turns out that Adam Smith is an
insightful participant in the ongoing debates about cosmopolitanism – what
it is, what it assumes, what it can and cannot do.

In the vast and ever expanding sea of Smith scholarship, we have no
interpretation of Smith that rigorously considers his thoughts about distance
and proximity in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* – that pays serious and
central attention to the question of *spatial distance* in his moral philosophy.[12]
This book is the first study to illuminate the spatial texture of Smith's

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[8] For some very recent cosmopolitan interpretations and appropriations of Smith, across a variety of
disciplines, see Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1999); Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*
(Boston: Beacon, 1995); Amartya Sen, "Open and Closed Impartiality," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 99,
no. 9 (2002), pp. 445–469; Margaret Chatterjee, "The Oceanic Circle," in Margaret Chatterjee,
Gandhi's Diagnostic Approach Rethought: Exploring a Perspective on His Life and Work (New Delhi:
Promilla and Co. and Bibliophile South Asia, 2007), esp. ch. 7; James Page, *Peace Education: Exploring
Ethical and Philosophical Foundations* (New York: Information Age Publishing, 2008); David M. Levy
and Sandra J. Peart, "Adam Smith and His Sources: The Evil of Independence," *Adam Smith Review*,
vol. 4 (2008), pp. 57–87; and Martha C. Nussbaum, "'Mutilated and Deformed': Adam Smith on the
Material Basis of Human Dignity," in Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition* (Cambridge,
MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming). My thanks to Martha Nussbaum for sharing an early
version of this chapter with me, since it expands on and qualifies some of her earlier assertions about
Smith's "cosmopolitanism" of which I have been somewhat critical in other places.
[9] One frequently sees Smith's moral psychology invoked (and distorted) in literatures seeking to assert
humanitarian and cosmopolitan duties toward distant strangers. For a particularly distorted example,
which also happens to disfigure some of my own work, see Page, *Peace Education*, pp. 136–139. Two far
worthier examples are Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, which uses Smith's impartial spectator model to
generate a humanitarian "politics of pity"; and Sen, "Impartiality," which emphasizes the global and
cross-cultural significance of Smith's impartial spectator model. I will engage both at some length.
[10] See Fonna Forman-Barzilai, "Adam Smith as Globalization Theorist," *Critical Review* vol. 14, no. 4
(2002), pp. 391–419. For somewhat related formulations, that draw more general connections between
free trade and the cultivation of humanitarian and cosmopolitan values in the eighteenth century, see
Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: University of
Notre Dame Press, 1977), ch. 5; and Laurence W. Dickey, "*Doux-Commerce* and Humanitarian Values:
Free Trade, Sociability and Universal Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century Thinking," in *Grotius and the
Stoa*, ed. Hans W. Blom and Laurence C. Winkel (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004), pp. 271–318.
[11] On the universalism of Smith's jurisprudence, one might begin with Knud Haakonssen's seminal
chapter on "Smith's Critical Jurisprudence" in *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of
David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 134–153. See also
Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 43–52, who has very interesting things to say about Smith's
jurisprudence in a global context.
[12] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, as vol. I of
The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith (Oxford: Oxford University
Press; reprint Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1982).

thought, and to put him into direct conversation with global ethics discourse. I address Smith's place in the long-standing debates over cosmopolitanism, which were perhaps as vibrant in the eighteenth century as they are in our own. Specifically, I argue here that Smith's thoughts about *care* and *judgment* operate within remarkably narrow spatial limits. He argued (a) that our natural "beneficence" tends to fade as its object becomes further and further removed from the spectatorial center; and distinctly (b) that our judgments of others become less and less reliable as a justification for action or intervention. Understanding the spatial texture of Smith's thought will help clarify how both the moral psychology of care and the epistemology of moral judgment worked for him.[13] My book ultimately reflects on the localist implications that flow from Smith's orientation to space, demonstrates serious problems with enlisting the *Moral Sentiments* flatly for ethical cosmopolitan purposes, but ultimately points toward other resources in his thought, largely neglected in this context, for cultivating a twenty-first-century global ethics.

Those familiar with eighteenth-century European moral philosophy will detect a Humean sensibility in my assertion that Smith's thought operates within narrow spatial limits. David Hume famously observed that "sympathy … is much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and sympathy with persons remote from us much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous."[14] Smith too believed that we tend naturally to connect affectively with those who are nearby or familiar to us, and that this connection tends to fade, become more tenuous, as an object becomes more "remote." Much will be said here about Hume's influence on Smith's way of thinking about distance, though I argue that Smith's account is richer and ultimately more provocative for us today. One of Smith's essential contributions beyond Hume, I argue, is that distance is a more complex and layered concept for him. It was not merely a physical concept. Smith approached distance in affective and cultural/historical terms as well – which means that I may be remote from someone sitting just before me, or close to someone across the globe. In this sense, Smith provides a framework for thinking in fresh ways about new sorts of human connection that emerge in a global age, for reflecting on what William Connolly has recently called "eccentric" connections that emerge in an age of speed and compressed distance – "crosscutting allegiances" that

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[13] My thanks to Patchen Markell for first encouraging me to clarify the differences in Smith's thought between care and judgment.

[14] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), p. 49. In this passage, Hume used the word "sympathy" to mean other-concern, while Smith used the term "sympathy" very differently and distinctively to denote a general "fellow-feeling" with any passion whatsoever. I explore these differences later.

"exceed," "complicate" and often "compromise" the concentric connections of place that governed in ages when people lived slow, local lives.[15]

Moreover, Smith defined sympathy very differently than did Hume, so that distance and proximity played a different role in his thought. Sympathy for Smith was not about other-regarding affections which weaken or intensify depending on the physical proximity of another. Sympathy for Smith was primarily a principle of judgment and was impacted in very complex ways by the cultural, affective and physical proximity of the person or object being judged.

My case here rests on situating Smith's thoughts about distance in the *Moral Sentiments* in another much older context which very likely situated Hume's thoughts too. Here I emphasize ancient Stoic ethics, and specifically the Stoic idea of *oikeiōsis*, popularized by the second century CE Stoic, Hierocles, whose surviving fragments figure prominently in the writings of the fifth-century Macedonian anthologist Joannes Stobaeus – though the idea of *oikeiōsis* was most likely made known to Smith and the Scots generally through their familiarity with Cicero's *De Officiis*. The influence of Stoicism on Adam Smith's moral and political thought is widely appreciated, and has been given extensive treatment by the editors of the Glasgow edition of the *Moral Sentiments*, by Norbert Waszek, Vivienne Brown, Peter Clarke and most recently Gloria Vivenza, Leonidas Montes and Martha Nussbaum.[16] The Stoic dimension of Adam Smith's thought is apparent to

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[15] William E. Connolly, "Eccentric Flows and Cosmopolitan Culture," in *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 177–201.

[16] See notably the editors' "Introduction" to Smith, *Moral Sentiments*, pp. 1–52, at pp. 5–10; Norbert Waszek, "Two Concepts of Morality: A Distinction of Adam Smith's Ethics and Its Stoic Origin," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, October 1984, pp. 591–604; and Norbert Waszek, *Man's Social Nature: A Topic of the Scottish Enlightenment in Its Historical Setting* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986); Vivienne Brown, *Adam Smith's Discourse: Canonicity, Commerce and Conscience* (London: Routledge, 1994); P. A. Heise, "Stoicism in Adam Smith's Model of Human Behavior: The Philosophical Foundation of Self-Betterment and the Invisible Hand," *Ökonomie und Gesellschaft*, vol. 9 (1991), pp. 64–78; P. A. Heise, "Stoicism in the EPS: The Foundation of Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy," in *The Classical Tradition in Economic Thought: Perspectives on the History of Economic Thought*, vol. XI, ed. I. H. Rima (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995); Peter H. Clarke, "Adam Smith and the Stoics: The Influence of Marcus Aurelius," University of the West of England, Faculty of Economics and Social Science, Working Papers in Economics No. 18, April 1996; and Peter H. Clarke, "Adam Smith, Stoicism and Religion in the 18th Century," *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2000), pp. 49–72; Jerry Z. Muller, *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours: Designing the Decent Society* (New York: Free Press, 1993; reprint Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995; Fonna Forman-Barzilai, "Adam Smith as Globalization Theorist," *Critical Review*, vol. 14, no. 4 (2000), pp. 391–419; Charles L. Griswold, Jr., *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 217–227 and 317–324; Leonidas Montes, *Adam Smith in Context: A Critical Reassessment of Some Central Components of His Thought* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Leonidas Montes, "Adam Smith as an Eclectic Stoic," *Adam Smith Review*, vol. 4 (2008),

even the most casual reader of the *Moral Sentiments*, for Smith spoke at great
length about the Stoic project, about the elements of Stoicism that attracted
him and those that he rejected. Throughout the *Moral Sentiments*, Smith
regularly enlisted Stoic sources, mainly the *Discourses* of Epictetus, the
Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, and less frequently, Cicero's *De Officiis*
and *De Finibus* and Seneca's *Epistles*. He concerned himself very little with
Stoic logic, physics and metaphysics, but concentrated on what he took
often rather selectively to be Stoic "moral philosophy." Part VII of the
Moral Sentiments, Smith's catalogue of the great schools within the history
of moral philosophy, contains an entire chapter on Stoicism.[17] While he
tended to think that the Stoic system was generally too rigorous in its
demand for apathy toward life as lived by most people, he was nevertheless
attracted to a moderated version of the Stoic idea of "self command," which
became, arguably, the central virtue in his own moral philosophy.[18] In an
extended discussion of self-command in Part VI Smith asserted that "Self-
command is not only itself a great virtue, but from it all the other virtues
seem to derive their principle lustre."[19] As such, it is not altogether surpris-
ing that most interpretations of Smith's Stoicism have focused on the
prevalence of "self-command" and connected ideas in his thought. Many
have also seized on the Stoic character of Smith's providentialism, which
runs through (some would say governs entirely) both his ethical and
economic ideas. But comparatively little attention has been given to
Smith's cautious appropriation of the Stoic idea of *oikeiōsis*, which I have
long found surprising given its direct relevance to contemporary debates
about cosmopolitanism in moral philosophy, political theory and interna-
tional ethics.[20]

pp. 30–56; Gloria Vivenza, *Adam Smith and the Classics: The Classical Heritage in Adam Smith's
Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 2 and pp. 191–212; and Nussbaum, "'Mutilated
and Deformed.'" For the Stoic influence on the Scottish Enlightenment more generally, see Richard
B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh*
(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), ch. 8; M. A. Stewart, "The Stoic Legacy in the Early
Scottish Enlightenment," in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquility: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in
European Thought*, ed. Margaret J. Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991),
pp. 273–296; and J. C. Stewart-Robertson, "Cicero among the Shadows: Scottish Prelections of
Virtue and Duty," *Rivista critica storia della filosofia* I (1983), pp. 25–49.
[17] *TMS* VII.ii.1 (pp. 267–314).   [18] See notably *TMS* VI.iii (pp. 237–262).   [19] *TMS* VI.iii.11 (p. 241).
[20] The notable exception here is Brown, *Discourse*, pp. 95–97. See also Montes, *Smith in Context*, p. 89,
n. 62, who challenges Gloria Vivenza who (in *Smith and the Classics*) attributes Smith's thinking
about the degrees of fellowship to Peripatetic influences, and doubts that it is Stoic in origin. See also
Montes, "Adam Smith as an Eclectic Stoic." Just as I was completing this book, I discovered Levy and
Peart, "The Evil of Independence." Though they never use the concept explicitly, Levy and Peart
contribute to our understanding of Smith's *oikeiōsis* when they seek to "locate the foundations of
Smith's egalitarianism in Stoic cosmopolitanism" (p. 2).

The word *oikeiōsis* derives from the Greek root *oikos*, which referred in ancient democratic life to the private realm of the household as distinct from the public realm of the *polis*, each of which entailed a different science of management, *oikonomeia* and *politika. Oikeiōsis* was a Stoic extrapolation from the familiarity that develops over time among those who inhabit the *oikos*, among those who very literally share physical space. Most fully developed by Cicero and Hierocles, *oikeiōsis* was the notion that human affection weakens as it radiates outward in degrees from the self. Thus, the Stoics mapped our affections concentrically, arguing that our affections are strongest at the center, closest and most familiar to the self, and that they weaken progressively as an object is removed further and further away. Imagine a dart board. According to Stoic *oikeiōsis*, the bullseye represents the self, the innermost ring represents one's family (those literally within the *oikos*), the next ring one's friends, the next one's neighbors, then one's tribe or community, then one's country, and so on; and ultimately the outermost and largest ring encompasses all of humanity. Surely, what determines the ordering of the circles, who will be regarded as "close," will vary with the kinship patterns in any particular culture.[21] But the process would seem to be a universal one for the ancient Stoics: human affection and care are ordered spatially around the self in a concentric pattern.

A central proposition in my interpretation here is that Smith's appropriation of Stoic *oikeiōsis* was conflicted and incomplete. He wholly embraced *oikeiōsis* as an empirical fact, as an accurate description of the concentric structure of human affection and care. Indeed, we will see that he organized his entire discussion of natural beneficence – of the natural "distribution of our good offices" – in *Moral Sentiments* VI.ii in concentric terms, mirroring the Stoic argument in remarkably precise detail. But while he embraced Stoic *oikeiōsis* as an empirical fact, as an accurate account of how human affection works, he decisively rejected Stoic cosmopolitan teleology which sought to overcome man's nature concentrically understood. Smith refused to follow the Stoic argument to its cosmopolitan conclusion that rational agents must cultivate "apathy" toward the near and dear, learn to resist *oikeiōsis* (the natural affection born of familiarity), to collapse the circles, and become "citizens of the world." In his engagement with Stoic teleology, then, Smith was distinctively *anti-cosmopolitan*.

[21] On this, see Margaret Chatterjee's fascinating discussion of Hierocles, Smith and Gandhi in "Oceanic Circle," p. 151. My thanks to Lloyd Rudolph for sending me Chatterjee's book just as I was finishing my own, prompting me, as he always does, to reflect on Smith's ideas outside of an Anglophone context.

THE ETHICS OF EXPANDING CIRCLES

The concentric model of ethical concern developed in Stoic thought has become something of a commonplace in ethics discourse today, and a centerpiece of the cosmopolitan agenda. In 1841, Ralph Waldo Emerson published his essay "Circles," which portrayed human life as a "self-evolving circle which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end."[22] Not long after, historian W. E. H. Lecky drew on Emerson's metaphor of concentricity, and conceived of moral progress as an *expansion* of ethical responsibility, as an "expanding circle" with the individual and its intimates residing at the center, but which "soon … includes first a class, then a nation, then a coalition of nations, then all humanity."[23] Lecky's formulation is so well known today that it is frequently invoked by intellectuals and practitioners as "Lecky's Circle."[24] Peter Singer's *Expanding the Circle* is a particularly well-known appropriation of Lecky's vision.[25] And this concentric way of thinking about our ethical duties is diffused throughout twentieth-century thought. Note for example Albert Einstein's "circle of compassion":

A human being is part of a whole, called by us the Universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.[26]

Something very similar is at work in Gandhi's late political thought. Margaret Chatterjee recently explored affinities between Hierocles' circles and Gandhi's idea of the "oceanic circle," even noting important parallels with concentric themes in Emerson, Lecky and Adam Smith, all of whom Gandhi read with care.[27] In an editorial of April 1946 Gandhi wrote this:

Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the

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[22] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles," in *Emerson: Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 320–345, at p. 323. My thanks to Eric MacGilvray for first bringing this essay to my attention.

[23] W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (New York: George Braziller, 1955), vol. I, pp. 100–101.

[24] See, for example, James Bacchus, "Lecky's Circle: Thoughts from the Frontier of International Law," address to the Appellate Body of the World Trade Organization at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, April 10, 2003.

[25] Peter Singer, *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981).

[26] Albert Einstein, Letter of 1950, as quoted in the *New York Times*, March 29, 1972.

[27] Chatterjee, "Oceanic Circle."

village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, til at last the whole becomes one life comprised of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circle will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and will derive its own strength from it.[28]

A few things stand out in this passage. Note the profound difference between the "centre" of Gandhi's oceanic circle and the isolated, selfish individual who tends to reside at the center of Western appropriations of the Stoic model. Gandhi's center is an individual who is richly embedded in his village which, as Chatterjee points out, demonstrates how vastly different the concentric layout will look in cultures with different kinship patterns.[29] To a Western sensibility, an individual who is already ready to sacrifice himself to the village is a perplexing center, a foreign starting point. But for Gandhi the problem was not to overcome egoism in the Western sense, but to address tensions between tribe and nation, between local identity and a larger sense of unity organized around the idea of "India." Finally, Gandhi is not concerned in this particular passage with expanding concern to all of humanity (though of course this was essential to his overall vision). For him the "oceanic circle" confronted political problems internal to India. Gandhi rejected the conventional options of either state centralization, which is pyramid shaped and oppressive, or decentralized fragmentation, which is shapeless, and would undermine Indian unity. The oceanic circle was a device for navigating this tension between local self-determination and holistic unity. Gandhi inspires some very interesting thoughts about how we might use the circles to expand human connection, but in a way that respects the integrity of the inner-most circles – self, family, village.

Today the circles are perhaps most readily associated with Martha Nussbaum's extensive work on cosmopolitanism, which draws frequently on the Stoic model to tamp down parochial self-preference and expand our ethical concern. She argues that we "should work to make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality; and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect."[30]

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[28] Gandhi, "Independence," cited in Chatterjee, "Oceanic Circle," p. 159.
[29] For an interesting discussion of the "moral circles" in Chinese thought, see *The Moral Circles and the Self: Chinese and Western Approaches*, ed. Kim-chong Chong, Sor-hoon Tan and C. L. Ten (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2003). Unfortunately, the book situates Adam Smith within a Western tradition that sees the individual as "isolated" and "egoistic" (p. xviii).
[30] Nussbaum, *Love of Country*, p. 9.