Journal of Universal Computer Science, vol. 2, no. 12 (1996), 842-857
submitted: 16/4/96, accepted: 7/10/96, appeared: 28/12/96 *© Springer Pub. Co.*

One Net One World
Global Citizenship and the Internet

Jenny Shearer.
(HyperMedia Unit and Department of Political Studies University of Auckland, New Zealand
jshearer@cs.auckland.ac.nz)

Abstract: The development of a global ethical system is desirable to fulfil the societal promise of the technology of the Internet. The author attempts to construct such a „pragmatic" ethical system (in an age of relativism and ethical scepticism) using concepts drawn from a number of moral philosophers. The global ethics construct uses the quality of human rationality as a basis, co-existing with the essence of „identity" in religious, cultural, and personal terms for individuals. The potential of the constructed Internet „global citizen" is unquantifiable, but the concept represents an opportunity for global co-operation and mingling of ideas, personalities, cultures, and solutions to problems. It is an unconstrained scenario utilising key qualities of the technology including rapid information turnaround and unprecented individual access by vast numbers of the global population.
Category: K.4.2 Social Issues [Computers and Society]; K.5.2 Governmental Issues [Computers and Society]

1 Introduction

The developing technological architecture of the Internet invites the construction of a parallel social infrastructure which could serve people in ways which are unprecedented. This paper is an attempt to extrapolate from the possibilities of the new technology a „global ethical environment", that is use of an Internet architecture to create a new field of social and political opportunity. It is an attempt to engage with the difficult issue of finding something which could be held up as global ethics, and possibly the simplest lead in is to take a straightforward principle many people would aspire to, that of global improvement, and base the construct on that. The environment may be inhabited by the „global citizen" who would in postmodern terms be a created „self", informed by the universal human quality of rationality, conversant with his or her own identity (ethnicity, gender, nationality, and so on, in the „real world") and ready to pass beyond existing social boundaries to experience other people's perspectives. It is this process of perceiving the points of view of other people, and of engaging in positive discussion on a basis of equality, which is well facilitated by the Internet. The Internet offers high quality mass interpersonal communications, allied with a massive scale of information base access. It is the medium of choice for vastly increasing numbers of people, with some developed countries debating the issue of universal access by their populations. However

problems of creating „information rich“ elites or countries with Internet access, at the expense of „information poor“ will be a major ethical question for an emerging Internet community to address. Organising the on-line community to aid navigation on the World Wide Web and prevent information overload is another prospective task. However the possibilities of an ethically moderated environment are not futuristic scenarios. The beginnings of such an environment may be observed in on-line education, and the activities of pressure groups which support free speech and privacy of communications where they may be under threat from national governments. The term "Netizen", meaning committed member of the Internet community, is already in use on the Internet.

To visualise the social and political potential of a radically different means of communication such as the Internet requires a rewriting of what is possible. Generally in the past, a set of given principles held by a social or national group have been built upon within a framework of geographic and cultural constraints. These constraints of national objectives, religion, or economic imperatives, have greatly modified utopian or idealised political ideologies. The Internet holds within its structure the potential for development of a global public forum unprecedented in scope and opportunity. For philosophers such as Jurgen Habermas, [Habermas 1989] public spheres created in the past, such as those of ancient Greece and the Enlightenment of eighteenth century Europe, have pointed the way to advances in human endeavours and thinking. Though imperfect in many respects (women were not included, political and social structures to some extent hindered function) these forums put thinkers together in conditions of relative equality, and produced highly influential intellectual streams of thought. Such a forum already exists in an informal interaction of networks and newsgroups within the Internet. But one of the primary lessons of Habermas is the fragility of these forums, which may be perceived as threatening to the power of established groups. It is an imperative to development of an Internet political identity that the Internet forum should be mapped and defended, so that its freedoms are not lost to commercial or outside political interests.

The Internet currently has the key quality of unfettered global access, within the constraints of computer access and pricing. A person can interact with a computer to fulfil his or her information and social requirements, publish on the Net, and hold personal power by doing so. Information is not censored or „fed“ with the user as a market. However, possibly more importantly, the Internet meets a social requirement of an individual to establish relationships before making an effort to understand another point of view. Here the behaviour of the person as an ethical being, as someone with cultural and psychological boundaries, may possibly be changed very considerably.

The Internet represents an opportunity for a liberal, or unconstrained political ideology of the type described by Sowell [Sowell 1987]. Large-scale fruitful political discourse already exists through networks set up by individual organisations such as environmental pressure groups, but these networks appear to be reproducing existing

organisational and ideological constraints through their structure. The architecture and ideals of a liberal or unconstrained community could be set up with reference to an agreed theoretical base without suffering the penalties traditionally associated with imposition of radical ideologies. That is without having to fight, or suffer punitive action from competing regimes. The Internet is currently not controlled by any particular regime, though it is likely the next few years will see a critical power struggle for its control. Change fostered by an ethical global environment in the Internet would be of the secondary variety produced by changing public opinion, and the purpose of such an ethical environment would be to protect the freedom of speech of Internet users and to develop its public sphere potential towards global levels of ethical thought and action. The motivation is firstly, that such a liberal ideology should be embraced by Internet users because they are at risk of losing existing freedoms, and secondly, such an ideology provides in a global sense the „right" path forward.

The Internet is not the first communication technology which has been the focus of dreams of human improvement. Television, for example, was supposed to educate the population but its potential has largely foundered under the weight of ratings-driven mass-appeal programming. Why should the Internet be any different? Possibly, because the global citizen will have learned the lessons of the failure of these earlier technologies, and the global citizen will in a sense be driving his or her own car - that is, will have choice. In the event of societal infrastructure failure, the citizen will be able to construct something different which works.Utopian visions were expressed 20 years ago by Ted Nelson. [Nelson 1987] The prevailing philosophy of the Internet has always been relatively anarchistic, resulting in a free and sprawling environment which has always held the possibility of fulfilling visions such as Nelson's. This freedom is now under threat [Elmer-Dewitt 1994] from a number of competing ideologies. The most obvious aggressor is free market ideology, becoming successful possibly because it mimics the typical Internet mindset in terms of promoting individualism. However the free marketeer is motivated towards profit rather than teamwork and the common good. Interests of sovereign states now pose a threat, as national governments move to impose regulation in areas such as control of pornography, and use of cryptography by individuals wishing for privacy in their communications. Interventions by national governments may limit access to or cause damage to the Internet structure, not as a deliberate attempt at damage, but as a flow-on effect of policy decisions. Lining up against the well-rehearsed arguements of the market and national governments, the Internet community currently lacks an agreed base of principle from which to develop a self-protective strategy. By developing a philosophical position, the Internet community may employ strategies such as mediation to uphold free speech while addressing the persistent problems caused by pornography on the Internet. [Shearer 1996]. In the area of cryptography, the principle of privacy of communications is able to be upheld in opposition to the perceived right of governments, such as the US Government, to regulate the use of cryptography. [Shearer & Gutmann, 1996]. The principle of freedom of development

of the Internet is able to be employed in arguing that current US software patents policy is damaging to the Internet [Shearer & Vermeer 1995].

In an intellectual climate this century which has foregone moral certainty it is difficult to build an „ethical“ framework with the purpose of protecting freedom of users and developing the potential of the Internet. However when the alternative is paralysis in the face of moral challenge, it is appropriate to attempt to establish a defensible ethical structure. On a practical level many good things could be seen to flow from the setting up of an information, or rather, knowledge system, together with a public forum as an ethical environment within the Internet. Such matters as classification of information in terms of its authenticity or to provide ease of access to the user, the control of certain types of socially disruptive behaviour such as sending abusive messages or extreme (such as classifications outlawed in most countries) pornography, the opportunity to facilitate free and open discussion, new understanding between people on the basis of a shared global interest, and an efficient organisation of the market, are positive potential outcomes. An „ideal community“ could be set up within the Web, for example, with links to cooperating sites and a developing new media which would incorporate global views and voices.

However, the visionary aspect entails more; that such an ethical environment should include in its architecture an open political function which could potentially be used for global citizens to better their world, for example to end world hunger, and war, to improve the environment, to build a sustainable future. To take a laissez-faire approach to development in the Internet is to deny the potential benefits of global citizenship to future generations. The function of the technology will be limited by its social architecture to supply of information rather than development of knowledge bases and political pathways with the aim of global improvement. An agenda for debate on the future of the Internet may be set by attempting to justify a particular ethical environment. A liberal camp needs also to defend itself against attacks on its right to exist, from people such as supporters of free market ideology. The market, stripped of its associated dominant libertarian or elitist ideology, would function most efficiently within the boundaries of an ethical environment.

2 Rationality, "Location" and the Constructed "Global Citizen."

To move beyond the philosophical problems presented by what Romand Coles refers to as the "rationalist versus relativist swamp," it is necessary to qualify the reliance of this paper on a notion of rationality, with the awareness that rationality may be regarded as a quality exercised by choice of the global citizen, rather than as an article of faith.

Coles [Coles 1992] describes postmodernist Jean-Francois Lyotard's position that reason is a mythical and undesirable "metanarrative" with totalitarian implications. That is, that instead of being a standard by which human thought and activity may be

judged, „reason“ is simply a construct devised by a group of people who wish to impose their view of the world on others, and to gather power by doing this.
"He urges us to abandon our search for a singular Reason that rises above the multiplicity and contingency of human life and instead affirm the the incompatibility and specificity of increasingly diverse language games, which develop not according to truths but by way of the creative impulses of sublime imaginations. He urges us to to view our society as a "pathwork" of utterly heterogenous games." In other words, Lyotard doubts that different people may be able to truly share a rational way of thinking, and maintains that each individual is encased in his or her own perceptions. However, Habermas finds rationality is a path for communication and consensus.

"Far from being a dangerous myth, reason, for Habermas, is a barrier against injustice, rooted in the inherent interests of the human condition and the tacit telos of every effort to communicate. Rationality functions as a regulative principle rooted in the idea of an "ideal speech situation" (an idea that goes underground but still remains central to his later work) which would allow us to discriminate between tolerable and intolerable differences. Implicit and explicit in the rhetoric and logic of Habermas' texts is an imperative consensualism, an endlessly repeated assertion that our positions "must" strive to converge."
Coles himself offers a position dealing with "edges", the productive area where differences meet and mingle.
"It is not that of a "communicative rationality," but rather one that embraces the sense, fertility and value of the intermingling development of and communication amoung our differences themselves."
He offers an "artistic ethos" which fosters a communication amoung games, selves, and practices which transcends the limits of each. This is a position matching to a degree the current somewhat anarchic social system of the Internet, and to some extent it defines the value of the minimally moderated newsgroups. To impose an imperative consensualism on this situation would be to destroy the valuable quality based on the specific geographical and cultural "location" of members of the Internet community. However, I would argue that it is possible to create knowledge "hubs" or systems where global citizens choose a mode of communicative rationality which acknowledges location and difference, and does not strive for consensus, but rather a productive dialogue. The area of tension between differing opinions and viewpoints may produce valuable insights and moderate actions, as long as the parties accept a rational environment as the best tool for progress.
This scenario of global citizens working, as the case may be, harmoniously or in a state of creative tension towards rational solutions to global problems, depends on whether the quality of human rationality may be used in this concious way. Nozick suggests [Nozick 1993] rationality of mind is an evolutionary survival pattern. His insight is to strip the mystique from rationality and to examine it as an evolutionary characteristic of humans, a part of the whole evolved person.

"Evolutionary theory makes it possible to see rationality as one amoung animal traits, an evolutionary adaptation with a delimited purpose and function." [Nozick 1993]

A first reading may lead to the conclusion that rationality is simply a tool for the survival of the fittest, and that the most successful of the species will be those who use rationality to survive and compete. Nozick describes the person who may uphold certain principles, not because he or she believes in them, but because in a human society people may place their trust more easily in someone who appears to behave consistently, that is, someone who gives the appearance of believing in certain principles. This may enable the person to operate more successfully in society. To follow this line of thought is to find humans may have an evolutionary "programme" of rationality : that it will be used as a tool for self-interest and that its use will be constrained by other, psychological, evolutionary mechanisms. The most that could be hoped for in terms of global betterment would be a schema of enlightened self-interest. This does not take us very far in dealing with complex problems on a global scale, given the human psychological propensity to select short or medium term benefits over long term gains.

However, consideration of the word "delimited", reveals the potential, as well as the limitations, of the concept of rationality as an evolutionary function. Humans may be a product of evolutionary processes, but are not entirely captured by them. Rationality embodies an ability to think beyond limits of age, race, occupation, or status, and an ability to develop principles which may be accepted as universal by rational, informed people.
A view of rationality as a useful construct, tempered with an awareness of diversity of perception, gives a perspective to the use of the Internet as a vehicle to promote the exercise of human rationality. A positive note is that technology brings humans together without overt constraints of power, nationality, appearance, gender, or other difference, which traditionally has made intercultural communication difficult, if not impossible. The practical barriers to rational communication may be broken down, but it must be accepted that people carry these constructs in their heads. The hope must be that they build on the initiatives already in existence in the Internet, to set up a dialogue as equals in a global forum. Each person may be a "self" constructed by socialistion, genetic inheritance, nationality, gender and so on, with a cultural and geographic location. However this "self" may choose to extend its identity to include the construct of "global citizenship", a concept which is necessary built on the quality of human rationality.

3 The Search for a Meta-Ethic.

The difficulties involved in developing a defensible Internet ethical environment in the absence of provable ethical certainty include consideration of historical political events (the failure of communism, the manipulation of democracies by capital interests) and the awareness that the ethical system would be global in application. That is, it must be able to be recognised as valid by people from all cultural backgrounds.

An ethical environment would have at its base the intention to better the world as a global environment and as a human community. The ethical system proposed is a construct focusing on human rationality, derived from a development of Aristotelian ethics by Flynn [Flynn 1973] and interpreted in the light of works by Habermas, Nozick and Sowell. Placed in the context of the Internet, it may be held to have a cross-cultural appeal which fits its global task, that of uniting people in a shared vision of a better future. Meta-ethics is the study of (and the development of concepts in which) „ethics“ is discussed. The goal here is to develop a meta-ethic concept which may be accepted by people of all cultures and religions, not as a replacement for their beliefs, but as an acceptance of ethical progress in a global environment. From this acceptance, global strategies and actions may be developed.

Rationality is a universal quality which may at first be best assessed in terms of its limitations rather than its possibilities. If the whole person has a cultural life, a spiritual conviction, psychological limitations, and so on, the exercise of a wider rational conciousness may fail before a pragmatic acceptance of the dominant order in the individual’s environment. However, if you offer a new public persona in which traditional hierarchies are lost and rationality is chosen, through acceptance of a global meta-ethic, that person becomes delimited in terms of his or her potential to accept new ideas and solutions.

Flynn proposes a "half-solution" to the problem of ethical certainty (the problem is put forward by philosophers who argue ethical certainty is not achievable) by proposing that that it is possible to embrace ethical scepticism, while still constructing a humanist ethic based on the observation of outcomes which promote maximum human happiness of a specific type, based on the full utility of human potential. That is, the exercise of human rationality leads to this essentially practical proposal, and it may be defended with rational arguement. If it is accepted that the full utility of human potential may in future balance on the well-being of the world environment and its species we are able to start to construct the rational "meta-ethic" of global citizenship. Flynn argues that in the absence of absolute ethical truth the best status of humans may be found by using observed data on their strategies of the past, and finding what creates the maximum collective "happiness" in humans, defined as a broad experience of life rich in harmony, and vividness. A life rich in peaceful interaction and fulfilment, rather than a life rich with money and possessions, may be seen as „happiness“ in this context.

"Aristotelians ... wish to emphasise that a certain state of human functioning, as distinct from happiness simply, is the good for men in a practical sense." [Flynn 1973]

Using this approach, the principles upheld by a modern Aristotelian may change with the advent of new and important information showing how the best interests of people are upheld. For example, the challenge to patriarchal academic constructs

masquerading as „discovered truth“, by feminists such as Donna Haraway [Haraway 1991]. Haraway contends political and physiological factors have been built in to the „Body Politic.“

„That union (of the political and physiological) has been a major source of ancient and modern justifications of domination, especially of domination based on differences seen as natural, given, inescapable, and therefore moral. It has also been transformed by the modern biobehavioural sciences in ways we must understand if we are to work effectively for societies free from domination. The degree to which the principle of domination is embedded in our natural sciences, especially those disciplines that seek to explain social groups and behaviour, must not be underestimated. In evading the importance of dominance as a part of the theory and practice of contemporary sciences, we bypass the crucial and difficult examination of the content as well as the social function of science.“

However Haraway defends the structure of science:

„In our search for an understanding of a feminist body politic, we need the discipline of the natural and social sciences, just as we need every creative form of theory and practice. These sciences will have liberating functions in so far as we build them on social relations not based on dominance.“

Scientific „truths“ may be debunked by such work, but the means to make such revelations are those of the rational mind. It is pragmatic to suggest the uptake of the existing scientific framework as a default position, that is, to make use of it until this position is challenged and more equal or rational schema may be put in place.

The point of strength is that the ethics of the Aristotelian may be defended and argued for on the basis of practicability for all people. In this way, the Aristotelian is justified in supporting the humanist ideal, as the life of humane love and creative work, as having the best outcome. In this sense the survival of humans may be seen as a primary principle. And for the human species to survive in a "humane" way, that is, with a broad experience of life rich in harmony and vividness, it may be deemed essential that our fellow travellers, the other species which live in and help to define our real world, survive also. The rights of the world citizen must include an appreciation of the integrity of our planet and the species which occupy it.

Thus the Aristotelian approach may build an ethical framework which expands to take in concepts unknown by the ancient philosophers, that is, the human in a context of „global“ politics. The Internet world citizen with this ethical framework is justified in saying his or her ethical system should be supported by everyone, and to make value judgements on what is happening on the Net and in the larger world. The appeal of this practical „ethical bridge“ is that the acceptance of what is rationally the best view given the current state of human knowledge, may be acted apon in the arena of global citizenship in the Internet. Yet because no claim of absolute ethical

truth is made citizens do not have to make moral transformations which they may find impossible given their cultural backgrounds. The meta-ethic may be accepted as an ethical standard by virtual world citizens of the Internet, which would nevertheless allow them to retain their traditional moral absolute beliefs, or remain ethical sceptics, or keep whatever religious beliefs they hold, in the "real" world. This acceptance of a rational meta-ethic may be seen as human ethical development, not ethical scepticism. Someone could be a fundamentalist Muslim or work for IBM, and still support it. Every person would be able to recognise that rational work towards a better world is a higher function open to everyone. This scenario differs from the regimes of existing international agencies which express highflown sentiments of international co-operation. These regimes in fact operate from a tacit acceptance of nationalistic and economic imperatives and work from a basis of negotiation, diplomacy, and imposed solutions.

In contrast to existing international agencies, new modes of communication might be established through the Internet. Citizens may be presented with radical change in the form of a rationally operating Internet global society. Solutions would develop in the minds and Internet meeting places of global citizens, rather than be foisted apon them by an outside agency. The aim would be a constructive interaction rather than a process of cultural homogenisation or consensus. Ethical guidelines would operate allowing citizens to find a future direction, while also countering threats to their own public forum, whether these threats emerged as widespread software patents hindering development, sale of pornography affecting public forum functions, large scale propaganda, inappropriate commercialisation, or whatever. History teaches us that public freedoms and public free speech are always under threat.

The conclusion that the maintenance of human ethical "identity" is important for the functioning of society, is drawn from the work of postmodernists who have argued for equality and recognition of the value of various societal groups. But the concept of global citizenship also implies a recognition that enhanced global communication and co-operation amoung peoples is possibly the only practical way to cope with the major ills that assail our planet environmentally, with overpopulation, in the issues of mass slaughter and hunger of people, the disappearance of many species of plants and animals, and many other issues. The "constrained" ideology described by Sowell [Sowell 1987] as being the confidence in traditional process, in politics, religion, family, and other matters, with each person confining their endeavours to their own field of expertise, holds no promise of solving the major global problems of the next century. In contrast, the "unconstrained" ideology of a new global citizen dependent on new solutions devised by the best judgements of rational minds, holds some hope of recognising the "big picture" and devising solutions.

The inclusive nature of the neo-Aristotelian reliance on rationality creates, further, the opportunity for those with a conservative ideology such as that of the free market to work within an Internet ethical environment. People who believe in the survival or prosperity of the fittest, operating in a competitive marketplace, may still recognise

that their own long-term survival in a world they recognise may be dependent on a level of global co-operation about use of the world's resources. They may for a time support the concept of the global citizen as valid, though they do not personally believe in the underlying ethics. This adoption of principles without necessarily believing in them works also for existing schemes including capitalism, muslim or christian fundamentalism, and so on. However clearly those people who did wholeheartedly support the principles adopted by the community would be the force which would create it and drive it.

4 Defending an Internet Ethical Environment as a Moral Choice

Flynn [Flynn 1976] maintains that ideological opponents must be confronted with a specific moral agenda rather than ruled out of the ethical arena entirely. In other words supporters of a rational global citizenship project could not deny opponents entry into the moral realm, but they could defend themselves as providing the best ethical solution, and criticise opponents on specific moral grounds.

Flynn provides a list of issues that are typical of moral discourse in order to establish what these grounds of moral comparison could consist of if a person with certain ethical views is assessed. The points relevant to this case are listed as follows. The person must:

- Have ideals that take priority over whims or desires.

- Continue to hold the ideals having gained a reasonably full knowledge of what they mean in practice.

- Be willing to to universalise the ideals - be willing to give reasons for the moral assessments, and stand by the ideals with logical consistency.

- Have concern for the welfare of a group of people (the group may or may not include all of mankind), rather than the person alone - this rules out pure egoism.

- The person must possess some criterion of justice, at least justice as fairness, and will probably have a criterion of justice as rewarding excellence as well - if so, he or she must have something to determine the balance between the two with logical consistency, for example, a criterion of importance or significant life.

- Use the ideals to pass judgement on the person's own way of life in total, as well as bit by bit.

- Be willing to argue that the ideals, or a blueprint which aims as close to them as reality allows, are capable of ordering a human society.

- Welcome the remaking of mankind in general in the light of the ideals.

- Give happiness (perceived satisfaction) an important place - he or she need not give it top priority and certainly need not endorse the happiness of all mankind.

The list is designed to encourage communication with opponents and clarify the problem of justification.

Firstly, it is appropriate to show why an Internet ethical environment incorporating ideals of global citizenship could be put forward as morally justifiable, using the terms above, by Flynn. A rational global citizen, having educated himself or herself through the facilities provided could be expected to make decisions on ethical grounds which would take precedence over whims and desires, as the individual saw fit. This person would universalize his or her ideals that everyone should work towards a better world as rational global citizens. It would follow that this person would have concern for all global citizens, as well as the earth itself and all its plant and animal species.

To be realistic, a global citizen's view would consider trade-offs between what might be considered unfettered ideal outcomes, and the constraints of the real world. For example the global citizen would attempt to find a balance between recognising the equality of all citizens and their rights to a full life, while including the market and its rewards for excellence. The boundaries to the workings of the market would be established by the global citizens' visions for the future. If optimal outcomes in terms of the global community's ethics were established these outcomes would be based on the concept of global co-operation and the best interests of all people. A negative scenario could also be devised, in which unregulated competitive markets, nationalistic interests and non-humane scenarios prevailed.

A rational scenario would presumably establish the way the market could best operate to cause economic efficiency without threatening the higher ethical purpose of global citizens. It could be argued that this operation of the market would be necessary to get things done in an efficient way, and to allow for motivation and reward in the important areas of research and development of things which would further the global community's aim of preserving itself in good heart. However the global community would not, by doing so, endorse free market ideology. It would endorse its own principles on the understanding that people could make the best ethical choice, that is, the choice of promoting global harmony and co-operation. The market could operate efficiently within that ethical framework.

As seen above, the concept of global citizenship implies more than participation in a public forum though this is an important function. It implies that the individual be ready to make personal changes to better the life of all people, and of other species. The potential of the technology is the creation of opportunity to educate, and increase understanding and peaceful interaction between people of different nationalities and

ideas. The nature of the interaction would not be coercive, but the intention would be to improve the quality of life for global citizens of the present and future. The principles may not be acceptable to ideological adversaries, but would effectively arm the Internet community to debate and take action against infringements of their perceived rights, in the inevitable conflict with groups attempting to impose other ideologies on the Internet. „Internet citizens“ would be empowered by their ideology to protect and develop their cyberspace domain.

5 The Challenge to Conservative Ideologies

The probable primary ideological opponents of a rational ethical environment are likely to be supporters of the free market represented by people with libertarian or elitist views who promote, for example, the unregulated activity of major capital interests and multi-national communications corporations. It is worthwhile testing the defences of an ethical environment against their likely arguments. However, it could just as easily be followers of absolutist religions, who might object to the humanist derivation of the postulated ethic, or national governments, who may perceive national advantage as more important in the short to medium term than global advantage in the long term.

If we take the "constrained" view of society put forward by Sowell, and contrast it with the "unconstrained" view, we see, essentially, an irresolvable conflict. However Sowell tells us that not every ideology is entirely "constrained", or "unconstrained". Some are a mixture. [Sowell 1997]

The ideology of the rational global citizen would appear to be primarily "unconstrained", that is, has features of leadership by intellectuals, and the following of rational lines of thought to wherever they may lead. It incorporates the belief that human knowledge has advanced historically, if imperfectly, and that good use may be made of that knowledge to improve the world. However it may rightly include features of the "constrained" viewpoint. It does not argue against the importance of traditional process but rather seeks to establish a system which would create change through education and rational debate, rather than coercion. It accepts elements of human nature such as the competitive drive, and thus accepts that in some areas the market may be the best way to progress.

It is in the concept of progress that the ethics of the global citizen would diverge from those of the traditional conservative. The postulated rational global citizen would argue that progress must be directed by rational global assessment of factors, environmental, economic, social, and so on, in order to preserve the earth for future generations and to improve the lot of many global citizens. Typically, the traditionally conservative person would not argue against the ideals put forward but would argue that the way the global citizens would go about achieving these ideals would be

destructive, or ineffective. The conservative would put his or her faith in the processes of existing institutions such as international political bodies.

However the meta-ethic of the rational global citizen's new world would be backed by the modes of mass communication made possible by the technology of the Internet. Citizens could develop classified "knowledge" systems which would enable them to better themselves as informed participants in global politics, and integrate or connect existing Internet initiatives in areas such as the environment, national regulation of Internet use, and so on. They could overcome existing technical problems of vote-taking on issues, and form news systems and interfaces to keep citizens informed on issues perceived as important. The process would be unlike anything seen in international relations, because of the direct uncensored input (given that the Internet community was able to win in the critical matter of use of cryptography for privacy of communications, against national interests) of very large numbers of global citizens. In this way, the raising of awareness of the mass of people of the issues and the possibility of mass acceptance of solutions to global problems by global public opinion, could potentially be a peaceful and profound precursor of useful change. In itself, it is a process which the traditional conservative would have once derided as impossible. The Internet may well make it possible, and in doing so, challenges the conservative view on the grounds of overcoming a major traditional objection.

The reliance on tradition and unarticulated social structures of the essentially conservative view of politics may be the primary cause of inertia towards radical social change on any scale. It tends towards an acceptance of , for example, inequalities in economic advantage due to the laissez-faire operation of the market. However, it may be argued that both the ideology of the free marketeer is ethically flawed, and that the traditional view put forward by Smith, [Smith 1976] that the free operation of the market will result in a favourable outcome, may be challenged on wider economic grounds. In this paper, the ethical aspects only are examined.

Attempts to establish a moral basis for the free market, such as the libertarian philosophy of Tibor R Machan [Machan 1989] which is based on a specific moral theory, Classical Egoism, are readily challenged. In his critique of Machan's philosophical justification, Pullar comments :

"Machan's work is seriously lacking in scholarship, and... his arguments are often based on dubious premises. Machan's work is no case for the free market economy." [Pullar 1994]

Given that Machan's work is broadly representative of free market ideology, we can gain insight into the moral status of the free marketeer. It is certainly true they take up an ethical stance, and will adhere to their views under pressure. A well-known example of this may be the immovable stance of Margaret Thatcher during her years as Prime Minister of Britain.

It may be argued against the free market that outcomes are not satisfactory. Perfectly free markets are not able to be achieved in the real world, given the presence of modifying external factors, and no such perfectly free market has been achieved. A result of free market political decisions in terms of deregulation has resulted in monopolisation and concentration of ownership in major industries, particularly those concerned with global communication and information systems. As a result, individuals are faced with less rather than more choice in the way their knowledge systems are served up to them. This raises the potential of indoctrination of the consumer. As the issue of individual freedom and choice is central to the free market ideology, this is a major criticism. It is also possible to argue that technology can also help to make markets more free, as seen in the development of Java, where Java applets may be employed across Internet platforms, and give the user independence from the systems provided by the giant multi-national corporations which seek to place their own standards on the Internet.

While free marketeers believe everyone should participate in the free market, to enable it to work, there is no intent that everyone will benefit from this participation. Individuals subscribing to the free market ideology are involved in establishing winners and losers. The assumption, which I have challenged, is that the process of competition will give the best outcome. In a global scenario not only individuals, but whole countries may be the losers. The environment, the welfare of many species of plant and animal life, and the quality of life for future generations are also secondary issues or ruled out of the ethical realm of the free marketeer. The ethical stance of the free marketeer may be challenged on the basis of being highly individualistic, and thus not concerned with the welfare of all or a group of people. Its basis of egoism ensures the state protects only the right of individuals to compete with other individuals. This does not equate with concern for their welfare.

The personal happiness of the free marketeer is considered to be of very high value, in fact far more important than altruistic notions of being of service to other people. Within the ethical realm this is a major moral failure. Similarly, free market ideology makes little or no moral distinction between dealing with, for example, genocidal or torturing regimes, and dealing with democratic regimes which support human rights. Business is business. The process argument would state that the rights of ordinary citizens of these regimes are infringed by such measures as trade embargoes, and countries should be left to sort out their own political problems. But in the ethical arena of global citizenship, this situation becomes a strong case for the workings of a market stripped of its ideological component. In an ethical environment, new solutions may be devised which may or may not include trade embargoes. Political issues cannot be separated from economic issues, environmental or other issues, but are seen as part of the big picture. Certainly, there would be large scope for objections to be transmitted to the citizens of the offending country, in much the same way as Chinese citizens learned by fax of world reaction to the massacre of students at Tienanmen Square.

It could be argued that one of the key issues of the progress of South Africa to the breakdown of the apartheid system and towards democracy was the glare of international publicity and the feeding of key ideas back into South Africa from dissidents both outside and inside the country. However, a rational global citizenry may not see the establishment of democracy in every country as necessarily the best solution to global political troubles. Establishing global political solutions might be one of its tasks.

Upgrading of the World Wide Web will be necessary to achieve a technical infrastructure to support the societal needs of global citizens. Features of Hyper-G [Maurer, 1996] pioneer some of the structures required, for example, improved navigation tools, information „hubs“, levels of anonymity of contributors, and copyright charging systems. These structures, within the context of the Internet, have prompted the author to track back to an ethical framework, presented here, which will justify attempts to build an optimal technical/social infrastructure.

6 Conclusion

The Internet, in particular the second generation World Wide Web architectures, have the potential to host a global ethical environment based on a qualified interpretation of the quality of human rationality. Building on this "meta-ethic", concerned with the welfare of the world community expressed as its people, its environment, and its other species, a global citizenship may be created. The aim of such a citizenry would be, not to „regulate“ in the interests of the commercial sector or an external bureaucracy, but to establish a global knowledge and political system which would protect its own freedoms and promote a better world.

References

[Habermas 1989] Habermas, J. "The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society," Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence , Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989.

[Sowell 1987] Sowell, T. "A Conflict of Visions. Ideological Origins of Political Struggles", William Morrow and Company, Inc. New York, 1987.

[Nelson 1987] Nelson, T. "Computer Lib / Dream Machines". Tempus Books, Microsoft Press, Washington, revised edition 1987.

[Elmer-Dewitt 1994] Elmer-Dewitt, P. "Battle For The Soul Of The Internet", Time International Magazine, July 25, 1994, No. 30, Time Inc. New York p. 32.

[Shearer 1996] Shearer, J. „Mediation In The Internet“. WebNet 96 - World Conference of the Web Society Proceedings, AACE (Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education) USA, 1996.

[Shearer& Gutmann 1996] Shearer, J. Gutmann, P. „Government, Cryptography, and the Right To Privacy.“
Journal of Universal Computer Science, 2 (3) 113-137, 1996.

[Shearer& Vermeer 1995] Shearer, J. Vermeer, A.
„Software Patents and the Internet: Lessons from the Compuserve/Unisys Graphics Interchange Format Case Study.“ Journal of Universal Computer Science, 1 (5), 308-315, 1995.

[Coles 1992] Coles, R. „Self/Power/Other. Political Theory and Dialogical Ethics.“ Cornell University Press, 1992.

[Nozick 1993] Nozick, R. "The Nature of Rationality", Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993.

[Flynn 1973] Flynn, James R. "Humanism and Ideology. An Aristotelian View", Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.

[Haraway 1991] Haraway, J. „Simians, Cyborgs, & Women. The Reinvention of Nature.“ Routledge New York, 1991.

[Flynn 1976] Flynn, James R. "The Realm Of The Moral", American Philosophical Quarterly Volume 13, Number 4, October 1976 pp. 273- 286..

[Smith 1976] Smith, A. "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" Oxford University Press , 1976

[Machan 1989] Machan, T. "The Moral Case for the Free Market Economy", The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, New York, 1989

[Pullar 1994] Pullar, N.S. "A Moral Case for the Free Market Economy? The Libertarian Philosophy of Tibor R Machan". University of Auckland, M.A. Thesis, 1994.

[Maurer 1996] Maurer, H. Personal Communication, 1995 - 1996.