DEVIN STEWART: Professor, how would you describe the world we live in today? How is it unique?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I think what has changed in the world, basically I suppose over the course of my lifetime, which is since the 1950s, has been an enormous increase in the flow of information across societies. I mean economists rightly say that globalization began a very long time ago and that the British economy, for example, had as large a dependence upon world trade in the 18th century as it does, roughly speaking, now. But the average Briton did not know anything about what was going on in Bangalore or in Kumasi, let alone Melbourne or somewhere remote like that. So I think the big thing is that every day now you can wake up in the morning and keep track of what's going on anywhere—and, even more interesting, there's a fairly high probability that they can keep track of you.

So again, it's still somewhat asymmetrical, this relationship of information flows—I mean the flows are not all the same in every direction—but still it is the case that if you live in Accra, Ghana, you can keep track of what's going on in London, and if you live in London you can keep track of what's going in Accra, second by second. So I think that's a big change.

It's worth applying a general thought, which is that it has always been the case, I think, that people understood that they had moral obligations to people they knew about. Well, now you know about everybody. So, in a certain sense, this kind of information flow makes it essential, I think, that we in some sense take responsibility for everybody.

DEVIN STEWART: So it in fact increases our moral obligations?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Alas, yes, information increases your moral obligations. I know it's hard enough already. But the more you know, the more things you can think about affecting.

I mean you need both knowledge and of course power, you need the capacity to affect other people. I can't be responsible for doing something for somebody if I don't have the capacity to affect them. But that's another thing that is of course very much changed over the centuries. Both collectively and individually, we can have huge impacts, and both intentionally and unintentionally.

The big ecological problems that face us are not the result of people mostly intentionally trying to affect each other in negative ways, but as island nations disappear, that is a consequence of things that people are doing in other places. If we weren't doing those things, they wouldn't be disappearing.

So we have the capacity now to shape life in other places to a greater degree, I think, than we ever had. And we also, as I say, have more information about those places. The combination of knowledge and capacity to act I think does increase the range of things that you are required to think about.
DEVIN STEWART: Do you see things getting better or worse?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well, there's that much-used Dickens quote about "the best of times and the worst of times."

I think many things have improved. For a start, the world is significantly more—there is a wider range of places in which something like democracy exists, for example, than has been true in much of the past. There are more democratic states in Africa than there were when I was a child. When I was a child, there were mostly colonies and there was one democracy. As we know, Latin America is much more democratic than it was when I was a teenager.

China is more democratic. I'm a critic of many things that the Chinese regime does, but still it is more possible now to express critique. It's true that they have large numbers of people in prison for expressing critique, but the numbers of people in prison in China today are orders of magnitude smaller than the numbers that there were in the past. I think those things are getting better.

But the thing that worries me the most, I suppose, when I think about things we should be doing something about is that we have been terrifically unsuccessful in producing the kind of coordinated action that is absolutely essential if we are going to do anything about these ecological problems that affect us. We haven't even been able to get people to a consensus about what's happening. Even though there's a technical and scientific consensus, we can't produce a political consensus about what's happening. That's not just true, unfortunately, in the United States; it's true in a lot of places. I think that is a challenge.

It is, in part, a challenge because these are problems that can only be solved by massive coordination. Some of them can be solved to some extent by creating markets and so on for carbon offsets, which will allow individual decision-makers to produce good collective results. But a lot of them we can't solve that way. We just need massive coordination.

We are not even very good at coordinating within countries, even within democratic, highly organized, technologically advanced countries. So I guess it's not surprising that with, whatever it is, 195 nations in the world we can't coordinate everybody.

And I don't feel very optimistic about the way we're going on that. Every time we approach some kind of new deal on these things, it seems to go away. So I worry about that.

It's an interesting problem because in the end it's going to affect everybody. This is not one of those cases where not doing something simply harms strangers or people far away. In the end, we all need the world to function ecologically. While money can protect you to some extent, in the end, for one thing, it just gets more and more expensive to protect yourself from the harm.

Even if money does provide some kind of protection from some of the ecological problems, in the end, if you can afford a gas mask, I suppose you can live on a planet where the air is poisoned. But it just gets more and more expensive. It would be better, surely, to be able to live on a planet where you didn't have to wear a gas mask.

I'm not saying that we're anywhere close to that yet, but I do think these are not just problems about the failure of people to do what's altruistic. They're actually failures of prudence and self-interest as well.

DEVIN STEWART: Part of our project is illuminating an idea of a global ethic. Does that mean
anything to you; and, if so, what does it mean?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I think that, as I said, we now know about everybody, in principle, and we now can affect everybody, in principle. That just means applying normal moral ideas that are present in almost every moral tradition, that we have at least negative obligations to everybody, that we have at least the negative obligation not to cause harm to strangers who pose no threat to us.

So there is a kind of minimum, basic set of obligations that I think—it's not just that we have them to one another; it's that most people recognize that we have them to one another—not everybody, but most people recognize. In particular, there are people in every society who recognize that we have these obligations. They are, as it were, a majority of the bien-pensant [right-minded] in every society that agrees about this. So we have a basis. It's minimal, but there is a basis.

If you look at the things that produce moral disagreement across the world today, some of them are about things like global distribution questions, though a lot of that disagreement is about the facts, I think. That is, if Jeff Sachs is right and it is going to cost so many billions of dollars to get rid of the bottom billion, if we all agreed on that, on those facts, we might be able to agree on how to produce that money.

But we don't agree on those facts. And indeed, not only do we not agree on those facts, we don't agree about how to spend the money. We don't agree how much, for example, it is helpful to have increases in aid transfers between states as opposed to increases in direct investment in order to liberate the economic forces in the less-developed world, and so on.

But there are also probably disagreements there in the end about how important it is to make sure that everybody is taken out of poverty. By the way, that's one of the pieces of good news. The Chinese, in particular, have taken hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in the last couple of decades. That's an amazing achievement. We should be admiring of them for having done it—and, by the way, having done it at the same time as becoming a moderately—they are still a very repressive society, but they are a less repressive society than they were at the start of this process. So they are less repressive and there are fewer people in poverty. That's a significant achievement.

The other kind of source of disagreement is to do with things that have to do very much with intimate life—gender, sexual orientation, to some extent religious observance, and so on. These are things where you get very big divisions across societies. They have to do with how people do things in their families, with their close intimates, their friends, in their villages and towns and neighborhoods. They do them in different ways in different places and they feel very strongly in each of these places that the way they do it is the right way to do it and they think—it's not just that other people are doing something different, which would be okay; it's that they think that other people are doing something wrong.

So when the other people come in, when the American secretary of state comes in or the British prime minister and says, "We're going to come in and help you, but a condition of that is that you stop persecuting gay people," people don't necessarily respond in a very positive way to those kinds of interventions.

Now, that was not meant to be an argument against the secretary of state or the British prime minister saying those things or doing those things. I think it's right, precisely because we can affect how things are everywhere, when we give people help we have to say, "We're in a shared moral world here and we can't just help you in ways that allow you to go on doing what you want to do. We have to help you in ways that we can agree are right. If you're going to go on doing things that are
wrong, that we think are seriously wrong, we first need to have a conversation about why we don't have a common understanding about this, and then we need to say, "Look, I'm sorry, but we can't make unconditional gifts to people who are doing things that we take to be seriously wrong."

There's a lot of focus at the moment on the lesbian and gay and transgender issues. They're very important. But the underlying issues are about gender, and they are hugely important because it is still the case that the vast majority of women in the world live in conditions of effective domination and inferiority, or inferiorization, by society, to some extent by the state, whatever the state says. I mean Saudi Arabia has signed all the UN treaties on the rights of women, but it would be crazy to think that that settled the question of whether women have the rights that they should have in Saudi Arabia. And I'm not picking on the Saudis. There are lots of other people about whom you could say the same thing.

DEVIN STEWART: You're basically saying that disagreements over gender and intimacy are a very important source of conflict.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Yes.

DEVIN STEWART: You talked about facts, gender issues, and norms and morality as being sources of conflict. Do you see one as more important than the other?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: There are these sources of moral disagreement across societies. Some of them have to do with just what the facts are. We don't agree within societies or across societies exactly about the facts about how to deal with global poverty. What are the solutions? What's the scale of it? What are the obligations? None of this is agreed in general. I think if we had more agreement on the facts, we probably could get more agreement on action. But these are very complicated social facts and they are hard to pin down.

The other great source of conflict across societies is about intimate life, about the things that we do with our families and our close friends in our synagogues and temples and churches. These are things to do with gender, sexual orientation, and to some extent with religious observance. Those are things where there is very significant disagreement and where people think they are very important. So it's not trivial disagreement. People don't just think it's okay that there are other people who are doing these things differently. They think it's bad that other people are doing these things differently to some extent.

It's interesting. There are people, I think, whose response is, "Okay, you can do that but we won't." Sometimes African politicians talking about gay issues will say, "Look, if you want to allow your guys to marry each other and your women to marry each other go ahead, but we're not going to do that." But it's not because they think it's okay; it's simply because they think it is, as it were, up to us to decide how to behave even though they think we're behaving wrongly.

So sometimes people are able to handle a little bit of difference in this area. But what they don't accept is that you should come into, as it were, their lives and declare how they should conduct their intimate lives. As I said, at the moment there is a lot of focus, correctly or rightly I think, on questions about lesbian and gay and transgender issues around the world. But those are small, I think, in comparison with the fundamental gender inequalities that are absolutely pervasive still basically in all societies.

It's true that there have been massive improvements in many societies. In the North Atlantic things are, relatively speaking, much better for women than they ever have been. But even here there are
things we should be doing. In many places in the world it's a long, long way from anything like being even moderately satisfactory in this situation.

When you're dealing with people in other societies, coming in and saying, "We want to help you, we want to do business with you, we want to trade with you, we want to have tourism, you come to us and we come to you, and so on, but you have to understand that we think that the way women are treated in your society is not just different from us but we think it's wrong"—I mean you have to say that if that's what you think, and that's what I think. But how you get from there to more consensus about these questions is a difficult issue.

As I say, many societies are moving ahead formally on these fronts. They have signed up for the UN treaties and so on, and to some extent they have changed the law. In Pakistan, the laws against honor killing have gotten stronger and stronger in the last decade, for example, and they are enforcing them more than they used to. But the fact is thousands of women a year around the world still are killed in these ways.

So I think we need to continue these conversations. We have to make it clear on the moral issues where we stand, that on the basic rights issues we are not going to concede. But I think it is going to be a long conversation.

Though one has to remember that it has only taken essentially 50 years to get from a situation where Sandra Day O'Connor could be told by a law firm when she left her law school with one of the top qualifications, "Why are you coming to us; if you're only going to get married and have children, go away?" to a situation where it's perfectly routine now to have a number of women on the Supreme Court. So I think, when the tide turns, it can move quite fast.

We have to remember, just to take Pakistan again, the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association in Pakistan is a woman, and they have had women prime ministers in India and Pakistan and Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and all of South Asia have had women prime ministers. So there has been progress. But these are slow-moving things. The fact that there is a woman at the head of the Supreme Court bar in Pakistan does not mean that you can't get stoned to death in a village because you refuse to marry the man that your family picked for you. You still can. I think, when it happens, it may happen quite fast, the big change in each place, but it hasn't happened yet.

One piece of good news here, I think, is that in these respects many parts of, say, sub-Saharan Africa are actually not so bad. Women have places in public life in many sub-Saharan African countries. They have relative economic autonomy; they can run businesses without their husbands having rights over them, and so on. So there are many places in the less-developed world where things aren't as bad as they could be. So there is a higher base from which to start.

DEVIN STEWART: Is this the biggest ethical challenge that we face today, or is there something else?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well, I think getting to a shared understanding of what equality means with respect to gender and ethno-racial difference and sexual orientation remains a big challenge. Many states treat men and women unequally, and they may do so in a way that makes it very hard for them to deny that that's what they are doing. And some states distinguish among residents and citizens with respect to religious affiliation and give special privilege to some. That's especially true in, say, parts of the Muslim world.

But the idea that the citizens—and indeed people—are entitled to a certain kind of basic equality is
pretty pervasive in the world. What's needed is a shared understanding of what that means in practice. So it may well be that there are people who think that not allowing women to drive in Saudi Arabia is somehow an expression of equality because, after all, there's a relevant difference between men and women in their capacities with respect to driving. That is, they may try and turn it into a factual issue. Now, if they really treat it as a factual issue, then we can have the factual conversation with them and show them that they are mistaken.

Often, these "factual" claims are just covers for underlying prejudices, and if you persuade them that they're wrong about the facts, they'll just come up with some new facts to continue the practice. So we shouldn't take everything that people say about these things with the same seriousness. But still, I think we owe it to people, if they do offer a defense of what they are doing, to take the defense seriously and to respond to it as best we can.

But I think these conversations are going to go on secretary of state to foreign minister, they're going to go on imam to imam, rabbi to rabbi, Catholic priest to Protestant minister, congregation to congregation, community to community, philosopher to philosopher, tourist to tour guide. They're going to go on at many, many levels in the world. The fact is that, because there is all this increased exchange of information, and because there is all this migration and tourism, it's very difficult in the world today to live in a place where you don't at least know what the range of opinion is.

You may think that it's just fine to treat women the way you do, but in the past you didn't know that there were people who thought there was another way of doing it. Now, unless you're in a very remote village in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan or somewhere—and even there I suspect it's pretty easy to find these things out because they have access to satellite television —unless you are in a very remote place, you know that your way of doing things is not the only way of doing things; and, as I said, not just that it's different, but that it is criticized, assessed negatively in a moral way, by other people.

That can make you defensive, it can make you hold on to the practice, but it is different from just doing it "because it's what we do and no one has ever suggested doing it any other way."

I think that those flows of discussion and information are just going to go on and they are going to reshape the way everybody thinks about these things.

DEVIN STEWART: You talked about conversation and speaking up when you think things are wrong. Are those your recommendations to organizations and businesses and governments, or do you have other recommendations?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I think there are two levels of this.

The thing about conversation as a metaphor for how we should interact is that conversation is not an instrumental activity. You converse with people not in order to achieve some result but in order to be with them, to share with them whatever comes up. In the end, if you converse with people sufficiently, you get used to each other and you take each other's differences in a more relaxed way.

There are devout evangelical American Christians who think that homosexuality is wrong but who have gay friends and who don't quite know how to reconcile these two facts. But nevertheless, they are in conversation every day or from time to time with their lesbian and gay friends, and so they have a more relaxed attitude, even if officially they think it's bad.

So conversation is like that. It's not about coming to agreement; it's not about settling things. It's a
way of being together.

We need to have discussions as well as conversations, and discussions are instrumental things where you are trying to settle something. We've had many such discussions since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and we've got lots and lots of agreements. Almost everybody has signed up to lots and lots of agreements. They are, from a philosophical point of view, somewhat weird because they are the result of political processes, and so they have things in them that are of very different characters.

It's very important to have access to water. I'm not sure that access to water figures in the philosophical constellation along with, let's say, the right to free expression as a fundamental right. It's a need that human beings have, but it doesn't have the same kind of complicated philosophical basis. But still, we now say that everybody has a right to water. Great. I mean it's good that people have access to water; I'm not against that.

So these treaties are a bit of a hodgepodge. Some of the things in them I don't agree with. But still, they are politics; they are the result of complicated negotiations in which people give and take, and in the end they come to an agreement. They are at a higher level of the common denominator than they were when they started out. They are not where everybody had ambitions to be in other places, but they are in a better place than they were.

So conversation is one thing. I think that, to connect the two, people who have been having conversations with each other are probably better at having discussions. That is, if you are in conversation with people, then when you have to come to a discussion where the point is that you have to agree about something, you are having a discussion with somebody you know, whom you sort of like, and you know things about them, and you know they're weird in this way but regular in that way, and it makes it easier.

So the analogy is, as it were, the more our societies are in conversation, the more we have sense of what people in other places are like and what concerns them, the more likely it is that when it comes to having to make the hard decisions that are involved in discussions where you have to settle something, the more likely we are to be able to do it.

I think the great challenge for the United States and for the North Atlantic societies is to be better listeners in these discussions because the discussions work better if everybody feels they have voice. Even if you come in absolutely convinced of your own moral decision, it's not helpful not to hear the other possibilities I don't think. We're not terribly good at that.

DEVIN STEWART: The Carnegie Council is turning 100 very soon, but we want to think about the future. What would you like to see happen in the next 100 years?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well, gosh, I'm definitely not in the prophecy business. There are a number of background things that I think it would be interesting to try and figure out as a human community over the next 100 years.

One is something that is I think very much in our minds at the moment but probably will continue to be for a while, which is how to make democracies work better. At the moment, the advanced democracies are actually not doing a terrifically good job of dealing with some of the major problems that face them.

They look dysfunctional to the citizenry. The Congress looks dysfunctional to American citizens. The
British Parliament looks weird to a lot of people in Britain, I think.

There isn't an alternative. We have to run democratic societies. The alternatives are undoubtedly worse. But democracy can definitely be improved. It needs to be improved, because all these other problems that we have to solve, especially the big ecological problems, are either going to be solved by crises that produce very, very high costs or they are going to be solved by democracies getting better at making complicated decisions and coordinating with other democracies.

So I think there are a lot of challenges there for politicians and for theorists about politics to figure out about how we can improve the basic mechanisms by which we have to settle the big problems that face us collectively. That's a kind of second-order set of issues about the institutions that we use in order to solve the first-order problems.

I continue to worry most in the medium and long term about the ecological problems. But these things are all connected. One of the challenges on the ecological front is continuing to take people out of poverty without massive environmental degradation. Getting the gender questions right will make a difference to the ecological things, I think. So they are connected, many of the first-order problems.

I would say that as a global issue this isn't big, but as an American issue, I would hope that over the next 100 years we get back to normal levels of incarceration. We now have a quarter of the world's prisoners and we have 4 percent of the world's population. I think it's amazing that it's not regarded as more of a scandal than it is. Whatever you think about Americans, we can't be five times as bad as the average people. Now, there are problems in the prison systems of most countries. It's just that we have this massive problem of just having too many people in prison at all.

We also don't treat them properly. The area in which the United States I think is most defective in relation to our obligations in respect of human rights is probably in the way we treat prisoners. I think there are human rights abuses in American prisons that, if we found them in other countries, we'd be reporting them to Geneva and making lists of complaints against people. That's true.

Prison conditions in most of Africa are ghastly. I wouldn't want to be imprisoned in the Arabian Peninsula and so on—at least I wouldn't want to be a non-Arab imprisoned in the Arabian Peninsula.

I think these are serious problems. They're terrible and we should do something about them, but they pale by comparison with the second-order problem of getting better at solving first-order problems. The big challenges are the environment, poverty, gender.

The environment is not getting better, I don't think, but on poverty and gender we have made some significant progress in the last decades. And I think we know how to do it. The trouble in the environmental case is that we don't know how to do it. We don't know socially how to do it and we don't know technically probably how to do it. So it is a genuinely complex and difficult problem of a sort that you would expect to be difficult to solve, especially with democratic institutions. But that is our situation. We can only solve it with democratic institutions unless we go in a catastrophic direction. And it is complex and it needs solving.

DEVIN STEWART: What does moral leadership mean to you? If it doesn't mean anything, you're welcome to say that, too.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: No, no.
DEVIN STEWART: You can be a skeptic.

Also, Professor, do you want to speak specifically about cosmopolitanism at all?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I'm happy to.

DEVIN STEWART: It's an exciting way to address global moral problems. I don't want to exhaust you, though.

What does moral leadership mean to you?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I actually think that in a lot of societies we can show examples where leadership actually changes moral attitudes. I'll give you an example which was very salient to me as I was growing up, because I went to boarding school in England when I was a teenager, and I was at school in England in the period when homosexual sex was decriminalized, abortion was legalized, and capital punishment was abolished. That all happened in one Parliament, I think, in the mid-1960s.

If you look at those issues, on all of them most people thought that the bills were wrong when the Parliamentarians voted for them. They have this charming custom in England of having free votes on moral issues. So these were not partisan debates and the bills were not government bills; they were so-called private members' bills. But the Parliament voted to do these three things, and six months later most people in Britain thought they were right.

There seems to have been something of a shift, in the African-American community in particular, in attitude to gay marriage ever since the president of the United States said that he thought that gay people ought to have their marriages recognized by the states.

So I do think that there is such a thing as moral leadership in the sense of articulating a moral position and getting other people to line up behind you because you have articulated it.

I don't think simply announcing things is how that happens. You have to make arguments and make it seem persuasive.

But you also have to make it seem attractive, which is not a matter of arguments. I think that part of what happens when certain people speak in an attractive way about these issues is that they shift people's views not by reasoning them into a new position but by saying, "Oh, that attractive person"—not physically attractive, that morally attractive person—"has this view."

I think Gandhi persuaded a lot of people towards nonviolence in that way. He was a strange and difficult man, but he was morally attractive, and he got lots of people to behave in this rather surprising way, which worked, by being morally attractive.

So I think there are clear examples of that.

I think it is the case that on many issues in many societies—I wrote a book a couple of years ago about the ways in which institutions of honor develop over time. If you think about why foot binding ceased in China in the early 20th century, it began with a small group of outsiders, and then insiders, campaigning and making a movement. If Kang Youwei hadn't started with his friend an anti-foot-binding society, and if other Chinese literati and intellectuals hadn't joined in, they might still be doing it as far as I can tell.
So I think there is a real place for leadership. But leadership only goes so far. Then you need what they got in the Chinese case, which is you need organization, you need movements, you need civil society organizations that are committed to making these changes. It's because of the anti-foot-binding societies and the anti-opium societies in China that they started to deal with those scourges in their society.

It's because of the abolitionist movement that we were able to eventually get rid of slavery. It took a civil war as well. But the fact is a sort of moral dynamic had to be set before the Civil War could raise the issues. Obviously, it would have been better to solve it without a civil war.

So I think leadership is important and it works sometimes. But one of the things about democratic societies is everybody, rightly, regards themselves as a center of moral authority. So deferring to others in moral questions is not something that people in democratic societies are inclined to do, nor I think should they. They should listen and they should be listened to. But in the end you are responsible for your own moral life. So the role of leadership is to, I think, make attractive ?? and guide people towards and give attention to the right answers. But in the end, people have to come to those answers for themselves.

And as I say, what's interesting is that in many societies there's a kind of, what my friend Malcolm Gladwell has made popular, tipping point. There's a kind of tipping point at which once enough people move in a certain direction, suddenly everybody does.

A perfectly concrete example of this is on many of these gender questions. In 1955 a young woman graduates from Smith and says she's going to law school. People say, "Why?" Well, in 1965 her niece goes to Smith and says she's going to law school, people say, "Great." There has been a big switch in assumptions about what's reasonable. I don't know when it happened, but it happened very fast. It happened in probably a decade, that particular switch. The switch against foot binding took 20 years in China and they had been doing it for 1,000.

So I think we can be optimistic. Leadership here is not just one person, it's a kind of— I hate this expression—moral avant garde. It's the people who do the organizing. It's the people like the groups that organized before the Stonewall so-called uprising in Greenwich Village, who got gay people in to a frame of mind where they were willing to claim certain things, they exercised leadership. Then lots of other people got involved, both gay and straight. That was only the late 1960s, and now here we are.

People under the age of 30, including people under the age of 30 who go to Christian evangelical churches, are mostly inclined to think—certainly, none of them think, or hardly any of them think, that gay sex should be criminal, as it was in the late 1960s. The majority of young people, a significant majority, think that gay people ought to be allowed to be married. Well, if you had told someone in 1970 that this was what's going to happen, they'd have told you you were out of your tree, because even the most radical people weren't in favor of gay marriage in 1970 probably. It just wouldn't have been on their horizon.

So I think horizons of moral possibility actually can shift quite fast, and there is a role for leadership, and the leadership comes not mostly from individuals but from active organized groups that focus on particular questions of moral salience.

So organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union or the NAACP or the abolitionist societies or the anti-foot-binding societies or the anti-dueling societies in Britain in the 19th century are very important forms of social leadership because they define a position and they accumulate a kind of
social authority.

And again, just to take another thing that has shifted radically over a period of 50 years, in 1960 if you were an undergraduate of Harvard, Yale, or Princeton—there were no girls; you're a man, you have to be a man, because there are no women there. I mean there are associated women's colleges in the case of Radcliffe, but there are no women at Harvard, there are no women at Princeton, there are no women at Yale. There are about three or four black people in each class. And people say routinely sexist and racist things and nobody calls them on it. You try saying a routinely racist or sexist thing at Harvard or Yale or Princeton today and you just won't have any friends.

So there are these shifts that occur. In each of those cases I don't know exactly when it occurred, but I can pin it down somewhat because I know that in 1960 it was one way, and actually by 1980 it was another way in the case of the things I mentioned. So these things can happen fast.

But there had to be people in front. There had to be the person who said, "I'm sorry, but I don't think you should talk like that about black people," or, "I don't think you should say those things about women." And there couldn't have just been one of them because that wouldn't have happened. There had to be gradual developing consensus, groups of people who said, "Come on," and then they started fighting to get more women and blacks into these institutions. Again, that involved leadership, it involved groups of people getting together to make things happen.

DEVIN STEWART: Speaking of dueling, Andrew Carnegie thought that war was barbaric, a lot like dueling, and he hoped for world peace. Do you think world peace is possible?

ANTHONY APPIAH: Well, we haven't had world peace recently. The Second World War ended, but it didn't end by ending war. If you live in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo today, you would not say that we live in a world of peace. And then there are these formal wars that are going on. So we don't live in a world of peace.

Could we? I assume we could. It's an assumption. Those people who think that the way to get there is not instantaneous, total disarmament but gradual reduction in the level of armament in the world, are surely right. Politicians use the instruments that are available. The government of Costa Rica has never started a war. That's because they don't have an army.

We do things—bracket for the moment the question whether the United States's intervention in Libya was a good or a bad thing—we did it because we could. In order to be able to do it, we had to have a large number of missiles of a certain sort in order to keep the air space over Libya free of government aircraft. If we hadn't been able to do it, we'd have had to do it some other way. We'd have had to negotiate. We'd have had to do it by politics, normal politics.

So I think we should aim to reduce the level of armaments everywhere. We are not. The Chinese are currently building up their armed forces. The Russians show no inclination to reduce the level of their conventional forces. So we are not moving in the right direction on that one.

If the frontier between India and Pakistan were less militarized, then the Indians and the Pakistanis would have to solve their problems in some other way.

So I really do think—it's sort of like the argument that the NRA rejects at home—I really do think that if you have fewer weapons around, fewer people will be killed with them. That's a very important thing to be trying to do.
You can't do it unless you have confidence-building measures across the parties who are currently facing each other in a way that they think is stable given the current level of weapons. So getting weapons levels down is not just a matter of declaring that you are going to stop building aircraft carriers or using aircraft carriers; you have actually to talk to other people and make agreements that you are going to do these things. That's hard.

There are two levels of this. One, which happens to be in the news as we're talking, is the fact that the Russians have, I believe, finally said that they are going to stop sending arms to the Syrian government. So one is to do with the provision of arms, the arms business, arms dealing, and so on, the regulation of that, which we haven't really made very good progress on. So that's one set of issues.

Then there is the issue of the disarmament of the major powers. But that's a different issue.

We need to do both if we want to move towards a world in which we solve things less often, or try to solve things less often, with warfare.

**DEVIN STEWART:** Does cosmopolitanism help address some of these problems?

**ANTHONY APPIAH:** In Western philosophy we have a very long tradition of cosmopolitanism. Its age is reflected in the fact that the word "cosmopolitanism" comes from a Greek phrase that was first used in the 4th century before the common era, probably by Diogenes the Cynic, *kosmopolitēs* (citizen of the world).

What's amazing is that that notion was invented before it could possibly make any sense. As I said about our current global situation, for a shared sense of citizenship to make sense, you have to know about each other and you have to be able to affect each other. Diogenes was not in a position to know about most of the people in the world. He knew nothing about the people who were living in what we call Latin America (it wasn't called Latin America then). He didn't know anything about East Asia. *Herodotus* thought the world stopped just the other side of India. But, nevertheless, he imagined this thought that we could all be citizens of one thing.

So there has been a very long discussion of this idea. It has waxed and waned. But in the course of that discussion I think a couple of really good ideas have developed which are now really useful in the context of our new global situation.

One is this basic idea that we do have responsibilities to everybody, that the boundary of your state is not the boundary of your moral concern. That's the universal side of cosmopolitanism.

The other side of it is that cosmopolitanism has always—at its best, anyway—combined the respect for universality with the recognition that there are forms of difference that should be allowed to persist, that not everybody has to be the same in order for the world to be going well, going right.

In the sort of aesthetic dimension of cosmopolitanism, that goes with the thing that is called cosmopolitan in the arts, which is an engagement with the cultural and literary and poetic and artistic life of other societies.

So these things are all connected by the thought, we're all one thing, we're all a single community; on the other hand, we have forms of difference that are okay. We don't want everybody to become the same. It's actually part of the joy of being human that you know that there are other humans who are doing it in different ways.
That basic background framework means that you are in a good position both to participate in the global moral conversation as someone who thinks that it's important that we're all one community, but also to participate in a way that might actually draw other people in because the other people you are drawing in are not being told, "Okay, we have all the answers; the way we do it is the only way to do it—my way or the highway." Rather, what you are saying is, "Look, there are things we have to agree on that are basic, that are human rights, and we don't compromise on those. But beyond that there's a wide range of things where it's up to each human being and each community of human beings to make up their own minds about how they are going to do it."

I think that is an attitude to bring to questions of global ethics that is more productive than either a total focus simply on the human rights, because that means you only talk to people about the things that you think they are doing wrong basically, right, because that's what human rights is—"Oh, you're not granting this person their human rights," or whatever. That doesn't seem a very attractive way of shaping the global conversation.

So I think cosmopolitanism, with its sense of the right of people to make their own lives—of course, not just societies but individuals, so it goes with a sort of liberal toleration at home as well as overseas—is a good framework for thinking about these things.

Cosmopolitans are tolerant enough of difference that we know that some people aren't cosmopolitan. So we accept that not everybody is going to be on our side on this, especially on the difference side. I think we are morally obliged to tolerate difference, and so that's part of the universal bit. But you're not morally obliged to celebrate it. If you want to be an Amish person and live in the closed community that is self-consciously uninterested in what's going on outside because you are focused on the moral life of your own community, that's one of the things that the cosmopolitan says you are allowed to do, provided you do your duty to everybody else. And there will be people like that, often organized around religion but not necessarily.

If you bring these attitudes to your conversations, your being together with other people, and if you bring them into the discussion when you are trying to settle things, and you say that we don't have to agree about everything—this is a climate treaty, and we can agree to disagree about lots and lots of things. If you say that there's some feature of your cultural situation which needs attention in our discussion, we who believe that we should be sensitive to the detailed features of people's cultural situation, we will listen. If it really matters to you on the ecological side, if it really matters to you that this mountain is not just a mountain but the home of the gods, well, we don't think so, but we are not sure that we're right about everything. I think that's an attitude to bring.

DEVIN STEWART: Fantastic.

Point B Podcast
"The more our societies are in conversation, the more likely it is, when it comes to having to make the hard decisions that are involved in discussions where you have to settle something, the more likely we are to be able to do it."

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