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## The Elusive Cosmopolitan Ideal

**Craig Calhoun\***

The discourse of globalization is gloomier early in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than it was in the 1990s. Markets are stagnant. The world's one superpower has announced a doctrine of pre-emptive invasion of those it sees as threatening. Awareness of the global vitality of religion is growing, but intolerant fundamentalists seem to thrive disproportionately. A host of humanitarian emergencies and local or regional conflicts kill by the tens of thousands. And the dark side of globalization includes diseases that kill by the millions, trafficking in women, drugs and guns. Why didn't we see it coming?

Why didn't we see it already there? As globalization proceeded after 1989, it brought alternate shocks and enthusiasms. Fighting among national groups in the former Soviet Union was a shock. The relative peacefulness of most post-Communist transitions—despite the dispossession and disruption they entailed—brought enthusiasm. There was an enthusiasm for global economic integration and the rapid development of Asian “tigers” and a shock with the currency crisis of 1997. There was an enthusiasm for information technology as the harbinger and vehicle of freer communication and new wealth and a series of shocks with the extent to which the Internet brought pornography and spam, then the dot.com bust, then a range of new surveillance regimes. There was enthusiasm for European integration and repeated shocks when wars erupted in Europe and the European Union could not achieve an effective common defense or foreign policy, and when immigration produced resurgent racism and nationalism. There was enthusiasm for global democracy and shock and disillusionment as war came even to highly touted new democracies like Ethiopia and Eritrea and intertwined political and economic meltdown in Argentina. There was enthusiasm for both human rights and humanitarian intervention and shock when the two came into conflict as the world failed to find an adequate way to address genocide and ethnic war in Central Africa.

For most of the 1990s, shocks failed to hold back enthusiasm. This was nowhere more evident than in the proliferation of cosmopolitan visions of globalization. These were (and are) internally heterogeneous.

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\* I am grateful for comments on an earlier version of this paper from audiences at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii and University of California, Berkeley, Department of Sociology, both in March 2003.

All, however, participated in a common contrast to overly strong politics of identity or claims to group solidarity. They extolled human rights and humanitarian interventions by “global society” into local messes. They praised hybridity and multiple, overlapping political memberships. Mostly produced from the political center and soft left, they shared with neoliberalism from the harder right a contempt for states which they understood mainly as authoritarian and dangerous. They focused not only on multilateral institutions but on the possibility that individuals might emancipate themselves from the sectionalism and restrictions of groups. Whether mainly ethical, political, socio-psychological, or cultural in their orientation, advocates of a more cosmopolitan world rejected nationalism, at least fundamentalism if not all religion, and most strong claims on behalf of ethnic groups. And so, the cosmopolitans suffered September 11 as an especially severe shock, and the continuing prominence of national security agendas and both religious and ethnic identities as a gloomy regression from what had seemed a clear progress.

There is much to feel gloomy about in the contemporary world, including the crisis of multilateral institutions, the prominence of reactionary political groups including but not limited to nationalists, and the assertion of military power as the solution to many of the problems of global inequality and instability. But this paper is not about the dark side of globalization so much as about the overeager expectation that the world could happily be remade through ethical, political, socio-psychological, and cultural orientations in which individual freedom and appropriations of the larger world would require no strong commitment to intervening solidarities. It is about a certain blindness in cosmopolitan theory, blindness toward the sociological conditions for cosmopolitanism itself and toward the reasons why national, ethnic, and other groups remain important to most of the world’s people. It is about the ways in which cosmopolitanism—however attractive in some ways—is compromised by its formulation in liberal individualist terms that block appreciation of the importance of social solidarity.

That cosmopolitanism comes in several variants makes it less coherent theoretically, but it makes it easier to take up in shifting ways to address different ethical, political, socio-psychological, and cultural ideals. Cosmopolitan rhetoric can be appropriated by global corporate elites as easily as NGO activists. This is an important reason why it has not proved effective in contesting either economic neoliberalism or military neoconservatism.

In the present paper, I shall situate most cosmopolitan theory as part of an effort to remedy deficiencies in liberal political theory. I will suggest that though it offers some advances, it is also held back by sociological weaknesses it shares with most liberalism. I will not adduce

a competing normative vision so much as suggest limits to the plausibility and potential efficacy of this one—at least without substantial supplements. Most advocates for cosmopolitanism treat both nationalism and religion as the “bad others” to cosmopolitanism, neglect social solidarity in favor of analyses framed in terms of individuals, and underestimate the implications of inequality—including the inequality that empowers some to approach the world effectively as individuals, neglecting the social bases of their own efficacy, while others are all too aware of the limits of their individual capacity and clearly in need of collective support for action—even defensive sustenance—in relation to the challenges the world throws at them.

### **Cosmopolitanism, Liberalism, and Belonging**

As political theory, cosmopolitanism responds crucially to the focus of traditional liberalism on the relationship of individual persons to individual states (and sometimes to markets). Ideas of citizenship and rights both reflect the attempt to construct the proper relationship between liberal subjects and sovereign states. The cosmopolitan theorists of the 1990s recognized problems both in how this constituted international relations as relations among such states, neglecting the many other ways in which individuals participated in a transnational or indeed nonnationally trans-state activities, and in the difficulty of accounting for why specific populations of individuals belonged in specific states.

Earlier liberals have often relied at least tacitly on the idea of “nation” to give an account of why particular people belong together as the “people” of a particular state. So long as the fiction of a perfect match between nations and states was plausible, this was relatively unproblematic, though it meant liberal theory was sociologically impoverished. To their credit, the various theorists of a new cosmopolitan liberalism recognized that it was no longer tenable to rely so uncritically on the idea of nation.

The prioritization of the individual society came to seem increasingly untenable. It began to seem fundamental and not contingent that markets and other social relations extend across nation-state borders, that migration and cultural flows challenge nationalist notions of the integral character of cultures and political communities, that states are not able to organize or control many of the main influences on the lives of their citizens, and that the most salient inequalities are intersocietally global and thus not addressed by intrasocietal measures. Accordingly, an important project for liberals was to work out how to extend their theories of justice and political legitimacy to a global scale.

It is instructive to see how John Rawls, the most important liberal theorist of our era, addressed similar issues. Rawls' (1971) classic theory of justice presumed an individual state as the necessary context of analysis. A well-ordered society, Rawls insisted, was precisely not a community or an association:

...we have assumed that a democratic society, like any political society, is to be viewed as a complete and closed social system. It is complete in that it is self-sufficient and has a place for all the main purposes of human life. It is also closed, in that entry into it is only by birth and exit from it is only by death. (Rawls 1993: 41)

Rawls knew, of course, that this was in some ways a fiction, but he initially thought it plausible, since his major focus was on what made "a" society just. Accordingly, he postponed analysis of relations among states and transnational phenomena to a later step in analysis. The 90s pressed the further step on him. Rawls' (1999) own approach was to retain the notion of "peoples" or discrete societies, and then to propose a "law of peoples" regulating relations among these. Liberal cosmopolitans generally do the opposite, extending "domestic" (but putatively universal) criteria of justice to the scale of humanity as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

"Cosmopolitanism" draws on classical and early modern sources for a moral vision in which all humanity is equally valued.<sup>2</sup> A cosmopolitan attitude is presented not only as a timeless good but as a specific response to current historical circumstances. The extension of markets, media, and migration has, advocates of a new cosmopolitan liberalism argue, reduced both the efficacy of states and the adequacy of moral and political analysis that approaches one "society" at a time. At the same time, "identity politics" and multiculturalism have in the eyes of many liberals been excessive and become sources of domestic divisions and illiberal appeals to special rights for different groups. Accordingly, cosmopolitan theorists argue that the "first principles" of ethical obligation and political community should stress the allegiance of each to all at the scale of humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> The cosmopolitans build on an important line of criticism of Rawls' theory of justice which focused on its limitation to single societies. Many critics favored eliminating the notion of "a society" smaller than the population of the globe and simply trying to rewrite the theory on this new scale. Among the first to argue thus was Charles Beitz (1979). Rawls (1999) did not accept this approach because he held that in any foreseeable near term future there would be distinct societies, and thus the more universal theory would be unrealistic enough to lack purchase on the problems of regulating their legitimate relations with each other. For this a "law of peoples" was needed.

<sup>2</sup> Anthologies representing diverse approaches include Archibugi and Held (1995); Archibugi, Held, and Kohler (1999); Archibugi (2003); Cheah and Robbins (1998); and Vertovec and Cohen (2003).

The new cosmopolitans retain, however, one of the weaknesses of older forms of liberalism. They offer no strong account of social solidarity or of the role of culture in constituting human life. For the most part, they start theorizing from putatively autonomous, discrete, and cultureless individuals. Reliance on the assumption that nations were naturally given pre-political bases for states had helped older liberals to paper over the difficulty of explaining why the individuals of their theories belonged in particular states (or conversely could rightly be excluded from them). The new cosmopolitanism is generally antinationalist, seeing nations as part of the fading order of political life divided on lines of states. Its advocates rightly refuse to rely on this tacit nationalism. But as they offer no new account of solidarity save the obligations of each human being to all others, they give little weight to “belonging,” to the notion that social relationships might be as basic as individuals, or that individuals exist only in cultural milieux—even if usually in several at the same time.

Indeed, much of the new liberal cosmopolitan thought proceeds as though belonging is a matter of social constraints from which individuals ideally ought to escape, or temptations to favoritism they ought to resist. Claims of special loyalty or responsibility to nations, communities, or ethnic groups, thus, are subordinated or fall under suspicion of illegitimacy. To claim that one’s self-definition, even one’s specific version of loyalty to humanity, comes through membership of some such more particular solidarity is, in Martha Nussbaum’s (1996: 5) words, a “morally questionable move of self-definition by a morally irrelevant characteristic.”

The individualism the new cosmopolitanism inherits from earlier liberalism is attractive partly because of its emphasis on freedom, and this encourages suspicion of arguments in favor of ethnicity, communities, or nations. These, many suggest, can be legitimate only as the choices of free individuals—and to the extent they are inherited rather than chosen they should be scrutinized carefully, denied any privileged standing, and possibly rejected. Against suggestions that individuals derive their identity from such solidarities, and thus have just reasons to defend them, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) have argued that it is a mistake to speak at all of identity in this sense. Rather, they suggest, we should treat individuals as primary and speak of their “identifications”. Brubaker and Cooper offer important criticism of both overly fixed (and often simplistic) claims for “identity” and a thoroughgoing constructivism that essentially dissolves into relativism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Brubaker (2002) has separately presented an argument for treating groupness as variable, and as more often a project than a fixed reality—notably in regard to ethnic groups and conflicts. I am in sympathy with this approach, but it need not be based on an ontological priority of individual persons and emphasis only on their identifications.

To speak only of identifications, however, implies that individual persons are real in a sense in which groups and social relationships are not. It is only a short step to Jeremy Bentham's (1789: 13) famous injunction that "the community is a fictitious body composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its members. The interest of the community then is, what?—the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it". And from Bentham, of course, it is only another short step to Margaret Thatcher's famous assertion that "society does not exist" (which she backed up by attacking a great many social institutions).

At least in their extreme forms, cosmopolitanism and individualism participate in this pervasive tendency to deny the reality of the social. Their combination represents an attempt to get rid of 'society' as a feature of political theory. It is part of the odd coincidence since the 1960s of left wing and right wing attacks on the state. This has made it harder to defend welfare states (let alone socialism) and harder to resist neoliberalism in both domestic and international policies. Hayekians and postmodernists have led the way in this denigration of the social, seeing it as restrictive and potentially authoritarian. Mainstream liberalism has followed suit partly because it had grasped the social overwhelmingly as the national (and sometimes quasi-national claims to ethnic solidarity or autonomy). It conflated society with nation in order to posit the prepolitical basis for social order, the 'people' to whom a democratic government must respond in order to be legitimate. But when the national seemed fundamentally illegitimate, as it did to many liberals in the 1990s, the theory offered little other approach to social solidarity.

Nonetheless, it is impossible not to belong to social groups, relations, or culture. The idea of individuals abstract enough to be able to choose all their "identifications" is deeply misleading. Versions of this idea are, however, widespread in liberal cosmopolitanism. They reflect the attractive illusion of escaping from social determinations into a realm of greater freedom, and of cultural partiality into greater universalism. But they are remarkably unrealistic, and so abstract as to provide little purchase on what the next steps of actual social action might be for real people who are necessarily situated in particular webs of belonging, with access to particular others but not to humanity in general. Treating ethnicity as essentially a choice of identifications, they neglect the omnipresence of ascription (and discrimination) as determinations of social identities. And they neglect the extent to which people are implicated in social actions which they are not entirely free to choose (as, for example, not liking Bush or Cheney, or the idea of invading Iraq

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Groups—or, following Nadel (1951: ch. 7), "groupings" are sometimes forcibly created. They may also be fluid without being strictly optional.

does not get one out of being an American). Whether blame or benefit follow from such implications, they are not altogether optional.

Moreover, when the limits of belonging to specific webs of relationships are transcended, this is not into a freedom from relationships but into a different organization of relationships. If feuding Hatfields and McCoys (or Nuer and Dinka, or French and Germans) reorganize to deal with their collective enemies or new opportunities, this is not a matter of escaping social solidarity but of changing it. Paradigmatically, this is what the growth of nationalism did with regard to more local or sectional solidarities (village, province, caste, class, or tribe). Nations usually worked by presenting more encompassing identities into which various sectional ones could fit. But sometimes transcendence of particular solidarities involves no neat larger whole but a patchwork quilt of new connections.

Identities and solidarities, thus, are neither simply fixed nor simply fluid, but may be more fixed or more fluid under different circumstances. It is certainly true that many solidarities—and not least of all ethnic ones—have been produced partly to engage in new conflicts, not simply to foster a larger peace. It would be a mistake, however, to think that this is the only work that ethnicity or community do for people. They provide networks of mutual support, capacities for communication, frameworks of meaning. Crucially, differential resources give people differential capacities to reach beyond particular belongings to other social connections—including very broad ones like nations, civilizations, or humanity as a whole. Not only options but needs for solidarities are unequally distributed. And as I shall argue, the idea of escaping from particularistic solidarities into greater universality may look very different for elites and for those with fewer resources.

### **Multiculturalism, Migration, and Cosmopolitanism**

In the background to the spread (and weakness) of many Western cosmopolitan theories is the muddle of multiculturalism. A wave of popular engagement with diversity absorbed and reproduced opposing positions. On the one hand, there were a variety of claims to the strength and power of specific group identities—national, ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual among them. On the other hand, there were as many theories of the insubstantiality of group identities, the internal diversity masked by each. Essentialism and the deconstruction of every claim to essentialism were both crucial to multiculturalism. It was and remains an inherently unstable and polyvocal discourse.



This is not to say that the rise of multiculturalism had no underpinnings in material social reality. On the contrary, it came to the fore partly because of the new prominence of some forms of diversity—such as immigrant minorities, partly because of advances in social movements that forced recognition of others, and partly because of improved analytic recognition of the diversity that had always been present if observers had simply paid attention. International migration and domestic politics both figured importantly. And if this appeared in academic discourse initially as an American phenomenon—indeed, sometimes mocked as such by Europeans—it rapidly surfaced elsewhere.

Multiculturalism sometimes took the form of a seemingly endless division of every potential solidarity into a proliferation of internal identities. To critics these looked mainly like divisions in the potential unity of nations or other encompassing groups. At the same time, multiculturalism also involved arguments for group rights, for example in the cases of aboriginal peoples and ethnic minorities. These too drew criticism, especially among those who worried that claims for the assignment of rights to various groups invited subjugation of individual freedoms to choose or create identities to the claims of groups and collective identities. Cosmopolitanism grew importantly as an ideology and set of values among many of these critics. It incorporated strands of multiculturalism in the form of appreciation for diversity, so long as this was understood mainly through rights of individuals to choose and did not involve claims to the incommensurability of cultures and thus of values. It also resisted what many saw as the “excesses” of multiculturalism, too much protection of group rights, endless fractioning of larger polities and movements, willingness to defend “bad” moral claims on the grounds of the rights of different cultures to equal respect.

Multiculturalisms divided importantly between projects claiming group rights and those emphasizing the rights of individuals to choose, construct, or express their “identities”. The two often overlapped inconsistently, as individuals claimed group identities as their personal rights. But the division was and is important, and follows the lines of a communitarian versus liberal contrast. Liberals were apt to emphasize diversity as just when grounded in individual choice, and claims to protect groups as unjust when they constrained or seemed to preclude such choices.

An important context for the growth of many new cosmopolitan theories, thus, was the attempt to retain recognition of the importance of difference, but assimilate this to liberal individualism. To a large extent, this reflected the position of liberal elites within Western societies

seeking to incorporate a stronger demand for tolerance into liberal political theory without sacrificing its universalistic elements.<sup>4</sup>

These cosmopolitan liberals often failed to recognize the social conditions of their own discourse, presenting it as freedom from social belonging rather than a special sort of belonging, a view from nowhere or everywhere rather than from particular social spaces. Unintentionally, thus, the views of cosmopolitan elites expressed certain forms of privilege; they were not neutral apprehensions of the whole. In particular, they represented the position of those sufficiently empowered to act effectively as individuals even in an international context. Central to my argument here is that an approach that starts with individuals and treats culture as contingent cannot do justice to the legitimate claims made on behalf of “communities,” and the reasons why “thick attachments” to particular solidarities still matter—whether in the forms of nations, ethnicities, local communities, or religions.

At the same time that this cosmopolitan variant of liberalism was growing among some Western elites, another source of cosmopolitan theory developed in a distinct trajectory. Here the bearers were more often themselves migrants, elites from non-Western societies moving into elite academic circuits largely in the West. The existential ground for this version of cosmopolitanism was more complex. Many of the Indian intellectuals prominent in the Subaltern Studies movement, and others influenced by their work, suggest something of this. Raised mainly in elite family and educational backgrounds in Bombay and Calcutta, they imbibed a broad mix of cultural heritages. Greek and Roman classics, Western history (largely mediated through British self-understanding), and American popular media were important alongside both ancient and modern Indian sources.<sup>5</sup> The claim to cosmopolitanism was, in this sense, rooted and organic. Yet it confronted double challenges. This cosmopolitan self-understanding was in tension with many trends in contemporary India, and was also a motivation for migration. A cosmopolitan perspective could offer insight into Indian history, but not allow an easy identification with Indian nationalism. Insertion into Australian, British, or American contexts—and at the same time academic diasporic contexts—was occasion for trying to construct a sense of belonging in the world at large. There was a certain tragic quality to the attempt to narrate India from Canberra or London, for all

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<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas (e.g., 1998) is perhaps the foremost example of this, though a variety of other theorists shared these aspects while differing on other particulars. Among those discussed below, both Martha Nussbaum and David Held are examples.

<sup>5</sup> There are moving personal reflections on this at the beginning of Appadurai (1997) and the end of Chakrabarty (2002). A classic reflection of these tensions for an influential member of an older generation appears in the work of Ashis Nandy (e.g., 1989).

the brilliance of the achievements. The tension between dwelling and belonging could be acute.<sup>6</sup>

But here too, the cosmopolitans were elites and their intellectual perspective reflected this. It presented a vision of the world in its diversity that was accessible to those with a variety of cultural and intellectual resources. Plurality and multiplicity are distinctive attributes of Indian history, to be sure, and of Indian society today. They are attributes of migration and diaspora for taxi drivers as well as university professors. But while Indians of many economic and social positions navigate this diversity, it empowers only some as individuals able to claim hybridity as a positive way of being in the world. As important as hybridity is, it is important also to understand the resistance to it that makes many migrants more conservative than those they left behind. Moving across boundaries is theorized better in the discourse of hybridity than the reasons why those boundaries are important to many who cannot move or who experience movement in profoundly less empowering ways. As hybridity and globality become ideals, a tension grows with those whose projects center on achieving unity within groups or securing the local.

Cosmopolitanism need not be presented as the universalistic enemy of particular solidarities, but it often is. Most cosmopolitan theories offer an abstract normative structure which, however attractive and however much occasioned by real-world social change, has the standing of “abstract ought” rather than immanent grounding in actual social conditions or projects of social improvement. In particular, they both underestimate and potentially undermine the gains made in spanning important lines of difference precisely by developing new solidarities.

### **The Varieties of Cosmopolitanism**

Appeals to the idea of cosmopolitanism have been advanced in the context of different theoretical and empirical projects, and take on different meanings in each. Different articulations overlap, however, and to some extent the common term is a source of reinforcement as well as fuzziness. I hope some clarity is achieved by distinguishing four main variants of cosmopolitan theories. I present these in order of increasing empirical content and declining abstract, universalistic rationalism. The more empirical theories offer more openness to concrete forms of social belonging, take cultural differences more seriously, and offer more

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<sup>6</sup> See Chakrabarty (2002) for this sense of dwelling.

ground on which to build a stronger theory with the addition of better sociological understanding of the importance of belonging.

**Ethical universalism.** The first and most radically universalistic approach to cosmopolitanism starts with the ethical obligations of individuals. Martha Nussbaum (1996, 1997) is representative, arguing that the highest and strongest obligation of each person is owed to humanity as a whole. She would recognize other attachments, even strong ones, such as those between particular parents and their own children. But she would recognize and value them only on the grounds that this particularism is the best way to meet the requirements of universal good (1996: 13, 135-6). In other words, it is right for parents to care most for their own children, but only because this will ensure the best possible global childcare arrangements.

Nussbaum roots her idea of cosmopolitanism in Stoic thought, and especially Diogenes Laertius and others of the often wandering Stoics of the late Roman Empire who sought to be citizens of the world rather than of any place in particular, and to defy all sorts of social norms. She is willing to accept that it is a “lonely business” and even an “exile” from “the comfort of local truths, from the warm, nestling feeling of patriotism” (1996: 15). It involves forsaking the “props of habit and local boundaries”. As the imagery suggests, Nussbaum presents the cosmopolitan not only as a deracinated individual but as one who must demonstrate personal strength to achieve this, a kind of virtuoso performance of freedom. Though she sees in this a basis for a better world, one in which human rights would be respected and developmental goals advanced, her examples of it tend more to emphasize personal life and individuals breaking free from the restrictions of social norms.<sup>7</sup> At its best, this involves a self-examination in which the point of view of the other helps us to grasp the nonessential character of that we might otherwise think universal and necessary. But in her accounts, the ‘other’ is sharply universal, not herself an embodiment of distinctive culture and belonging. I have argued elsewhere that there is a tendency in this sort of cosmopolitan theory to substitute ethics for politics, demands for individuals to recognize obligations for analysis of institutional conditions that join them in solidarities and oppositions (Calhoun 2002).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Nussbaum (1996: 16-17) likes the example of Hipparchia and Crates. Theirs was a very philosophical romance because, as she quotes Diogenes’ account, Hipparchia “fell in love with Crates’ arguments” rather than his wealth, pedigree, or looks. In any case, she forsook the privileged family and class into which she had been born and joined him in a life without possessions, but not without its more or less universally available entertainments: “they copulated in public and they went off together to dinner parties.” The point seems to be that cosmopolitanism can be fun. It is not entirely clear how to elevate it to the level of international politics.

<sup>8</sup> A number of self-declared cosmopolitans would qualify or dissent from Nussbaum’s strongest claims. For examples of some of these less extreme cosmopolitan positions,

Samuel Scheffler has called this extreme cosmopolitanism. Typified by Nussbaum, this takes world citizenship as fundamental, clearly and always morally superior to more local bonds—such as ethnic or national solidarities—which are good when they serve the universal good and tolerable only when they do not conflict with world citizenship. The more moderate alternative “is to say that, in addition one’s relationships and affiliations with particular individuals and groups, one also stands in an ethically significant relation to other human beings in general” (Scheffler 2001: 115). David Held (1995) is a good exemplar of moderate cosmopolitanism since he stresses more clearly than most the importance of multiple and overlapping allegiances of different scales.

**Cosmopolitan democracy.** This second approach starts with rights rather than obligations, and holds that wherever people are joined in significant social relations they have a collective right to share in control of these. It is rooted more in democratic theory and less in individual ethics. Thus advocates of this view argue that there ought to be a democratic polity to administer affairs at every level at which people are connected to each other. This underwrites the appeal to cosmopolitan democracy that David Held has laid out most forcefully. “People would come, thus, to enjoy multiple citizenships—political membership in the diverse political communities which significantly affect them. They would be citizens of their immediate political communities, and of the wider regional and global networks which impacted upon their lives” (Held 1995: 233). Held’s approach is moderate, among other ways, because he doesn’t suggest that people necessarily put the universal ahead of the particular in all cases, nor does he conceive of cosmopolitanism as a form of deracination, of freedom from cultural particularity.<sup>9</sup>

Held’s central concern is to determine how democracy could be the ordering virtue of global affairs rather than only the domestic affairs of (some) nation-states. “A community of all democratic communities must become an obligation for democrats, an obligation to build a transnational, common structure of political action which alone, ultimately, can support the politics of self-determination.<sup>10</sup> The idea of sovereignty needs to be rethought, Held suggests, and “stripped away from the idea of fixed borders and territories and thought of as, in

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see the other contributions to *For Love of Country*, and to the 1994 Boston Review symposium in which Nussbaum’s paper first appeared.

<sup>9</sup> To be sure, many cosmopolitans who accept the value of Held’s notion of multiple and overlapping (and therefore limited) sovereignty, would place greater stress on the practical difficulties of achieving such a complex political order (see the various contributions to Archibugi and Held, 1995). This is a different question, though it may limit the purchase of the theory in actual processes of political change.

<sup>10</sup> Held (1995: 232).

principle, malleable time-space clusters. ... it could be entrenched and drawn upon in diverse self-regulating associations, from cities to states to corporations.”<sup>11</sup> In such a world, persons inhabit not only rights and obligations, but also relationships and commitments within and across groups of all sorts including the nation.

In a sense, Nussbaum argues that there should be a prepolitical, moral basis for politics—but this should rest not on the alleged priority of ethnic, national or other specific loyalties but on the general loyalty of each person to all humanity. Held, by contrast, holds that there are no pre-political moral bases for politics, and offers an intrinsically political theory, advancing cosmopolitanism as an alternative way of establishing the appropriate units of democratic government. It is still a theory of what is right, however, rather than of how people might pursue the right, or of how they come to be who they are in their different groups.

**Urbane social psychology.** Another important sense of cosmopolitanism is to be at ease with strangers and in unfamiliar surroundings. This is a socio-psychological usage associated especially with urban life, rather than political organization. Richard Sennett evokes this sense in his accounts of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century cities (and corresponding critiques of 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbs). He cites a French usage of 1738: “a cosmopolite ... is a man who moves comfortably in diversity; he is comfortable in situations which have no links or parallels to what is familiar to him” (Sennett 1977: 17). This sense of the term implies that cosmopolitanism involves an appreciation of diversity, not just in the sense of toleration for the peaceful co-existence of separate spheres, but as a fact of common spaces within which one “moves”. It is not obvious that this is altogether compatible with Nussbaum’s strong universalist appeal. At most Nussbaum’s view would seem to imply toleration for diversity so long as it did not interfere with a primary commitment to equality. Equally, Nussbaum does not seriously confront the possibility that cultural diversity involves necessary and deep differences in understandings of the good, or human rights, which make the imposition of one vision of the good problematic.

Likewise, the cosmopolitanism of cities to which Sennett refers is precisely not a political usage of the term. Indeed, tolerance of diversity was great in cosmopolitan imperial and sometimes merchant cities precisely where there was little opportunity for democracy—or even for active republicanism. Ottoman Istanbul, old regime Paris, and colonial Singapore were all cosmopolitan, but not at all democratic. Their populations often came into anti-cosmopolitan conflicts precisely when called upon to organize self-rule (Calhoun 1993, 1995). Sennett’s

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<sup>11</sup> Held (1995: 234).

account centers more on the capacities and tastes of individuals to be cosmopolitan than on institutional arrangements. It draws on the tradition of analysis of republican virtue, but not with a centrally political focus. It does remind us of the extent to which cities themselves are part of the social basis for thinking about—and living--cosmopolitanism.

**Hybridity.** Still other scholars claim the term “cosmopolitan” not for any singular overarching view of the good, or of universal norms, but for the coexistence and mutual influence of multiple cultural influences and values. Homi Bhabha’s calls for hybridity, thus, or Salman Rushdie’s argument for the importance of impurity, mixture, and novelty rather than appeals to purity exemplify this sense of the cosmopolitan. As Rushdie (1991: 394) writes, “Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world.” Or in the phase of Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, and Chakrabarty (2000: 580), “Cosmopolitanism, in its wide and wavering nets, catches something of our need to ground our sense of mutuality in conditions of mutability, and to learn to live tenaciously in terrains of historic and cultural transition.” The emphasis here is cultural rather than socio-psychological. It is focused more on creative bricolage than on the flaneur as observer of urban difference. But in any case, the cosmopolitanism they evoke is not the universalism of Nussbaum, but an infinitude of potential weavings together of more or and less local traditions, cultural productivity that seeks to transcend particular traditions and practices that seek to express traditions but not only to themselves. Necessarily, then, there is no singular cosmopolitanism adequate to the world as a whole—nor even any fixity of humanity as a whole—but rather a plurality of cosmopolitanisms. Likewise, it is not enough simply to contrast vernacular to cosmopolitan, the local tradition of small places to the larger traditions of broader spaces. It is crucial to see that these constitute each other. There is a “dialectic between cosmopolitan and vernacular that creates them both” (Pollock 2000: 616).

Each of these third and fourth notions of cosmopolitanism starts from the premise of diversity. For the third, that of the urbanite at ease with difference and strangeness, diversity is in fact the core value. The paradigmatic urban flaneur could also be a tourist, a reader of heterogeneous literatures, or an habitué of exotic foods, languages, or spiritual experiences. The point is his openness, and the strength of individual personality he manifests in (and indeed acquires from) his relations to such plural contexts.<sup>12</sup> This does not depend on his membership in any specific culture, nor does it focus attention on the

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<sup>12</sup> See Sennett (1970) on the ways in which growing up amid complex heterogeneity made nurture stronger individuality than protection from diversity in suburbs or other such spaces. A similar insight informs Georg Simmel’s (1950) classic account of “The Metropolis and Mental Life”.

mixture of cultural traditions. The fourth sense of cosmopolitanism does both. It presents diasporas, the interplay of oral and literate traditions, the relations among village, nation, and transnational society as matters of multiple memberships and mixture. It is more fully focused on participation than the third, less constituted by observation. Alone of the four versions of cosmopolitanism it incorporates, rather than only tolerates, ethnicity. To be sure, it does not incorporate the illusory claims of many advocates of ethnicity (as of nationalism) to discern a pure core to ethnic culture or precise boundaries to the ethnic community. But it understands participation in cosmopolitan relations as participation in specific cultural traditions and cultural relations that partially transcend and partially incorporate others—including others that may be more particular and others that may be comparably general. It refuses the notion that the cosmopolitan is somehow above or outside the particularities of culture, though he or she may participate in cultural productivity and sharing that recognizes each cultural tradition only in the context of others and thus in partially relativized form.

The third and fourth versions of cosmopolitanism are different from each other, thus, but even more distinct from the first and second. They are less rationalistic and universalistic, but also less directly connected to politics—or at least the constitution of polities. They identify modes of social and cultural relations that may be of political as well as intrinsic importance. But though tolerance, interest in others, and openness to change may all be political virtues, they are not in themselves bases for constituting polities; they do not explain patterns of allegiance.

At the same time, all four sorts of cosmopolitan theories share some important virtues. Not least, all appropriately recognize that the factors shaping human lives are not contained within discrete societies. All four approach existing cultures and communities with recognition that these are internally complex, that members struggle with each other, interpret common heritage differently, and take different positions on cultural norms that are in tension with each other. Though this is recognized most by the second (e.g. Held) and fourth (e.g. Pollack), all recognize in some degree the extent to which memberships are typically multiple and overlapping. People do not cease to live in Birmingham and Britain because they are of Pakistani origin, Muslim faith, and perhaps Sindi ethnicity.

As a result of the last, all point up one of the great weaknesses of much communitarian thought. This is the tendency to treat communities as though they were individuals. Some kinds of advocacy for multiculturalism treat cultures as similarly integral. This is commonly diagnosed in nationalist thought. The US pledge of allegiance, for



example, repeats a claim common to many nationalisms in referring to the “indivisible” character of the nation. Advocates for ethnic communities and other “identity groups” too often speak as though all members of a group might share the same interests and indeed be much more identical to each other than they are—and as though there were much more agreement about both interests and identity than there is. It is this sort of simplification that motivates arguments against “identity” such as that of Brubaker and Cooper (2000). Elsewhere, Brubaker (2002: 164) calls it “groupism”: “the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis.” Communitarians often slip into speaking of *the* community, or *the* culture of a community as though either could be more unitary and clearly bounded than is possible. This sort of slip among communitarians provides cosmopolitans with a convenient straw man to knock down. But that culture and community are never quite so simple does not mean that they lack force or legitimate value, let alone that they are mere illusions.

Pollock and his colleagues suggest that while focusing on rights has been important in many contexts, “the fetishization of liberal individualism has, in the past few years, created a cosmopolitan imaginary signified by the icons of singular personhood” (Pollock et al 581). Advocates for global issues from AIDS to land mines, business leaders with global visions and power, philanthropists working internationally, and public figures communicating to audiences around the world (whether on politics or simply as entertainment) thus figure as icons for cosmopolitanism. The point is not just that cosmopolitanism is linked to humanitarian and human rights visions, but that these are represented as the ideal of ethically pure action of individuals in an ethically tainted—indeed terribly challenging—world. Such individuals may be presented purely in terms of their ethical stance, but this hides the social supports this requires.

### **The Social Bases of Cosmopolitanism**

Individualism is just part of what Pollock and his colleagues’ account of the personages of media cosmopolitanism reveals. It also suggests how much the “imaginary” behind cosmopolitan social theory is rooted in the way elites participate in globalization. It is accordingly somewhat skewed.

I have elsewhere (Calhoun 2003) referred to this as “the class consciousness of frequent travelers.” I mean to call attention not just to the elite occupational status of those who form the archetypal image of

the cosmopolitans, but to the grounding certain material privileges give to the intellectual position. “Good” passports and easy access to visa, international credit cards and membership in airline clubs, invitations from conference organizers and organizational contacts all facilitate a kind of inhabitation (if not necessarily citizenship) of the world as an apparent whole. To be sure, diasporas provide for other circuits of international connectivity, drawing on ethnic and kin connections rather than the more bureaucratically formalized ones of businesspeople, academics, and aid workers. But though these are real, they face significantly different contextual pressures.

Post 9/11 restrictions on visas—let alone immigration—reveal the differences between those bearing European and American passports and most others in the world. The former hardly notice the change and move nearly as freely as before. The latter find their international mobility sharply impeded and sometimes blocked. The global border control regime thus encourages a sense of natural cosmopolitanism for some and reminds others of their nationality (and often of religion and ethnicity as well). However cosmopolitan their initial intentions or self-understandings, these Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans are reminded by the ascriptions and restrictions with which they are confronted that at least certain sorts of cosmopolitanism are not for them. Normative cosmopolitans can (and do) assert that this is not the way the world should be, and that borders should be more open. But they need also to take care not to deny the legitimacy of any anti-cosmopolitan responses people may have to this regime of borders, including not just resentment but renewed identification with nations and even projects of national development which hold out the prospect of enabling them to join the ranks of those with good passports.

The point is not simply privilege. It is that a sense of connection to the world as a whole, and of being a competent actor on the scale of “global citizenship” is not merely a matter of the absence of more local ties. It has its own material and social conditions. Moreover, the cosmopolitan elites are hardly culture-free; they do not simply reflect the rational obligations of humanity in the abstract (even if their theories try to).

To some extent, the cosmopolitan elite culture is a product of Western dominance and the kinds of intellectual orientations it has produced. It reflects “modernity” which has its own historical provenance. To quote Pollock and his colleagues again, “this revenant late liberalism reveals, in a more exaggerated form, a struggle at the heart of liberal theory, where a genuine desire for equality as a universal norm is tethered to a tenacious ethnocentric provincialism in matters of cultural judgment and recognition” (Pollock, et al 2000: 581). But the

cultural particularity is not simply inheritance, and not simply a reflection of (mainly) Western modernity. It is also constructed out of the concrete conditions of cosmopolitan mobility, education, and participation in certain versions of news and other media flows. It is the culture of those who attend Harvard and the LSE, who read *The Economist* and *The New Yorker*, who recognize Mozart's music as universal, and who can discuss the relative merits of Australian, French, and Chilean wines. It is also a culture in which secularism seems natural and religion odd, and in which respect for human rights is assumed but the notion of fundamental economic redistribution is radical and controversial. This culture has many good qualities, as well as blindspots, but nonetheless it is culture and not its absence.

Nussbaum and other extreme cosmopolitans, and to a lesser extent many of the moderates, present cosmopolitanism first and foremost as a kind of virtuous deracination, a liberation from the possibly illegitimate and in any case blinkering attachments of locality, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. But like secularism, cosmopolitanism is a presence not an absence, an occupation of particular positions in the world, not a view from nowhere or everywhere. All actually existing cosmopolitanisms, to be more precise, reflect influences of social location and cultural tradition. The ways in which any one opens to understanding or valuing of others are specific and never exhaust all the possible ways. Secularism is again instructive. The parameters of specific religious traditions shape the contours of what is considered not religious, nor not the domain of specific religions. The not-specifically-religious, thus, is never a simple embodiment of neutrality. What is "secular" in relation to multiple Christian denominations may not be exactly equivalent to what is secular in the context of Hindu or Muslim traditions (let alone of their intermingling and competition). So too, cosmopolitan transcendence of localism and parochialism is not well understood as simple neutrality towards or tolerance of all particularisms. It is participation in a particular, if potentially broad, process of cultural production and social interconnection that spans boundaries.

To say that the cosmopolitanism of most theories reflects the experience of business, academic, government, and civil society elites, thus, is not merely to point to some reasons why others may not so readily share it but also to suggest sources of its particular character. It is neither freedom from culture nor a matter of pure individual choice, but a cultural position constructed on particular social bases and a choice made possible by both that culture and those bases. It is accordingly different from the transcendence of localism on other cultural and social bases. Cosmopolitanism has particular rather than solely universal content, thus, so its advocates sometimes fail to recognize this.

Moreover, the content and the misrecognition are connected to social bases of relative privilege.

Much thinking about ethnicity and the legitimacy of local or other particularistic attachments by self-declared cosmopolitans reflects their tacit presumption of their own more or less elite position. I do not mean simply that they act to benefit themselves, or in other ways from bad motives. Rather, I mean that their construction of genuine benevolence is prejudiced against ethnic and other attachments because of the primacy of the perspective of elites. Any prejudice by elites in favor of others in their own ethnic groups or communities would amount to favoring the already privileged (a very anti-Rawlsian position). So the cosmopolitans are keen to rule out such self-benefiting particularism. But ethnic solidarity is not always a matter of exclusion by the powerful; it is often a resource for effective collective action and mutual support among the less powerful. While it is true, in other words, that in-group solidarity by those in positions of power and influence usually amounts to discrimination against less powerful or privileged others, it is also true that solidarity serves to strengthen the weak. Indeed, those who are excluded from or allowed only weak access to dominant structures of power and discourse have especially great need to band together in order to be effective. Of course, elites also band together to protect privilege (and as Weber 1922 emphasized, exclusivity is a prominent elite weapon against the inclusive strategies of mass activists). And elites manipulate solidarities to pursue their own advantages rather than considering equally the interests of all. Nonetheless, elites are typically empowered as individuals in ways non-elites are not.

In short, when cosmopolitan appeals to humanity as a whole are presented in individualistic terms, they are apt to privilege those with the most capacity to get what they want by individual action. However well intentioned, they typically devalue the ways in which other people depend on ethnic, national, and communal solidarities—among others—to solve practical problems in their lives. And they typically neglect the extent to which asserting that cultural difference should be valued only as a matter of individual taste—“identifications”, in Brubaker’s and Cooper’s terms—undermines any attempt to redistribute benefits in the social order across culturally defined groups. They can extol multiculturalism, in other words, so long as this is defined as a harmonious arrangement in all cultures are seen as attractive parts of a mosaic, but not when members of one cultural group organize to demand that the mosaic be altered. In the case of Hawaii, for example, Jon Okamura (1998) has not only challenged the myth of a multicultural paradise, but noted the extent to which this enshrines an existing distribution of power and resources. It not only encourages the idea that individuals from each cultural group should be treated equally (as

against, say, affirmative action). It especially inhibits self-organization by members of any group traditionally on the losing end—say native Hawaiians—to alter the terms of the distributive game. Such organization can only appear as hostile to the idealized multicultural harmony.

### Conclusion

My argument has been mostly cautionary and critical. I have suggested that most cosmopolitan theories are individualistic in ways that obscure the basic importance of social relationships and culture. I have argued that reducing the diversity of cultural and social identities to different tastes or possible “identifications” inhibits attention to the ways in which they are both basic to individual lives and undermines recognition of why those on the losing end of processes of globalization (and other social arrangements) may have special reasons to understand their place in the world and organize their action through such solidarities. I have also suggested quite simply that culture and social relationships are as real as individuals, even if they lack bodies. My critique has been strongest against the “extreme cosmopolitanism” that promotes elimination of all loyalties lesser than that of each individual to humanity as a whole, but raises questions also about the “moderate cosmopolitanism” that would recognize at least some such loyalties though only in “thin” versions that are compatible with an integrated global polity.

No one lives outside particularistic solidarities. Some cosmopolitan theorists may believe they do, but this is an illusion made possible by positions of relative privilege and the dominant place of some cultural orientations in the world at large. The illusion is not a simple mistake, but a misrecognition tied to what Pierre Bourdieu (1990) called the “*illusio*” of all social games, the commitment to their structure that shapes the engagement of every player and makes possible effective play. In other words, cosmopolitans do not simply fail to see the cultural particularity and social supports of their cosmopolitanism, but cannot fully and accurately recognize these without introducing a tension between themselves and their social world. And here I would include myself and probably all of us. Whether we theorize cosmopolitanism or not, we are embedded in social fields and practical projects in which we have little choice but to make use of some of the notions basic to cosmopolitanism and thereby reproduce it. We have the option of being self-critical as we do so, but not of entirely abandoning cosmopolitanism because we cannot act effectively without it. Nor should we want to abandon it, since it enshrines many important ideas like the equal worth of all human beings and—at least potentially—the value of cultural and

social diversity. But we should want to transform it, not least because as usually constructed, especially in its most individualistic forms, it systematically inhibits attention to the range of solidarities on which people depend, and to the special role of such solidarities in the struggles of the less privileged and those displaced or challenged by capitalist globalization.

Second, it is important to think of solidarities in the plural, avoiding the illusion that plagued much earlier thought of ethnicity and nationalism that there was some one basic identity common to all members of a group. Nations and ethnic groups are internally differentiated in a variety of ways, overlap with and are cross-cut by various other identities, and figure with greater or lesser salience when members are in different interpersonal situations and when different large-scale factors—say economic change—affect their overall positions. Family comes to the fore sometimes, and may push ethnic solidarities to the background. Ethnicity may shape a certain interaction more than class or class provide the basis for a cross-ethnic solidarity without either of these being clearly prior to or more real than the other. Indeed, this is an important reason not to see any of these solidarities as entirely “pre-political”. Though they may be bases for political action, they are also recurrently remade by political efforts. These efforts include not only organizing and material changes but intentionally produced changes in discourse—like those wrought by feminism as well as by some ethnic and nationalist movements. With Brubaker (2002), thus, we can emphasize the variable and shifting qualities of group membership, the distinction between groups and organizations that facilitate action in their names, and the extent to which groups are projects rather than fixed realities. We should emphasize that groups seldom contain whole persons or command all their allegiance—family and nation are often in conflict, after all, nationalist ideologues notwithstanding. But none of this makes solidarities or groupness less important, only more complex and problematic. Moreover, we should not dismiss the invocation of “groupist” notions of sharp boundaries and clear composition as merely errors made by practical participants to be avoided by analysts. We need to understand these as partly constitutive of group identity and solidarity, even though it never can fully match them.

We do not need to choose between two caricatures of social solidarity, identity, ethnicity, or more generally groupness. It is not either simply a matter of inheritance and essential commonality or a matter of free-flowing ubiquitous and undetermined construction. It is socially produced, shaped by material factors, culturally organized and yet also open to human action. Neither should we oppose “category” to “group” (equating the later with network). Rather, it is one dimension of solidarity or groupness.

Solidarity, thus, is not the “bad other” to individual choice. Not only may it be chosen, it may be a crucial condition of other choices. And absence of solidarity may eliminate possibilities for choice. Solidarity may, for example, be the basis of an effort to restrict allegedly “free” market relations—for example by limiting the right of “outsiders” to buy land held by members of “local” groups. Absent restrictions, the apparently greater net freedom of choice—all the world is free to buy—becomes a radical loss of freedom to the locals (especially where these are less wealthy than most outsiders). That restrictions appear at first blush to be clearly reductions in freedom is an expression of the extent to which a certain liberal ideology is dominant and also the extent to which most of us are in positions of relative privilege and so can readily imagine ourselves primarily as buyers. But an approach to the world in which cosmopolitan diversity simply opens a greater range of consumer options is clearly a limited one. And, as evoking this suggests, buying into some neoliberal discourses about freedom actually means celebrating the tyranny of the market.

I do not mean to accuse Nussbaum or other strong cosmopolitans of neoliberalism or celebrations of consumerism. I do mean to suggest that inattention to social solidarity may make for slippage between cosmopolitanism based on strong ethical universalism and that based on misrecognized personal advantage. It is important not to sacrifice sociological analysis of why people seek and reproduce social solidarity to a more or less abstract account of individuals, states, and humanity at large. And it is important not to think that valuing humanity as a whole eliminates—even potentially—the need for valuing various more intermediary solidarities.

Cosmopolitanism is not wrong, but by itself it is inadequate. Taking seriously the whole of humanity need not preclude taking seriously the various particular relationships in which humans are constituted and connected to each other. Cosmopolitanism remains attractive, and arguments linked to it have offered important insights in political theory. But it needs the complement of greater attention to social solidarities. Cosmopolitanism need not be abandoned in order to take community, culture, and other forms of solidarity seriously. On the contrary, it may be improved.

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