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Cosmopolitan Liberalism and its Limits

Craig Calhoun

Cosmopolitanism is in fashion. It is valued in clothing style and eating habits, leisure travel and business connections, musical taste and ethical commitments. I have previously criticized the too easy conflation of these different dimensions. This tends to give a tone of moral self-righteousness to matters of personal style, and it tends to deflect attention from the extent to which these sorts of cosmopolitanism rest on positions of personal privilege. I have termed this the “class consciousness of frequent travelers”.

In my talk today I want to take up a different but related theme, the renewal of political liberalism as cosmopolitanism.

Most versions of cosmopolitanism are contained within liberalism. They are grounded in thinking about individuals – their rights, tastes, and potential travels through the world, and indeed also their ethical obligations. They have much less to say about social transformations that would raise the opportunities and standards of living of the poor or collective struggles that might bring these about. In this they share something with 19th century bourgeois liberalism. Compared to previous aristocratic closure of opportunities it helped underwrite a new openness. But it offered much less to struggles to transform capitalist inequalities. And it was often actively hostile to attempts by craft workers and others to defend their traditional communities.¹ So it is today with those enthusiastic about a range of new technologies and willing to accept the economic relations that shape their distribution and use. There is a tension running through modern history between struggles to open new individual opportunities – for those with the resources to take them up – and struggles to transform social structures to benefit those much less well off. Both of these struggles are important, though they have proved hard to integrate.

Those alarmed by a reassertion of nationalism and by the growing securitization of both domestic states and international relations call for an ethical orientation to people in general. This has often been identified as cosmopolitanism - a universalistic but abstract view of the obligations and rights of the “citizen of the world”. For most, this stops short of imagining the world to be a coherent polity. But since the 1990s a new idea began to be discussed actively. Could one achieve cosmopolitan democracy?

I do not mean to suggest an essential scale to democracy. To be sure the ancient Greeks had good reasons to hold that the form of government they called polity, which since the Renaissance we have called republican government, to require limits in scale, generally to the city-state in which at least most citizens could recognize each other face-to-face. Democracy is a form of republican government, not one which greatly impressed the ancient Greek philosophers (partly because like Socrates they tended to suffer under it), but one which has become a widespread standard in the modern world. The democracy we recognize appears in small countries and large, and even in relatively small ones depends on mediation by print, or broadcast, or other media that reach beyond the face-to-face. National boundaries need not be permanent limits, and so when we criticize the 'democratic deficit' of the EU, it is precisely because that supranational polity could be more democratic. The EU is in fact presented by many as the exemplary model for cosmopolitan democracy. But here we need to be careful. Not only is the EU as such less democratic than any of its member states, it enforces strong boundaries against the rest of the world, it is organized on the basis of both formal citizenship and sociocultural structures of belonging. Moreover, much of the impetus to create and repeatedly strengthen the EU comes from the conviction that transnational political and economic integration are required to compete effectively with other regions of the world and to maintain a standard of living that is privileged.

It is an open question whether the EU will continue to integrate further, and will in time become the primary structure of political belonging for its citizens. The current crisis suggests reasons to be cautious about assuming a linear trend of integration. But in any case the integration of Europeans into a new transnational polity would not be definitive of cosmopolitanism. That European polity could be more or less open to immigrants and transregional trade, more or less committed to the welfare of others or to defending the prosperity of its own citizens, more or less aggressive and militarized. But the structures of belonging that secure its internal cohesion and enable it potentially to be democratic must integrate Europeans more and outsiders less. Cosmopolitanism may complement this sense of belonging, help to produce a positive sense of global connections, and encourage citizens to make sure that Europe treats non-Europeans with respect. But cosmopolitanism is not in itself a basis for democracy. Both may be good, but good things do not always come in a package; balance is often required.

Democracy, by contrast to cosmopolitanism, has usually depended on strong connections and mutual recognition among the members of a specific people. These are crucial supports for collective decision-making (and loyalty even when decisions are contentious). Republics depend on

the cohesion of citizens as monarchies and empires do not. Theories of cosmopolitan democracy bring the two perspectives together in a surprising and important but also problematic way (see Held 1995; Habermas 1998; and essays in Archibugi and Held, eds. 1995; Archibugi, Held and Köhler, eds. 1998).

The project of cosmopolitan democracy is intended to create a political order adequate to the actual scale of global interconnections and yet responsive both to the diversity of individuals' attachments and the ideal of self-governance. It responds not only to the reality of economic integration, but also to the ethical challenges posed by globalization. It responds to limits of conventional liberal thought, most notably those posed by linking citizenship to national identity. It offers a way of thinking about obligations all human beings share because of new technologies and trading patterns render us all members of a common community of fate. But there is also misrecognition.

In these remarks, I address the attractions of cosmopolitanism and the reasons liberal theorists have sought to transcend thinking in terms of national states. But I also address the limits imposed by the conventional terms of liberal theory and resistance to a strong account of the importance of social solidarity, culture, and 'belonging', not least as bases for democracy.

There is nothing inherently democratic in cosmopolitanism. We need to be attentive to the bases on which seeming cosmopolitanism rests – business and academia, global civil society and multilateral organizations. Each of these brings particular patterns of inclusion, inequality, and sometimes exclusion; none is simply, neutrally global. As the class-consciousness of frequent travelers, cosmopolitanism provides elites with a self-understanding shaped not so much by a consciousness of privilege as by the illusion of having escaped the biases of particular locations. Yet of course the wealth, the expense accounts, and the conference invitations to specify a social condition. Cosmopolitanism is not universalism; it is easiest for those who belong to a social class able to identify itself with the universal (Calhoun 2003). Moreover, as Sergio Costa notes, most cosmopolitan theories, however well-intentioned, reflect “the presence of an ontological and historical a priori, the so-called North Atlantic societies producing the cosmopolitan order” (Costa 2005: 1).

Liberalism Goes Global

Liberalism grew up in close relationship to the modern state. Ideas of citizenship and rights both reflect the attempt to construct the proper relationship between individual subject and sovereign state. In general, liberal theories do not begin from strong accounts of culture or social

solidarity (and thus may be judged sociologically impoverished) though repeated efforts have been made to integrate republican thought with its notion of moral community, or to bring more attention to participation and difference into theories of citizenship. Nonetheless, 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. Liberal political theory was essentially domestic” in its focus. So long as the fiction of a perfect match between nations and states was plausible, this was relatively unproblematic

Wars and refugees posed recurrent challenges to both the system of nation-states and the political theory of liberal democracy. World War II was a pivotal instance. As Hannah Arendt (1951) emphasized, Jews and others were denied citizenship by both the Nazi Germany from which they escaped and the other countries into which they fled. Ideas of individual rights could not protect them since these depended on states for recognition and enforcement. After the war, a variety of efforts were made to provide better for stateless people, including signing several treaties and founding such organizations as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.² Nonetheless, states were the signatories on the treaties and states formed the UN and the high commission. Even though ideas of human rights would become increasingly important, especially after the Cold War, they did not escape the issue of state sovereignty.

Capitalism too posed challenges to political liberalism. Liberalism incorporated a notion of the ‘separation of spheres’ that suggested that the economic and the political were significantly autonomous, even though the idea of the property-owning individual was closely bound up with that of the autonomous political subject. Free-market individualism informed a libertarian (and sometimes liberal) resistance to state power, but still accepted state and individual as the fundamental units of analysis. At the same time, capitalism produced a substantial arena of economic power that demanded autonomy from not only states but liberal conceptions of participatory rights and democracy. Not least of all, though the growth of markets and capitalist firms often depended on systems of state support, capitalist economic relations transcended states. Capitalism produced global organization of production and global flows of goods and indeed people that states could not effectively control.

During the 1990s, these challenges intensified. A variety of humanitarian crises, often products of civil wars and ethnic conflicts, pressed issues of refugees and human rights to the fore. Responses linked these in complicated ways to notions of intervention by an “international community” into the ostensibly sovereign affairs of states (Fassin and Pandolfi, 2010). The (somewhat nebulously conceived) international community itself included a growing range of nonstate

organizations, but interventions, especially military ones, generally reflected state power even when they were organized through multilateral organizations.

Faced with these challenges, many liberals began an important effort to rethink political theory. For the most part, liberal theory had been (and indeed still is) concerned mainly with conditions inside states. It has accepted that different considerations and conditions govern international relations. This is one of the bases for the division of international relations from the rest of political science, derived in partially mythological fashion from the notion of state sovereignty identified with the Peace of Westphalia. The division was in a sense restated after World War Two in the dominance of the “realist” perspective in international relations, an assertion of the necessity of *raison d'état*. Many international relations analysts doubted that the democratic vision ascendant in Western domestic politics was a good idea, but they insisted that even if it was it couldn't apply internationally. At the very least it would be destabilizing and more likely disastrous.³ Conversely, liberal theorists accepted that their domain was “domestic” affairs and presumed an individual state as the necessary context of analysis. John Rawls (1993: 41), the most important liberal theorist of our era, put the matter clearly:

...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.

Such a society is more than merely a community or an association. It is given a more determinate form by a state, Rawls argued following Kant. This makes for a “well-ordered society”. Such a state could be democratic, or liberal, but it also could be hierarchical. If hierarchical, it could be called “well-ordered” when informed by conceptions of the common good, and of rights of members, and equipped with mechanisms for consultation across levels of the hierarchy. The key point is that there is a stable constitutional regime treated internally as legitimate, and a kind of closure enabling it to be taken as a unit.

Domestically, thus, Rawls focused on creating a legitimate political association: a social arrangement to which reasonable people would assent not knowing their particular position within it. In a liberal democratic society, free and equal people would be able to “cooperate freely with others on terms all can accept” (Rawls 1993: 50). Internationally, however, Rawls – again following Kant - saw the problem as more complicated. The relevant relationships were not only among human persons but also among peoples and states.

Concentrating on domestic relations of justice among persons, Rawls' theory of justice argued in detail why it was better for a state to be democratic and egalitarian. But in international affairs, Rawls sought "to yield a more general law of peoples without prejudging the case against nonliberal societies" (Rawls 1999: 65). In order to pursue international peace, and such benefits as international cooperation could confer, he held it necessary not to demand the transformation of the domestic constitution of different states.

Rawls saw international relations as different precisely because there was no global state. Rawls' approach was to retain the notion of "peoples" or discrete societies, and then to propose a "law of peoples" regulating relations among these. He was not a Schmittian, imagining states to be self-constituting creatures of power. He did not adopt the extreme "realist" position that state sovereignty renders international relations a more or less Hobbesian realm of disorder and essential conflict. Nor did he hold that any international pursuit of human rights must be an ethnocentric imposition. He held that the law of peoples could promote not only peace and cooperation in the pursuit of material interests but human rights. Nonetheless, he did insist on respect for the historical production of distinct ways of life and constitutional orders among different peoples. He did not grapple in depth with the issues of internal diversity of peoples or cultural contradiction within various ways of life. He commended pluralism on positive grounds as well as the more negative ones that disturbing this status quo could lead to deeper conflicts.

One way of understanding liberal cosmopolitanism is as the refusal to recognize such a strong demarcation between the "domestic" and the "international". Trade and economic relations, migration, media, disease and ecological danger run across state boundaries, the reasoning goes, so it is appropriate to extend "domestic" criteria of justice (that is, criteria that refer to persons not collectivities) to the scale of humanity as a whole.⁴ Rawls is wrong to accept the "de facto pluralism of the status quo" rather than to pursue a more ideal liberal order on a global scale (Bowman and Lutz-Bachman 1997: 17; McCarthy 1997). Such a version of cosmopolitan liberalism can accept most of the rest of the Kantian and Rawlsian approach. Indeed, many cosmopolitan liberals today argue in essence that Kant and Rawls were simply too timid, and that the force of their stronger arguments (those for justice among persons) demands that right-thinking people pursue justice on a global scale without regard to cultural or political differences, precisely because justice is accessible in universalistic terms.

For many, this is simply a moral imperative; it does not require further justification in terms of practicability. Concerned more with practice, others call for the building of a cosmopolitan law that is not

international in the sense of being instituted among nations or states but transnational in the sense of being like “domestic” law but operating across existing state boundaries. Kant and Rawls both seemed to think such an approach would depend on a global state (and to think such a state was at most a distant possibility). For Kant this seemed both unrealistic and possibly bad. He favored a federation that would preserve sovereign states in their freedom, but with mutual regulation and a commitment to peace, much as a good state preserved the freedom of individual citizens (Baynes 1997). A global state would eliminate a whole level of freedom, and political innovation. Some liberal cosmopolitans today agree, and suggest strengthening existing international institutions like the United Nations with the eventual goal of creating a global state. Others hold that cosmopolitan law is possible without waiting for (or perhaps even wishing for) an overarching global state. What makes it possible is the development of global civil society. They are impressed by the potential of nongovernmental organizations of various kinds either to substitute for a global state, or at least to supplement existing states and international organizations.⁵ Such a global civil society, aided by global media and social movements, would underpin a public sphere able to make human rights and similar ideas effective.⁶ Still others seek a global state.

Clearly global governance institutions are now being built. Most are creatures of international treaties and thus still reliant on national states. Some, like arbitration agreements, are the product of agreements among multinational business firms; some involve social movements and civil society associations taking on governance roles. There is room for considerable debate as to whether developments of this sort are likely in any near future to be great enough to secure world peace, achieve human rights, and in general carry the burdens cosmopolitans would assign to transnational governance. Global civil society is real and important, thus, but also thinner and more dependent on states than is often recognized. Moreover, this civil society is asymmetrically dominated by elites, both citizens of rich countries and privileged citizens of poorer ones. More of it is organized in capitalist business terms than liberal cosmopolitans make clear. And in general global civil society is not democratic or subject to constitutions providing for strong internal or external accountability. Even organizations that do morally good things on behalf of genuinely needy people are not necessarily (or often) organized democratically. Achieving internal democracy in the organizations of global civil society is not likely to be easy (or in all cases consistent with at least short term efficacy). Overcoming the inequalities of global civil society is likely to be just as hard.

None of this means that global civil society is not valuable or good. It means that relying on it to constitute a just and attractive global political order requires, at the very least, a great deal of optimism. It is

better to see civil society as a counterbalance to states than as a substitute for states.

In any case, liberalism went global during the 1990s. 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 came to be working out how to extend their theories of justice and political legitimacy to a global scale.

Many of the most important leaders in these efforts to rethink liberalism have adopted “cosmopolitanism” as the label for their projects of a new liberal global order (anthologies representing diverse approaches include Archibugi and Held 1995; Archibugi, Held, and Köhler, 1998; Archibugi 2003; Cheah and Robbins 1998 and Vertovec and Cohen 2002). This draws on classical and early modern sources for a moral vision in which all humanity is equally valued. How to transmute equal moral value into social institutions and political arrangements is an issue. Most of the cosmopolitan arguments focus on justice among individuals. They tend to denigrate or at least marginalize national and more local loyalties, to ignore religious belonging, and in general to treat individuals as essentially discrete and equivalent.⁷ They are largely neoKantian and focus on what is universalizable.⁸ But most take this further than Kant did. They focus on international equivalents of domestic law (or ethics) as these address more or less equivalent individuals. Fewer follow Rawls in holding that nation states (or peoples) need to retain sovereignty; more find Kant’s idea of a federation attractive. Staying more at the level of ethics, or asking simply about the justice of inclusion or exclusion from the body of citizens (as with regard to migrants), most in fact say little about specific international or transnational institutions. David Held (1995; Held and McGrew 2007) is an exception, laying out an institutional approach to the development of cosmopolitan governance. But neither ethical universalists nor cosmopolitan institutionalists typically attend in a sociological manner to the actual structures of belonging to social groups, cultures, and histories. These differentiate people, but also connect them (Calhoun 2007).

Cosmopolitanism is presented not only as a universal and timeless good but also 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.

Liberalism and Belonging

Ethical universalism, institutional cosmopolitanism, and liberalism generally share an ironic reliance in the nation-state that they seek to transcend. Other approaches to cosmopolitanism place more stress on diversity as a good in itself and are less closely derived from liberalism (Pollock 2000, Sennett 1977). Appreciating difference may be an ethical value, framed for example in terms of extending recognition to all people not merely as sharing the minimal common denominator of humanness but as the people they actually are. This implies recognition of the cultural contexts in which they live and which enable them to be who they are (Taylor 1994, Honneth 1996). And this in turn challenges the notion of formally equivalent subjects. But of course diversity is not only an ethical value; it is a consumer taste, a lifestyle choice, and for some a prudential consideration about the future – making sure there is social innovation (much as biological diversity may be seen as an important value). One of the challenges for a cosmopolitan ethics is working out how to relate universalism and appreciation for diversity.

Here retaining a key weakness of older forms of liberalism is a problem for new cosmopolitan theories. Few offer any strong account of social solidarity or of the role of culture in constituting human life. Some make efforts; Jurgen Habermas (1998) and Hauke Brunkhorst (2006) are especially noteworthy. But though they are concerned with solidarity, they are committed to understanding this overwhelmingly in terms of individual choice to make commitments to each other or to social institutions. For the most part, they start theorizing from putatively autonomous, discrete, and cultureless individuals. One reason is because they are rightly distrustful of ethnic nationalism, and especially of claims that it is the only or normal basis for large-scale solidarity. 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 words, a "morally questionable move of self-definition by a morally irrelevant characteristic" (1996: 5). More generally, "culture" is treated as a form of bias cosmopolitans ought to resist – and the milieux of global cosmopolitanism are understood as escapes from culture rather than shaped by their own culture.

For many, cosmopolitanism is centrally about how well or poorly we relate to strangers – those we do not know and those outside our political and communal solidarities. A cosmopolitan cares about people to whom he or she does not have a strong personal connection and about the world as a whole. Ethicists like Nussbaum and Anthony Appiah put the stress on orientations to individual action and considerations of justice and equity. Certainly from the perspective of justice, there are strong reasons to think that all human beings should be considered equally. Why should an accident of birth – being born in one country any more than being born light skinned or male confer any special privilege? Shouldn't those of us who benefit from global trade have obligations to consider whether the products we buy are produced by coerced or child labor? One can approach these ethical issues in narrowly individual ways – for example by taking care not to buy certain products. But seeking to have a bigger impact requires considering political or at least institutional remedies and changes.

When one shifts from individualistic ethics to consideration of the political and social conditions for achieving the good, the issue becomes still more problematic. Philosophers try to clarify matters by keeping the good and the just distinct. Crudely put, there is a difference between determining what to value and distributing whatever is valued in a fair way. Culture enters more deeply into considerations of what to value, what to consider part of the good life, than into considerations of fairness that are in principle more amenable to universalistic analysis.

One may ask what is just within one nation or indeed a smaller group. But for universalistic ethics this must seem a kind of temporary and provisional question; we need justice at the restricted national scale only because we haven't managed to achieve it globally (but that's where we're really heading). Indeed, the contemporary world poses innumerable

demands for thinking about justice across borders. Moreover, to think well about justice inside a group one needs to tackle the question of who is legitimately a part of that group – which itself raises questions of justice. So the cosmopolitan critique of mere nationalism (or localism, or bias in favor of co-religionists) has important merit. Yet it is not absolutely decisive (though some treat it that way). There are also compelling reasons to think that human beings thrive and prosper and do better at achieving justice in more particular groups and relations of social solidarity that stop short of including all humanity. Family is a powerful example. And though larger communities and even nations are not simply extensions of family, since they are organized on different logics, they also provide social support, personal identity, and contexts for communication that are vital to human beings. It is not at all clear that undermining all such intermediate solidarities would advance the net level of global, universal justice. But taking this into consideration requires moving from completely abstract questions of universal ethics into a practical realm in which sociological considerations of actual human behavior and relationships must figure centrally.

Take the challenge posed by the large numbers of refugees who have fled civil wars, states unable to contain criminal violence, political oppression, trafficking and the sex trade, and other ills. Most ethical discussion of refugees focuses on the reprehensible ways in which borders and sovereignty are evoked to stop refugees entering other countries. Many spend years in a legal limbo, living in camps or detention centers. Countries of initial settlement – those that border on unstable lands from which refugees flee, or those easily approached by sea – are the most generous; they usually do not turn refugees away, though they may refuse them education, opportunities to work legally, and other benefits. International agencies help refugees, and in some settings they have amenities nearby non-refugees lack. Such humanitarian assistance is seen as a primary achievement of global civil society. It comes largely from Europe, North America, and in general the world's rich countries. After an era of relative openness, most – especially European countries – have closed their borders. The United States takes the most resettled refugees (that is, those moving to a third country). Indeed the US takes in more than all other rich countries combined, but this means only that it takes in 80-90,000 out of more than ten million formally recognized by the United Nations (and there are several million more awaiting recognition, a process that can take years). The ethical universalism of liberal cosmopolitanism provides an important argument about why it is unfair, even immoral, for the citizens of rich countries to protect their perceived self-interest by keeping refugees out. But this sort of ethics does not address the other side of the refugee problem. It does not take up the importance of trying to avoid the problems that force people to become refugees. To do so, one would have to pay more

attention to solidarity and state institutions, to politics rather than just ethics. I do not mean to pose a false choice between mitigation and attacking root causes; both are important. I do mean to remind us that taking in refugees is a distant second best to ending civil wars, trafficking in women, ethnic violence, and political oppression – and that the means to accomplish this lie mainly in strengthening and improving states – and enabling equitable participation in global economic growth – not erasing borders. There is a difference between describing the ethical obligations of the rich to be generous, and describing the political imperative to create social structures that provide both opportunity and protection. Ideally these will be open to a flow of unforced migrants in each direction (how big a flow is a question). But agreeing to this ideal is not a substitute for, nor is it ethically superior to, building stronger solidarities on more local, regional, or national scales. Universalism is not a trump card against more local solidarities; it is a complement.

Leaving pure ethics aside, Ulf Hannerz (2006) notes that we still face a similar tension between larger, inclusive wholes and the wide range of actual cultural identities and practices. He contrasts the political and cultural projects of cosmopolitanism – the search for political unity despite diversity and the appreciation of global diversity. Each names an important positive sense of cosmopolitanism. Not only are they potentially in tension, however, they are not so good that more of either is always better. Global cosmopolitanism is sometimes deployed as a sort of ethical trump card against narrower identities and loyalties. In this it ironically extends one of the key features of nationalism – the absolute priority of the whole – even while opposing nationalisms as more sectional loyalties. Of course political unity on a global scale might come with recognition of subsidiary identities, and this may be what self-styled “cosmopolitan democrats” want. But it is easy for the rhetoric to denigrate the importance of belonging to more specific and concrete social groups than humanity as a whole. At the same time, the celebration of diversity risks losing its critical edge. It is easy for it to slide into a consumerist cosmopolitanism of ethnic restaurants and tourism, forgetting both the material privilege that makes enjoying these possible and the extent to which the celebrated diversity depends on less than universal cultural commitments.

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.

Cosmopolitanism is commonly situated in the story of modernity as the supplanting of community by association, traditional solidarities by rational politics, the partial by the universal. Ulrich Beck (2008) describes individualization in these terms, and sees it as a step on the way to empirical cosmopolitanization (which he distinguishes from merely normative cosmopolitanism). In such accounts nations may figure as way-stations, transcending local communities but still too partial and traditional and soon to be transcended themselves.

But modernity is not well-described as simply a progressive erosion of “community” in favor of cosmopolitan association; it has been more a struggle over how to relate local attachment and broader connection. Thomas Carlyle (1828) worried that “a certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had taken place of the old insular home-feeling.” Whatever its failings, “the old home feeling” helped to produce a sense of mutual obligations, and of “moral economy”, to borrow the phrase Edward Thompson (1971) retrieved from an old tradition. Disconnecting workers and employers from ties to place commonly meant disconnecting the latter from moral obligations to the former, depriving the workers of leverage for their efforts to secure just wages or relief in hard times. This doesn’t mean we should retreat to local communities and ignore the world. It doesn’t mean those earlier place-bound workers were always better off. It does mean that capitalism’s expanding scale and the disconnections that accompanied it were not unalloyed progress. It means we need to overcome a false opposition.

Cosmopolitanism – like indeed, NGOs and civil society - makes much more sense as a complement to states, and sometimes a corrective to state policies, than as an alternative. We live in a world of states in which being a citizen of the world without a relatively strong state is a disaster. Yet cosmopolitanism has often figured in the modern social imaginary as a sort of antidote to states and nationalism.

Many advocates for liberal cosmopolitanism treat nationalism, religion, and at least strong versions of ethnicity as the “bad others” to cosmopolitanism. They neglect the extent to which nations are also structures of integration, fields of common identity that help people overcome internal divisions. This in turn minimizes attention to social solidarity in favor of analyses framed in terms of individuals and the universal, and they 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.

Talk of cosmopolitanism as a new global trend has been rooted partly in high hopes for human morality, though arguments about moral obligation too often focus on what people ought to do and not what there is any reason to think they want to do or will do. It is appropriate to pay attention to obligations and appropriate to have high hopes for humanity. But it also makes sense to attend to human fears and passions. No cosmopolitanism will prosper which speaks only to rational calculations of what we ought to do. We have to ask what moves us to do right, and we have to ask what social supports we need.

The apparent abstraction of liberal citizenship has recurrently raised questions about the motivational basis for universal political participation. These questions are renewed in the context of European integration, as Habermas for example asks “whether there exists a functional equivalent for the fusion of the nation of citizens with the ethnic nation” (1998: 117). And indeed, from Fichte forward, theories of the ethnic nation sought to account for both the moral and the motivational identification of individuals with the state. But civic liberalism and ethnic nationalism were not the only possible political positions. Various sorts of pluralist arguments have flourished in different contexts, from Gierke and Tönnies, through Proudhon and Durkheim at least on occasion, Maitland and G.D.H. Cole, to Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne in the U.S.

Cosmopolitanism without more particular solidarities would produce a cold world and one disempowering for many. Martha Nussbaum has recognized the coldness, though she expresses it as a matter of personal choice: “Becoming a citizen of the world is often a lonely business. It is ... a kind of exile –from the comfort of local truths, from the warm, nestling feeling of patriotism, from the absorbing drama of pride in oneself and love of one’s own.” What cosmopolitanism offers, she suggests, is “only reason and the love of humanity, which may seem at times less colorful than other sources of belonging” (1996: 15) But Nussbaum doesn’t consider the material conditions of life that make cosmopolitanism easier for some to choose; she focuses on its (rather austere) moral superiority. Hannerz (2006: 13) asks, by contrast, “Why should there be no thick cosmopolitanism?” I think cosmopolitanism can be thicker and warmer, but then it must be found in a rich welter of mixtures, border crossings, and appreciations of cultural specificity and difference. Finding it in abstraction to the level of humanity in general or ethical reason as such necessarily makes it cold and thin.

Perhaps most basically, extending cosmopolitan arguments against nationalism into doubts about the importance of states is deeply troubling—not simply as an abstract matter of political theory, but as a concrete issue about how to achieve better living conditions for ordinary people around the world. States are the arenas within which rule of law, civil rights, reasonable regulations on business activity, and sometimes democracy are most likely to be achieved. States are the organizational structures most likely to deliver public security, health care, education and other services. Of course many do a poor job of delivering these benefits and/or do so very inequitably. But these are reasons to improve states, not abandon the state, especially in the absence of viable alternatives. Likewise, it is unquestionably true that state borders create unfairness for those kept out (and often for successful immigrants). This also demands political attention and reform. But while it seems entirely possible that we may improve on the structures of political authority, service delivery and social integration provided by modern states, it is far from obvious that weakening states now will make those better structures more likely.

Conclusion

Cosmopolitanism is an important response to globalization, but not by itself an adequate one. We need to problematize its acceptance of economic, modernizing imaginaries, its typically inadequate attention to the formation of solidarity and the conditions for collective choices about the nature of society, and its common substitution of ethics for politics, and the extent to which most versions reflect elite perspectives on the world. We need to complement cosmopolitan approaches that stress abstract equivalence with perspectives that pay attention to concrete historical structures of belonging. We need to be careful not to take universal distributive justice as definitive of *the good* rather than as one good alongside others. We need to question whether “thin identities” are adequate underpinnings for democracy.

We should also be wary of the tendency to reproduce a misleading dichotomy – on the one side ethnicity and nation, both understood to be old if not timeless, biased and often bad; on the other side reason, progress, enlightenment, and cosmopolitanism. Tony Giddens (2000: 22-3), for example, argues that “the battleground of the twenty-first century will pit fundamentalism against cosmopolitan tolerance. In a globalising world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe, we are all regularly in contact with others who think differently, and live differently, from ourselves. Cosmopolitans welcome and embrace this cultural complexity. Fundamentalists find it disturbing and dangerous. Whether in the areas of religion, ethnic identity, or nationalism, they take refuge in a renewed and purified tradition--and,

quite often, violence.” The issue is real but the forced choice too simple. In Europe, this way of thinking leads liberals overconfidently to dismiss less cosmopolitan citizens as simply backward. Globally, it risks denigrating as simply unc cosmopolitan too many of the political projects by which people in the global South pursue – and in particular European countries – their hopes. As Costa writes, “we need to get rid of the impression that the debate on globalization of human rights locks up a confrontation between, on the one hand, particularists, prisoners to conservative values, old-fashioned identities and lifefoms, and on the other hand, universalists who stand for values uprooted from any specific cultural context” (Costa 2005: 10)

At least for the foreseeable future, cosmopolitanism may flourish more on the basis of nations, religions and other culturally specific solidarities than as a substitute for nations and other mediating scales of belonging. Taking responsibility for what goes on in our own national states, and what they do abroad, may be more ethically virtuous and politically efficacious than imagining ourselves simply as citizens of the world. Working on the concrete social relationships by which we are bound to others is basic to building better political communities. Recognizing the cultural orientations through which we inhabit the world – and seeking sometimes to change as well as to celebrate them – is both more honest than imagining a world of rational but cultureless relations and at least as valuable as a basis for solidarity.

¹ The limits of liberalism were, of course, a central theme for Karl Marx. He criticized the division between politics and economics that offered formal citizenship and new political rights to the entire bourgeoisie while excluding the entire working class on the basis of property rights. Marx had little sympathy, however, for struggles of resistance against capitalism rather than more “modern” efforts to transcend it; see Calhoun (1982).

² See Somers 2008 for a recent discussion of citizenship, statelessness, and the right to have rights.

³ See Guihot (forthcoming) for a fascinating discussion of this moment of restatement of the realist position as not merely conventional wisdom but a sort of “theory” to guide an emerging field.

⁴ The cosmopolitans build on an important line of criticism of Rawls’ (1971) 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.

⁵ The argument for a differentiated cosmopolitan order in which states remained important, but with only partial sovereignty, is laid out most fully by David Held (1995) but supplemented in a variety of writings since. Held would grant partial sovereignty not only to states, but to the wide range of different organizations making decisions relevant to human life, and insist that democracy be pursued within each of those organizations. Sovereignty would not only be hierarchically differentiated, thus, it would be overlapping.

⁶ To be sure, it would be naïve to argue that global civil society and its public sphere could be adequate by itself, and many cosmopolitans pull back from this notion. James Bohman (1997), for example, takes care to argue not only the importance and power of the global public sphere, but the extent to which its greatest efficacy was achieved when it motivated the citizens of individual states to press their governments for action against abuses of human rights.

⁷ Nussbaum (2006) challenges the assumption of equally empowered individuals in the social contract tradition, but nonetheless calls for a kind of equivalence in terms of ethical standing as the basis for her capabilities approach.

⁸ Martha Nussbaum (2006) is more directly influenced by Rawls and critical of parts of the tradition in which Kant is central; she also relies on the Stoics – and it is no accident that her theory approaches politics largely an extension of ethics. See Benhabib (2006) for an explicitly neoKantian theory; and Anthony Appiah (2006) for an account broadly but less specifically in this tradition.