

[Craig Calhoun](#)

## 'Belonging' in the cosmopolitan imaginary

**Article (Accepted version)  
(Refereed)**

**Original citation:**

Calhoun, Craig (2003) *'Belonging' in the cosmopolitan imaginary*. [Ethnicities](#), 3 (4). pp. 531-553.  
ISSN 1468-7968

DOI: [10.1177/1468796803003004005](https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796803003004005)

© 2003 [Sage Publications](#)

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48245/>

Available in LSE Research Online: February 2013

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's final accepted version of the journal article. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

## Ethnicity in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary<sup>1</sup>

Craig Calhoun

In the 1990s, much discourse both in and about global civil society was beset by a false opposition. On the one side was the utopia of cosmopolitan liberalism. On the other side was the specter of reactionary nationalism or fundamentalism. And of course in a variety of settings, some national and some diasporically transnational, the value loading was reversed: fundamentalist or national utopia, threatening specter of cosmopolitan liberalism.

September 11<sup>th</sup> and the ensuing conflicts and upheavals refocused the discussion, but did not altogether dislodge the false opposition. They gave renewed emphasis to the image of Islam as the bad other to liberalism and progress. They encouraged the US government to demonize Islam and indeed to extend the condemnation to a secular (if extraordinarily ill-governed) Arab state. Commentators reconfigured the false opposition in the contrast of the alleged medieval character of the Taliban to the more modern West. Leaders who had not previously shown any strong interest in gender equality embraced it when it worked to reinforce the contrast. Not only such human rights issues but a variety of other indicators were harnessed to show the lack of 'progress' in Islamic societies, including even the sheer high-tech military prowess of America. The language of liberal democracy was invoked to explain the need for externally imposed regime change in Iraq (and possibly other Islamic societies). But at the same time, the 9/11 attacks and the dominant Western responses to them upset the cosmopolitan vision of an easy, happy progress towards cosmopolitan democracy. The US government's post 9/11 policies undermined multilateralism; security policies of many countries impeded flows of international visitors and migrants; already growing economic problems and protectionist impulses were exacerbated.

The prospects for cosmopolitan democracy and the more general discourse of liberal internationalism of which it is a part look less promising today than they did in the 1990s. But the basic rhetorical opposition between the liberal cosmopolitan and the illiberal local remains influential. It is not only misleading, but part of an ideological tendency to misrecognize the character of globalization and the conditions of liberal discourse within it. The opposition implies that its two terms operate separately from the shaping of the global order by capitalist economic relations (and others, like flows of loans and aid). It encourages a substitution of ethics for politics, accounts of what is good or bad in individual action for how collective struggles might change social structure or institutions. And it permits at most a thin appreciation of the sociological character of membership or belonging, including changes in belonging and efforts to transcend particular solidarities.

The present paper focuses on the way in which social solidarity—and its individual manifestation in a sense of belonging in specific cultural and social settings—is marginalized and often stigmatized in the asocial imaginary characteristic of the new self-declared cosmopolitan variants of liberalism. In particular, I ask whether there is any place for culture or ethnicity in such theory except as the stigmatized other, more or less

---

<sup>1</sup> Forthcoming in *Ethnicities*. I am grateful for comments in March 2003 from audiences at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii and University of California, Berkeley, Department of Sociology.

tolerated. Put otherwise, can cosmopolitan theory value humanity not merely in the abstract but in the concrete variety of its ways of life? I argue that cosmopolitan liberals often fail 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. The views of cosmopolitan elites express privilege; they are not neutral apprehensions of the whole. I argue also 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.

Cosmopolitanism need not be presented as the universalistic enemy of particular solidarities, but it often is. I will concentrate here on the theories for which this is most true. Because of their sociological deficiencies, despite their good insights these theories fail to make sense of the world as it is and the next steps people might take to make both it and their lives better. Indeed, they offer an abstract normative structure which, however much occasioned by real-world social change, can only have the standing of “abstract ought” with all the potential tyranny over the immanent projects of social improvement that implies. They both underestimate and potentially undermine the gains made in spanning important lines of difference precisely by developing new solidarities. Ironically, these gains suggest better than abstract universalism how cosmopolitan (in its best senses) could grow.

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

Liberalism has grown 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. Liberals often rely at least tacitly on the idea of “nation” to give an account of why particular people belonged together as the “people” of a particular state. But for the most part, liberal theory has not focused on the sources or nature of solidarity, but rather the relationship of individuals to states mediated by citizenship. 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 (despite repeated efforts to integrate more attention to participation and difference, both in part issues of social solidarity).

Problems did arise with both the system of nation-states and the political theory of liberal democracy. Wars and refugees, for example, posed recurrent challenges. 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. That ideas of individual rights could not protect them revealed the extent to which rights were really reflections of state power (and only limits on such power for those accorded legitimate membership). After the war, a variety of efforts were made to provide better for stateless people, including signing a variety of treaties and founding such organizations as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. 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 has posed challenges to political liberalism, even though the idea of the property-owning individual has been closely bound up with that of the autonomous

political subject. Free-market individualism has produced a libertarian (and sometimes liberal) resistance to state power, but still treats state and individual as the fundamental units of analysis. At the same time, capitalism has produced a substantial arena of economic power that demands 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 human rights issues to the fore and linked them in complicated ways to notions of intervention by an “international community” into the ostensibly sovereign affairs of states. 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. At the same time, capitalist globalization grew enormously.

Faced with these challenges, many liberals began an important effort to rethink liberal theory. John Rawls, the most important liberal theorist of our era, had for example produced a monumentally influential theory of justice that presumed an individual state as the necessary context of analysis (1971). A well-ordered society, he 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 intentionally postponed analysis of relations among states and transnational phenomena to a later step in analysis. In recent years, however, this 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. 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” criteria of justice to the scale of humanity as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</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

Many of the most important leaders in these efforts to rethink liberalism adopted the notion of “cosmopolitanism” as a frame.<sup>3</sup> This draws on classical and early modern sources for a moral vision in which all humanity is equally valued. Cosmopolitanism 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.

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. They 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 ones 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

---

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>3</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).

“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. 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. 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 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) 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.

### **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.

In all cases the term has a normative aspect; sometimes this is focused more at the level of ethics and sometimes more at that of politics. The most purely normative uses tend to be the most abstractly universalistic and rationalistic as well as the most decontextualized. Some other uses are more empirical, and offer more openness to concrete forms of social belonging, take cultural differences more seriously, and sometimes take up cosmopolitanism as a social psychological variable. I am most concerned with the problems of the abstractly normative cosmopolitanisms, and will concentrate on two of these—or what might be described as extreme and moderate variants. More briefly, I will describe appeals to cosmopolitanism that give it more empirical content and stress particularity, hybridity, and social-psychological openness to difference. The latter are vulnerable to only some of the criticism I will direct to the former—notably to the charge of elitism. They also suggest some of the ways in which a more satisfactory cosmopolitanism might be developed, one which would complement not oppose solidarity.

The first and most radically universalistic approach to cosmopolitanism starts with the ethical obligations of individuals. Many cosmopolitans thus argue that the highest and strongest obligation of each person is owed to humanity as a whole. This is the position of Martha Nussbaum (1996, 1997). 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>4</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>5</sup>

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 is a good exemplar of moderate cosmopolitanism since he stresses more clearly than most the importance of multiple and overlapping allegiances of different scales.

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

---

<sup>4</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>5</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, see the other contributions to *For Love of Country*, and to the 1994 Boston Review symposium in which Nussbaum’s paper first appeared.



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>6</sup>

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.

These two kinds of arguments are what I want mainly to consider here, but at the outset we should distinguish them from two other ideas of cosmopolitanism. In each case, the connections among the different usages inform the connotations of the term, but this is sometimes misleading. For example, one important sense of cosmopolitanism is to be at ease with strangers and in unfamiliar surroundings. It 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 connotation 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.

Still other scholars who 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

---

<sup>6</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.

and practices that seek to express traditions but not only to themselves. Necessarily, then, there is not a 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>7</sup> This does not depend on his membership in any specific culture, nor does it focus attention on the 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 tolerating, 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. The third and fourth each seem to me to escape much of the criticism I shall pose with regard to the first two, and especially the liberal universalism I have used Nussbaum to represent. They may be guilty of similar elitism—though I think not as extreme—but they are not rationalist, universalist or individualist in the same way. At the same time, they share some important virtues. All four sorts of cosmopolitan theories 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.

---

<sup>7</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”.

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). And likewise 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.

One way of distinguishing the four versions of cosmopolitanism is to consider how each approaches the idea of citizenship. Extreme ethical cosmopolitanism asserts that citizenship of the world is direct and unmediated—it is an inherent attribute of humanness—and is fundamental and unqualified. Moderate political cosmopolitanism (especially in the “cosmopolitan democracy” version of Held) values citizenship of the world, but also citizenship in a variety of intermediate associations of different kinds, including corporations and other institutions as well as territorially based populations; it sees world citizenship as at least in part mediated through these other forms of association. The cosmopolitanism Sennett associates with urban life is also linked to an idea of citizenship. Not only is there a strong tradition of locating citizenship in cities (rather than nations), but there is an ideal of citizenship focused on the virtue of citizens rather than their belonging to any group. The city is a place in which the virtue of good citizenship can be acquired and displayed, in part because the loyalty of an urban citizen to a city is not to the category of people who happen to be there but to the place and the life it supports. Finally, however, the critical cosmopolitanism suggested by Pollock and his colleagues questions whether the notion of citizenship is “a necessary common frame to be shared universally,” and worries that exalting the ideal of citizen typically depends on certain notions of public life (and restriction of intimacy to the private sphere), and on the idea of the individual—and especially autonomous interest-bearing individuals—as the subjects of citizenship (Pollock et al, 2000: 584).

Indeed, they 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. But individualism is just part of what this 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 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, and public sector 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 a 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.

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 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.

### **Ethnicity and the Value of Solidarity**

So far, 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. What I want to do now, in closing and all too briefly, is to say a little about social solidarity itself—or more precisely, the forms of social solidarity in which people organize their lives,

A first thing to recall is that 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 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.

Third, not only are people shaped by and participants in a variety of different solidarities, these are organized in different ways. Without going into any detail, let me just evoke six.

1. Solidarity may be underwritten by mutual interdependence in exchange, which may be more or less readily recognized. At a micro-level such connections may appear as concrete exchanges, at a macro-level they are more likely to seem systems, and to be understood without reference to the interpersonal transactions that make them up. This is how we think of “the economy” for example, but a sense of economic interdependence can be powerful.
2. Solidarity may also be produced by common culture. Speaking the same language, having the same referents—goods to think with, in Lèvi-Strauss’s sense—even participating in the same habitual arguments can all produce a sense of shared belonging. This is reinforced by the simple extent to which it is easier to interact when more or the “ground rules” are clear from the outset.
3. Distinct from cultural commonality of the sort mentioned above is membership in culturally defined categories. Nations are perhaps the most important of these categorical identities in the modern world, but class, gender, race, clan, and others work in similar ways. Indeed, the very notion of humanity as a whole evoked by cosmopolitans is such a categorical identity. It posits a “set” the members of which are equivalent in some crucial regard. Ethnicity is sometimes understood this way, especially when it is made an object of bureaucratic administration or large scale media and political attention. More often, though, ethnicity is understood to be more than simply a categorical identity; it implies relatively dense interpersonal relationships (e.g., marriage within the group).
4. Structures of social relations—networks—are a fourth form of solidarity. Here groupness is less a matter of equivalence among members or of a single label that fits all. Rather, it is the product of the way in which members are joined to each other in direct or indirect relationships. Without going into it very much, direct ones are those in which the parties are clearly known to each other as persons—mainly but not exclusively face-to-face relationships—while indirect ones are those in which some sort of mediation is involved that makes the connection without direct interaction and mutual awareness—as one might be related by marriage or by a bureaucratic organization—to people one has never met.
5. Though not always recognized as such, public communication is itself a form of solidarity. It is often presumed that people must be

already joined in solidarity to form a public, but this seems wrong insofar as the very notion of public has to do with communication among those who are not bound to each other by private ties. Communication may take place among strangers and yet knit its participants into a sense of a common undertaking. This is true in many social movements—say the anti-globalization or antiwar movements—which have enormous scale and mobilize people who share no single categorical identity or strong personal network. It is also true of the collective discourse of many countries, and is an element of national connection distinct from common culture or mere categorical membership.

6. Finally, people are sometimes—too often, in fact—joined to each other by material power. They are conquered, drafted into armies, enslaved, or evicted from traditional landholdings and organized into new settlements. Their connections are neither the product of common culture, nor of pre-existing networks, nor of public choice, yet people joined to each other by impositions of power do form relationships and do develop collective self-understandings that shape their lives together and their relations with others. Even where we should regard the actions that create these groupings as illegitimate, it does not follow that the groupings themselves are.

The different forms of solidarity may be chosen by and reshaped by their participants in different degree. The first and the last appear mainly as impositions of material necessity, though perhaps not immutably so. It is hard to imagine individuals willfully transforming common culture, but cultures do change as a result of cumulative processes and individuals also exercise choice—conscious or unconscious—in their acquisition of and participation in culture. They may move to another society and learn another language, for example, but more modestly, they may also claim or reject various ostensibly common cultural values, delve into and reproduce historical traditions or let them fade. Categorical identities are open to choice, though also pressed on people by ascription. Social networks are shaped by available choices, proximity, and other structural factors but also partly products of choice. And certainly opening possibilities for collective choice is one of the most basic virtues of public communication.

A central point here is that 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.

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.

## References

- Archibugi, Daniele, eds. 2003. *Debating Cosmopolitics*. London: Verso.
- Archibugi, Daniele, David Held, and Martin Kohler, eds. *Re-Imagining Political Community*. Cambridge: Polity, 1999.
- Beitz, Charles. 1979. *Political Theory and International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bentham, Jeremy. 1789. *Principles of Jurisprudence*. London: Methuen (this ed. 1982).
- Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper. 2000. "Beyond 'identity'," *Theory and Society* 29: 1-47.
- Calhoun, Craig. 2002. "Imagining Solidarity: Cosmopolitanism, Constitutional Patriotism and the Public Sphere," *Public Culture*, vol. 14 #1, pp. 147-72.
- Calhoun, Craig. 2002. "The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* v. 101 #4, pp. 869-97.
- Cheah, Pheng and Bruce Robbins, eds. 1998. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Held, David. 1995. *Democracy and Global Order*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Held, David and Daniele Archibugi. 1995. *Cosmopolitan Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Okamura, Jonathan. 1998. "The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai'i," pp. 264-284 in D.C. Gladney, ed., *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiki, Turkey, and the United States*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Nussbaum, Martha. 1996. *For Love of Country*. Boston: Beacon.
- Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," pp. 1-17 in M. C. Nussbaum, *For Love of Country*. Boston: Beacon, 1996; this ed. 2002.
- Nussbaum, Martha. 1997. *Cultivating Humanity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pollock, Sheldon. 2000. "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12(3).
- Pollock, Sheldon, Homi Bhabha, Carol Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabharty. 2000. "Cosmopolitanisms," *Public Culture* 12 (3).
- Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, John. 1993. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rawls, John. 1999. *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rushdie, Salman. 1991. "In Good Faith," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books.
- Sennett, Richard. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder*. New York: Vintage.
- Sennett, Richard. 1977. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Knopf.
- Simmel, Georg. 1950. "The Metropolis and Mental Life," pp. 409-24 in K. Wolff, ed. and trans., *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press.
- Vertovec, Steven and Robin Cohen, eds. 2003. *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.