

Edited by **Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse**

The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism

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CAMBRIDGE

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Preface

Trade has internationalized rapidly and labor mobility has increased significantly since the end of the Cold War. These developments have sharply raised questions about the moral significance of national boundaries. What obligations do citizens of wealthy countries have toward the citizens of poorer countries? Are they entitled to restrict the entry of immigrant labor, and if so in what ways? Are they entitled to restrict the exit of capital? Do wealthy citizens of wealthy countries owe more to their less advantaged compatriots than to foreigners who are even poorer? Political theorists have started to address these and related issues. They fall into two broad camps: those who consider national boundaries to have fundamental moral significance, and those who consider them to have no, or only derivative, moral significance. We observed that the latter camp, which we think of as committed to cosmopolitanism, had done a great deal of work countering the claims of nationality, but much less work elaborating the detail of, and defending, a distinctively cosmopolitan political theory. So we asked a number of political theorists whose work embodied a cosmopolitan perspective to write essays contributing to the task of defending a positive political philosophy of cosmopolitanism. This anthology is the result.

Most of the contributions were written specifically for this collection. However, in four cases, some material originally appeared elsewhere. The contributions by Hillel Steiner, Allen Buchanan, Richard Miller, and Martha Nussbaum contain previously published work, and we are grateful both to the authors and the publishers of the original pieces for permission to reprint that material here. Hillel Steiner's essay is a revised version of "Liberalism and nationalism" which originally appeared in *Analyse and Kritik*, 17 (1995), pp. 12–20. Allen Buchanan's chapter contains material that was previously published in "Beyond the national interest" *Philosophical Topics*, 30 (2002), pp. 97–131. Richard Miller's chapter, "Cosmopolitan respect and patriotic concern" was originally

published in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 27 (1998) pp. 202–24. Martha Nussbaum's chapter reproduces and revises material from "Beyond the Social Contract: capabilities and global justice. An Olaf Palme Lecture delivered in Oxford on 19 June 2003" by Martha C. Nussbaum *Oxford Development Studies*, 32 (2004), pp. 3–18. Permission to reprint this last piece has been granted from the original source on condition that we insert a reference to the journal's web site, <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Nationalism appears to have been on the rise since the mid 1980s. The break up of the former Soviet Union, and the dissolution of the barrier between Western and Eastern Europe triggered the political advance of nationalism in Eastern Europe, as new countries emerged, defining themselves in opposition to the previously existing regimes. Simultaneously, increased immigration from the former communist and from Muslim countries has fuelled nationalist sentiment within Western European states themselves. At its best, the latter development has prompted governments and citizens of those countries to reconsider the meaning of nationality, inducing a more inclusive and multicultural conception of "the nation." At its worst it has provoked xenophobic backlash.

At the same time, the north-south divide between wealthy industrial and post-industrial and poor developing countries has been an increasing object of political concern. Most developing countries are no longer colonies of wealthy ones, but many bear the marks of a history of domination and exploitation. The post-colonial period in Africa in particular has often been brutal, and the extent of responsibility of the former colonial regimes for what followed independence is not clear, and, whatever its extent, rarely acknowledged by the former imperial countries. The US and the former Soviet Union used Africa and the Middle East as focal points for the Cold War, and it is hard to believe that those regions did not suffer politically and economically as a result. While several European countries retain a special interest in their former colonies, that interest is not always helpful, and is rarely accompanied by a willingness to pay back.

Analytical political philosophy of the sort practiced by the contributors to this volume was not, initially, well prepared to deal with the rise of nationalism. The dominant framework for thinking about distributive principles was formulated by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* (1971). His

model developed there ignored the problems of thinking about questions of international distribution, by assuming that the principles of justice are developed for a closed scheme of social cooperation, which is entered by birth and exited by death. There is nothing wrong with making such simplifying assumptions for the sake of developing a theory, but the assumptions framed the subsequent development of political philosophizing in such a way that issues of international and multicultural justice remained at the margins of debate.

The fall-out from the break-up of the Soviet Union coincided with Rawls's first attempt to consider how his theory might be extended to cover issues concerning the moral relationships between states (Rawls, 1993a). Rawls's extension was surprisingly conservative. He did not argue for the universal application of his principles of justice across state boundaries, but for a respectful relationship between states (as representatives of peoples). He argued that liberal democratic regimes have an obligation to deal with illiberal decent hierarchical regimes as equals, and not to endeavor to impose their values; and also that national boundaries place limits on redistributive obligations. While Martha Nussbaum (amongst many others) is highly critical of Rawls's approach, Jon Mandle's contribution to this volume offers a sympathetic reconstruction and reading of Rawls's arguments, claiming that they are in fact better motivated and less quietistic than some critics have believed.

In the 1990s political philosophers began to address these problems in earnest. A large and sophisticated literature has developed defending the legitimacy and intrinsic moral significance of national boundaries; as has a literature critiquing their legitimacy and significance. Some of this has taken the form of direct criticisms and defenses of Rawls's positions; but it has become increasingly independent of Rawls's terms of engagement. The default position in the debate is, naturally enough, that national boundaries have significance and legitimacy. Cosmopolitans dispute this generally by making specific arguments against particular kinds of defenses of nationality. Because the debate has had this character it has been less clear what the precise content of a positive cosmopolitanism is. It is somewhat clear what cosmopolitans are against. But what are they for? And why?

The term "cosmopolitanism" originates with the Stoics, whose idea of being "a citizen of the world" neatly captures the two main aspects of cosmopolitanism: that it entails a *thesis about identity* and that it entails a *thesis about responsibility* (Scheffler, 1999). As Christine Synnwich points out in her contribution, cosmopolitanism, as a thesis about identity,

indicates that one is a person who is marked or influenced by various different cultures. The history of the word "cosmopolitan" has thus come to have both positive and negative connotations, depending on people's attitudes to such an identity. It has had negative connotations, for instance when cosmopolitans were regarded as foreigners to be excluded, such as in the case of Jews or Bolsheviks. It has also had more positive connotations when it is thought to mean that a person is well traveled or worldly, rather than narrow-minded or provincial.

As a thesis about responsibility, cosmopolitanism guides the individual outwards from obvious, local, obligations, and prohibits those obligations from crowding out obligations to distant others. Contrary to a parochial morality of loyalty, cosmopolitanism highlights the obligations we have to those whom we do not know, and with whom we are not intimate, but whose lives touch ours sufficiently that what we do can affect them.

But the precise content of these responsibilities, and the precise weight they have relative to local obligations, are widely disputed among cosmopolitans. The debate about cosmopolitanism is not identical with the debate about impartial and partial morality; cosmopolitans do not (typically) dispute, for example, that we have obligations toward, and prerogatives relative to, our friends, neighbors, and relatives. The particular focus of cosmopolitan thinking is on the content and weight of obligations beyond national (or, sometimes, state) boundaries, relative to the content and weight of those obligations to which national and state boundaries give rise. We might want to distinguish between *weak* and *strong* cosmopolitanism (as, for example, Scheffler, 1999 and Caney, 2001b, do). Weak cosmopolitanism just says that there are *some* extra-national obligations that have some moral weight. Strong cosmopolitanism, by contrast, claims that, at the most fundamental level, there are no society-wide principles of distributive justice that are not also global principles of distributive justice; and that our fellow nationals not only have no claim on us, but we have no right to use nationality (in contrast with friendship, or familial love) as a trigger for our discretionary behavior. Between these two extremes are a range of views concerning the content and relative weight of obligations and prerogatives relative to compatriots and non-compatriots.

The contributions to this volume suggest that this distinction, though useful, needs a great deal more nuance. For one thing, everyone has to be at least a weak cosmopolitan now if they are to maintain a defensible view, that is to say, it is hard to see how one can reject a view that all societies have *some* global responsibilities. Many theorists who conceive of themselves as anti-cosmopolitan endorse international obligations that

are, at least in our real world context, quite demanding. Richard Miller, by contrast, argues in his contribution that certain facts about the structure of actual social institutions support a derivation of quite strong obligations to have special concern for one's compatriots from a cosmopolitan principle of equal respect for all. The contributions here move the debate into the detail of precise questions about the content and weight of the two different kinds of obligation relative to each other. David Held's position "layered cosmopolitanism" described below bridges that divide in an interesting way. Kok-Chor Tan also makes the point that if you have a just global basic structure, it does not seem to matter as much (or at all) if extra attention is then bestowed on compatriots. Strong cosmopolitanism seems to care about something that it is not clear we have to care about. If everyone is adequately positioned to have a good life, why say co-nationals cannot spend excess resources on each other?

Our purpose in commissioning the authors for this volume was to encourage them to work out some of the detail and nuance that a full and viable cosmopolitanism needs to press the debate forward. We approached theorists whose work embodied a cosmopolitan élan, and asked them to think through particular problems that a positive account of cosmopolitanism would have to face, and thus contribute to developing a positive theory of cosmopolitanism. Many of the authors chose to focus on the content of our distributive obligations beyond national boundaries, others on the role of national boundaries in determining the weight of our obligations, others still on the feasibility of cosmopolitan demands that, it is thought, bears on the question of their moral significance.

SOME FURTHER CENTRAL ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE ANTHOLOGY

A key concern is how precisely to characterize cosmopolitanism. The crux of the idea of moral cosmopolitanism is that each human being has equal moral worth and that equal moral worth generates certain moral responsibilities that have universal scope.¹ Cosmopolitanism's force can well be appreciated by examining what the position excludes. For instance, cosmopolitanism rules out assigning ultimate (rather than derivative) value to collective entities such as nations or states, and it also rules out positions that attach no moral value to some people, or that weight the value people have differentially according to characteristics like ethnicity, race, or nationality. However, when we try to uncover what cosmopolitanism requires, here the view seems less determinate. Part of the

indeterminacy is due to there being so many ways to interpret what our equal moral worth entails. Does equal moral worth mean that from the standpoint of a citizen, equal concern is due to all regardless of their citizenship (as, for example, Richard Miller denies)? Are all due equal consideration irrespective of nationality? Does equal moral worth entail ensuring each person has a right to an equal share of the value of all land (as Hillel Steiner maintains)? Should we be trying to equalize resources on the one hand, or our capabilities, or the conditions of human flourishing (as Nussbaum and Sygnowich believe)? Is the equality we should be concerned with different altogether, something like democratic equality (as Christopher Bertram argues)?

Or should we not be concerned with equality at all, but eliminating poverty, or gross insufficiency? Cosmopolitans typically draw attention to vast disparities in the life prospects that people from the poorest and the richest nations face. Such massive inequalities in life chances are typically condemned, but often the concern when investigated is not with inequality *per se*, but rather with the radical insufficiency that some must bear, especially when they are unable to meet basic needs. Whatever the other views to which a cosmopolitan may be committed, there is much agreement that, minimally, all people everywhere should be enabled to meet their basic needs (or some such). David Copp explores how this basic needs principle should apply globally. The contributions of Sygnowich, Nussbaum, Pogge, and Bertram all also bear strongly on the questions of what, precisely, would *constitute* insufficiency and how we would identify it.

Bracketing concerns about insufficiency, though, are there other reasons to be concerned with inequality? Bertram argues that insofar as inequality bears on our capability for democratic citizenship, it should be of concern, but typically, not otherwise. So long as we are all assured of the capability to function as a citizen of a democratic state, inequalities are not *per se* troublesome. Inequalities within a state are likely to be much more problematic than inequalities between states. Political participation in a particular society may require a certain level of wealth. Consider how if most of the population has access to radio, television, and the internet, increasingly collective political deliberations may take place on these media. Those who cannot afford these will be unable to participate politically in an effective manner. In this way inequalities within a state can have an important undermining effect on people's ability to function as equal citizens in a democratic state, and so how within country inequalities might be more damaging than between country inequality, at least with respect to democratic capability.

What else more definite can be said about the positive content of the cosmopolitan position? David Held argues that we can specify a set of interconnected principles that express well the idea of each person's having equal moral significance, and he selects eight of these principles as paramount. These are principles of: "(1) equal worth and dignity; (2) active agency; (3) personal responsibility and accountability; (4) consent; (5) collective decision-making about public matters through voting procedures; (6) inclusiveness and subsidiarity; (7) avoidance of serious harm; and (8) sustainability" (p. 12, below). While the eight principles are universal in scope, how the principles are to be applied or interpreted in local contexts must always take place in situated discussion. This mix of regulative principles combined with interpretive activity, Held terms a "layered" cosmopolitan perspective" (p. 18, below).

What role is there for the state according to cosmopolitanism? According to some theorists such as Tan, if the cosmopolitan vision of justice is to have any appeal, it must adequately acknowledge "the local attachments and commitments people have that are characteristic of most meaningful and rewarding human lives" (p. 164, below). Tan argues that a way to do this would be to ensure that the global "basic structure" is cosmopolitan – that the global institutions are ones that adequately treat individuals as equals (regardless of their nationality, say). However, once the background global context is just, persons may defensibly favor the interests of their fellow nationals. So cosmopolitan principles should govern the global institutions, but should not directly regulate what choices people may make within the rules of the institutions. Favoring national interests or co-nationals is permissible so long as the background global institutions are just.

Allen Buchanan argues against a popular view (which he terms "The Permissible Exclusivity Thesis") that states may always permissibly decide a state's foreign policy exclusively on the basis of the national interest. This thesis entails the denial of even the weak cosmopolitanism that we earlier claimed could not plausibly be denied. Why is it false? For one thing, if you endorse human rights you cannot also hold the Permissible Exclusivity Thesis, since the commitment to human rights gives at least one important set of concerns that may trump concern with national interest, at least in some cases. If the thesis is so clearly false, what explains its popularity? Perhaps the thought that we have to face what amounts to a false dichotomy: either we may exclusively pursue national interest or we must be committed to a view that embraces some kind of impartial perspective in which no special weight can be given to the national

interest. Since the latter option seems so unpalatable, we take up the former position. But, clearly, we have other options: it is not the case that the national interests must either count for nothing or everything. More nuanced positions are available in which we can try to (say) balance concern for human rights of all with any special regard we may show to compatriots or the country's welfare. At any rate, it is only when foreign policy is liberated from its focus on exclusively furthering the national interest that we can begin to ask the right questions.

Darrel Moellendorf also engages with the issue of how to weigh our duties to non-compatriots. He argues that the grounds for duties of justice are best located in our association with one another. Global economic association, which is largely non-voluntary, gives rise to duties of global justice. However, fulfilling duties of global justice is consistent with ignoring or discounting some of the interests of non-compatriots, especially those with whom the citizens are only in weak association. Just global governance requires global institutions that ensure duties of distributive justice are fulfilled and that adequate institutional provisions are made to protect other interests of persons, especially in cases of state failure. Summing up his position then: "states are permitted to ignore all of the time those interests of non-citizens that typically are not protected by the basic structure of states, other interests if and only if they are protected by suitable state or global structures, and that states are permitted to discount all of those duties that its citizens have to those non-citizens with whom they are only weakly associated, although in practice such discounting may be very hard to achieve without prohibitively high moral costs" (p. 161, below).

Many theorists believe there is good reason to include states in prescriptions for a just global order. States may well prove to be a good way to ensure democratic participation and protect certain basic interests and liberties in many cases. Besides, in many cases people are deeply attached to their nations. For many theorists, possibly most, the view is that a unitary world state is undesirable. Rather a federation of states is a more desirable, and in many cases efficient, way to distribute responsibility effectively (Copp and Nussbaum, for instance, maintain such views). But what attitude *should* good cosmopolitan citizens have toward the states they inhabit? None of our contributors endorses a radical view that citizens should be entirely devoid of fellow feeling for their compatriots, though many endorse views consistent with the idea that there is nothing wrong with lacking patriotic sentiment. Couture and Nielsen, however, argue for a *rooted cosmopolitanism* – the idea that patriotic sentiment is

not only morally innocent, but can actually be valuable both in undergirding the moral virtues of cosmopolitanism and independently of that function.

Most cosmopolitans believe that there are significant duties of global justice. Many authors focus on issues to do with global distributive justice. Several present arguments why revenues should be collected and placed in a Global Fund of some kind and the proceeds should be disbursed, for instance to ensure that all are positioned to meet their basic needs with dignity, or to protect human rights, or to support unconditional basic income or initial capital stakes. Several arguments locate these duties in the troublesome global economic order that significantly undermines attempts to address global poverty. Moreover, our failure to reform the global economic order deeply implicates us in the misery of those almost 1.5 billion people who live in poverty around the world. Thomas Pogge's work has done much to illuminate the problematic issues.² In his contribution here he addresses many of his recent critics and responds to their concerns.

Whatever principles of global distributive justice we endorse, and whatever form we think cosmopolitanism should take in our world, cosmopolitans must address the issue of whether their project is feasible and whether hope for realizing the cosmopolitan vision is naive or misguided. Though several authors weigh in on this kind of issue throughout the volume, in the final chapter Catriona McKinnon addresses the concern directly, arguing against the view that hope for the cosmopolitan ideal is misplaced, on the grounds that moderate cosmopolitan ideals are in fact feasible.

What direction should research on cosmopolitanism take from this point onward? The essays here carry forward the debates on the meaning and content of cosmopolitan principles. But taken as a whole they do relatively little to address the kinds of concrete reforms of global and local institutions that the principles would demand. We diagnose three reasons for this. First, a global cosmopolitan political movement is still in its infancy, and is working in an ideological environment which makes reform difficult. Second, relatively few philosophers have developed the expertise concerning the institutions of global governance that some of their peers have developed concerning, say, education policy, health care policy, and welfare state design. Some of those who do have this expertise are represented in this collection, but it is striking that there is not the critical mass which exists among philosophers interested in those other policy arenas. This fact is probably connected to another explanation, which is that global governance is conducted at the highest levels of