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Cosmopolitanism, America, and the Welfare State

This essay deals with some recent Anglophone controversies over cosmopolitanism. The welfare state lurks in the background as a national version of the good that exists in an interestingly conflictual relation to cosmopolitanism’s critique of nationalism. It helps raise questions like the following: How does one induce one’s fellow citizens into solidarity with one another without thereby encouraging the sort of national arrogance and exclusiveness that leads to the bombing of foreign populations and the scapegoating of non-citizens? This is not a question to which I will offer an answer. For the moment, in other words, cosmopolitanism and the welfare state define for me a continuing dilemma of political engagement in our time, and this paper does not offer a satisfactory way of reconciling them. What it does offer is, first, an experiment in disciplinary formalism, a somewhat abstract discussion of the ways in which different disciplines speak about or claim the territory of cosmopolitanism. Second, there is some commentary concerning the so-called “New Cosmopolitanism” as well as a series of recent articles on cosmopolitanism in the journal New Left Review. In the conclusion I reflect on the possibility of distinguishing a “left” from a “liberal” cosmopolitanism.

The exercise in disciplinary formalism arose out of concern with Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” thesis, a thesis I’m sure is familiar to you, as it was much invoked after September 11th to explain the global situation behind the attacks. In an article in the journal *Transeuropéennes*, I tried to suggest that the culturalist and anti-universalist assumptions behind the Huntington thesis offer a kind of monstrous mirror of our own disciplinary assumptions as progressive humanists-- a mirror in which we are invited to see, despite the apparent political differences, a strong resemblance between academic discourse on culture and an “identity

politics” of the right. If this resemblance is unpleasant, I argued, then we should rethink our reliance on the anti-Enlightenment impulse of the culture concept. For “culture” leaves us disarmed, unable to understand either how the world presently works or the directions in which it might be re-routed. Thus we have even less chance of making ourselves heard against the patriotic grossness of Bush-style unilateralism, with its utter disregard for world opinion and its shameless propaganda against Islam and “terror.” The point here is not to pretend we can forget all the critiques of liberal and Enlightenment discourse since Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, but only to instill a certain hesitation into a disciplinary rhetoric that, because of its methodologically pervasive subordination to the founding concept of culture, sometimes confuses the critique of Enlightenment with the motive and rationale for everything it does and reproduces such critique as the universal template underlying routine interpretations and arguments. And I suggested that one way to break out of this mirroring of Huntington would be to break with Huntington’s assumptions about the limits of the welfare state model on a global scale. In pursuit of a relatively feasible program of counter-globalization, which is to say a program for regulating the world capitalist system on which people of very different cultures can agree, one place to start—one of the least impractical versions of cosmopolitanism, but one in which I as a literary critic have the least claim to expertise-- would be by trying to extend the European model of the welfare state beyond the nation-state and beyond the borders of the “developed” world..

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Other disciplines have been asserting quite distinct disciplinary claims to the valuable piece of intellectual property known as globalization, not through culture but through *their* objects of knowledge. And whatever claim we ourselves want to make for culture, we cannot afford the sort of disciplinary provincialism that would simply assume that our claim, culture’s claim, is the best or the only valid way of approaching the subject. In other words, the question of culture’s fitness as a concept to confront the new global realities can only really be answered by considering other terms and concepts alongside culture and trying to think about a framework that would fit more than one. I’ll try to make a tentative start on this here, organizing my

remarks around different accounts of “cosmopolitanism” as an interdisciplinary description of the proper attitude or sensibility with regard to the new global realities.

The new global realities of course create a new challenge for imagination, or for culture in its primarily creative rather than its preservative role, if only because it is called in to bridge the gap between daily life and close reading, on the one hand, and vast, distant, increasingly trans-national forces and processes, on the other.¹ But one could just as easily say that globalization is wonderful news for those of us who study the imagination, since it gives the imagination a very juicy part to play. This is the position that Ulrich Beck attributes, correctly I think, to the cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai: “imagination gains a special kind of power in people’s everyday lives...more people in more parts of the world dream of and consider a greater range of ‘possible’ lives than they have ever done before” (53).² And here we have to beware of the sort of disciplinary provincialism or premature self-congratulation that I alluded to above. In his introduction to a special issue of the journal Public Culture, Appadurai writes as follows: “If globalization is characterized by disjunctive flows that generate acute problems of social well-being, one positive force that encourages an emancipatory politics of globalization is the role of the imagination in social life”(6).³ Appadurai makes it clear that globalization has given the imagination a *larger* role in social life. He knows that “it is in and through the imagination that modern citizens are disciplined and controlled—by states, markets, and other powerful interests. But it is also the faculty through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge. As the imagination as a social force itself works across

¹ This is the sort of imaginative work I’ve begun trying to track in “The Sweatshop Sublime,” PMLA 117:1 (January 2002), 84-97; also published in Helen Small, ed. The Public Intellectual (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 179-202 and in “Very Busy Just Now: Globalization and Harriedness in Kazuo Ishiguro’s The Unconsoled,” Comparative Literature 53:4 (Fall 2001), 426-441.

² Ulrich Beck, What is Globalization? (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

³ Arjun Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,” Public Culture 12:1 (2000), 1-19.

national lines to produce locality as a spatial fact and as a sensibility, we see the beginnings of social forms without either the predatory mobility of unregulated capital or the predatory stability of many states.” It is these as yet unnamed forms, “creative forms of social life” (6), that Appadurai identifies as a target of urgent new research on globalization. This is a program that I myself have found and continue to find inspiring, for ethical and political as well as scholarly reasons—not surprising, given that the creativity of these “creative forms” is demonstrably continuous with the project of Romantic imagination on which literary criticism was founded.

Appadurai can only use globalization to fortify the role of imagination, however, by undermining in the same measure certain non-imaginative elements that might equally well be associated with globalization. One of these is the state, which Appadurai—one of those who describe our situation, perhaps prematurely, as “post-national”—sees as definitively weakened, not strengthened, by globalization (4). His *parti pris* is revealed when he repeats the “truism” that this “is a world of flows. It is also a world,” he very properly goes on, “of structures, organizations, and other stable social forms. But”—here is the key moment—“the apparent stabilities that we see are, under close examination, usually our devices for handling objects characterized by motion. The greatest of these apparently stable objects is the nation-state” (5). If I read this correctly, Appadurai is saying that “structures” —including the state— are only “apparently” stable, not really stable. They are only “our devices for handling” motion. There is nothing “apparent” on the other hand about motion; motion is really there, indeed it is the only reality, whereas stability is only the mystified result of those mental constructs, including the state, by which we try to master and reduce the facts of endless flux. Only flows are real. The rest is in your head. In short, imagination rules, and rules even more completely than Appadurai elsewhere suggests.

Flattering as this is to the sensibility of literary and cultural critics—the flattery being one reason for Appadurai’s considerable following among literary critics—I’m not sure it offers a desirable model either of epistemology or of how to link culture and globalization. What’s

undesirable about it appears for example if you consult the much darker picture of global imagination painted by Benedict Anderson. Anderson's classic book Imagined Communities has long served as inspiration and support for all those who wanted to expand the political importance of imagination and/or the program of constructionism in which it has found an interdisciplinary home. But it's a terrible misreading of Anderson to think that showing the nation to be a construct meant taking a position against nationalism. On the contrary, the book is a sort of love letter to nationalism, the result of an apparent vacation among the disciplinary premises of cultural studies.⁴ In his more recent work, Anderson has returned to his own discipline's assumptions, but in a way that students of culture might want to rejoice at rather than suspect. Discussing the political affiliations of diasporic communities that Appadurai calls "trojan nationalisms," as in Sri Lanka, Namibia, Punjab, and Quebec, with their "nonnational identities and aspirations" (Appadurai, 417),⁵ Anderson renames them "long-distance nationalism": "a rapidly spreading phenomenon whereby well-off immigrants to the rich, advanced countries (and their children) are becoming key sources of money, guns, and extremist propaganda in their distant, putative countries of origin--in perfect safety and without any form of accountability" (150).⁶ Characteristic examples include support for violent Hindu fundamentalism among South Asians living in the US and Canada and the Zionism of American settlers doing God's work by occupying the West Bank. Just as topically, Craig Calhoun notes how prominently "migrants whose visions of their home cultures were more conservative and ideological than their originals" have figured in the events of September 11th.⁷) Accountability,

⁴ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, revised edition (London: Verso, 1996).

⁵ Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and Its Futures," Public Culture, 5:3 (Spring 1993).

⁶ Benedict Anderson, "Ice Empire and Ice Hockey: Two Fin de Siècle Dreams," New Left Review, 214 (Nov/Dec 1995) 146-150.

⁷ Craig Calhoun, "The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," ms. Available from the author. On the need to engage

Anderson argues, can only come from the constraint on imaginative affiliation exerted by the pressures and obligations of common citizenship in the same state. The state, the founding concept of political science as a discipline, reasserts itself here as a real and necessary structure, a structure with very real effects and in this case arguably desirable ones, given the possibilities of the unconstrained imagination to lead us toward unconstrained bloodshed.

The anthropologist Aihwa Ong makes much the same move as Benedict Anderson when in her book Flexible Citizenship she discusses the cosmopolitanism of overseas Chinese businessmen.⁸ She too is critical of Arjun Appadurai, whose work, she says, “begs the question of whether imagination as a social practice can be so independent of national, transnational, and political-economic structures that enable, channel, and control the flows of people, things, and ideas” (11). She too insists that governments have not been destroyed by global flows, but continue to be major factors shaping and constraining those flows, so that the result is “complicated accommodations, alliances, and creative tensions between the nation-state and mobile capital, between diaspora and nationalism, or between the influx of immigrants and the multicultural state” (16). But since Ong is an anthropologist rather than a political scientist, her recourse to the state has a different valence than Anderson’s. Rather than returning to the founding concept of her discipline-- in the case of cultural anthropology, culture-- her turn to the state takes her as far away from it as she can go, at least in one direction.⁹

with the communitarian critique of cosmopolitanism, see Janna Thompson, “Community Identity and World Citizenship,” in Daniele Archibugi, David Held, and Martin Köhler, eds., Re-Imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 179-197.

⁸ Aihwa Ong, Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁹ Ong’s own account of this intellectual move attributes it to two analytically distinct disciplinary identities. “As a social scientist,” Ong writes, “I point to the economic rationality that encourages family emigration or the political rationality that invites foreign capital, but as an anthropologist, I am primarily concerned with the cultural logics that makes these actions thinkable, practicable, and desirable...” (5). Cultural logic, or let’s just say culture, might be defined here as that which does not coincide with rationality, whether economic or political. For her as so often for literary critics, culture is a non-coincidence with economic or political

As another example of disciplinary maneuvering over diasporic subjects and transnational forces, consider a recent essay by the geographer David Harvey entitled “Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographic Evils.”¹⁰ What culture is to literary critics, space is to geography, and Harvey’s case against cosmopolitanism seems a forthright piece of special pleading on behalf of space. He is critical of the “ethereal and abstract universalism” (530) of Martha Nussbaum, for example, on the predictable grounds that her anti-nationalist cosmopolitanism cannot deal with space. Nussbaum sees “geographies and spatialities (and local loyalties),” Harvey writes, “as not only disruptors of order and of rational discourse, but as undermining universal morality and goodness” (545). Space for Nussbaum and her ilk is “the fount of all prejudice, aggression, and evil” (545). Hence Harvey’s title, which revolts against the implication that, if geography has to be taken into account at all, it is only *as* an evil, a force narrowing down loyalties that ought to be wider and more generous.

Harvey ends as follows: “Cosmopolitanism bereft of geographical specificity remains abstracted and alienated reason, liable, when it comes to earth, to produce all manner of unintended and sometimes explosively evil consequences. Geography uninspired by any

rationality, or *freedom from* those rationalities. At the same time, Ong’s objection to other, competing treatments of transnationalism is that these other treatments allow for *too much* freedom. Rather than “unstructured flows,” she says, she thinks transnationalism should be seen “in terms of the tensions between movements and social orders” (6). This tension is already there in the phrase “cultural logic,” which suggests a mix of freedom and constraint. In other words, this is not a matter of wearing two different disciplinary hats, but of describing what one does, or ought to do, within any *one* discipline, if one pays proper attention to the genuine complication of its object. I would suggest (I have argued this elsewhere) that this mixture of freedom and constraint is in fact a sine qua non of the disciplinary object as such— that areas of knowledge can turn into disciplinary objects, or function as such, only if they can fuse freedom and constraint. Literature, for example, whose appeal has seemed to come from the freedom of the creative imagination, could not function successfully as a disciplinary object if it did not also embody various constraints upon the imagination. Culture has to have a logic.

¹⁰ David Harvey, “Cosmopolitanism and the Banality of Geographic Evils,” *Public Culture* 12:2 (2000), 529-564. Harvey argues that “anthropological and geographical knowledges play a crucial, though often hidden, role in defining what any cosmopolitan project might be about in theory as well as practice” (532).

cosmopolitan vision is either mere heterotopic description or a passive tool of power for dominating the weak” (557-58). This echo of Kant on concepts and percepts may sound like a modestly balanced solution, but it can satisfy only if one forgets that there are more disciplines out there than geography. What about, say, culture? When you remember that each discipline could make the same sort of claim for its own concept that Harvey is making for space, the self-aggrandizing impulse of his claim becomes clear: we are the *only* discipline that cosmopolitanism needs in order to be localized and specified.

And yet I come to praise Harvey, not to bury him. It is important to remember what Kant called the “conflict of the faculties,” the fact that your intellectual object is not necessarily neutral to me, but may stand in my way, and my object is not necessarily neutral to you, but may stand in yours. But it’s equally important to consider a further move that Harvey makes, this time a move away from narrow disciplinary self-interest. Like Aihwa Ong, he separates his argument off from the premises of his discipline, and he does so in much the same way. He insists that, if it is to prove itself something other than “evil,” geography must set space in the context of *time*, must get back, that is, to an earlier moment of what he calls “synthesis” when the discipline of geography refused any “static descriptions of spatial orders” (551). Geography can’t allow itself to be “kept apart from the narratives of history” (554).

This moment of “synthesis” seems worth pausing over. There are lots of objects or concepts that claim the value of resisting (or discriminating) supposed universals. Space is one. Culture is another. Time is a third. What do you do once you realize, as you should realize, that your object is not the only object? “Synthesis” would seem to name a rough and provisional answer to this question: what you do is, you try to synthesize or integrate into your argument, or at any rate expose your argument to, that object that seems furthest from and most antithetical to it, the object that your own object seems most intent on excluding. For geographers, one example would be time, as for anthropologists it might be the state. Here I’m hinting at a not very subtle analogy between disciplines and nations and suggesting, not very originally I’m sure, that one learns one’s cosmopolitanism in one’s confrontation with disciplinary diversity before

trying it out on larger and more formidable diversities.

Like time and culture, another term that opens the door of globalization to people like ourselves is *feeling*. To make the global accessible to cultural analysis as a domain of feeling was one of my own proposals, in my last book, and though this is predictable enough on the part of a literary critic, it seems more interesting in the case of a philosopher like Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum is criticized by Harvey (among many others) for her unrepentant philosophical universalism, but from the peculiarly abstract viewpoint of my present argument she can be seen to be doing something very similar to what Harvey himself is doing. Her most recent book is called Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions.¹¹ Philosophy's disciplinary object might be described as thought. As Nussbaum illustrates at some length, the emotions have always been taken as obstacles to proper thought, standing in the way of the attainment of truth. So what she is doing here is what Harvey is doing when he calls for a narrative geography: trying to reconcile her disciplinary object with its apparent other, to show that there is or can be an "intelligence of emotions," to find common ground between universal truth and the local emotion that appears to oppose truth.

Her metaphor, interestingly, comes from Harvey's domain, the domain of space: her first sentence is "Emotions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives" (1). And her examples come largely from the domain of culture, the subject of a large portion of the book. Indeed, Nussbaum seems to be straining to incorporate into her case pretty much every disciplinary antithesis she can find. Time is perhaps even more antithetical to her work on ancient philosophy, the work of the classicist, than to her work as a philosopher in general, for as with the literary canon, "progress" or "development" seems to undercut the value of the classicist's subject-matter. But if time in the form of development is Nussbaum's disciplinary enemy, time in the form of development is precisely what she brings into her argument. One must demand "equal concern" for those who are far as well as for those who are near, she argues,

¹¹ Martha Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

but one can't demand it "from the start"; equal concern is something that one must work toward (388). "The right solution to its partiality problems is to work on compassion's developmental history" (392). This involves an education of the emotions, working out from the self and its strong emotional attachments to those who are nearest, or rather bringing the distant in closer—and this can happen only in time. It happens moreover by means of "imagination," which is required in order to enlarge "the intense early attachments of childhood" (388). At least as important, moreover, are "institutions" (387). It's the move to institutions that dictates the subject of the next chapter, which she entitles "Compassion and Public Life" and centers on political institutions like the law and the welfare state (403). More on this endpoint in conclusion.

In the end, I'm not sure that Nussbaum's desperately accumulative enterprise of reconciliation succeeds.¹² But even supposing the enterprise does not succeed, the formalist approach to describing it seems to me a useful one to contemplate. If Nussbaum, Harvey, and Ong all try to present a synthesis of their discipline's object with what that object seems to exclude most dramatically—the state for Ong, time for Harvey, feeling (and so on) for Nussbaum—then what follows for us as students of literature and culture? The fact that people in literature already make systematic reference to space, time, feeling, and even the state might encourage us to argue that culture comprehends and even binds together these other universalism-resistant objects. But for us, as for Nussbaum, Ong, and Harvey, the important synthesis is the more strenuous synthesis, that is, engagement with the disciplinary objects or concepts to which culture too is most radically opposed, those most deeply and threateningly imbued with universalism and rationality. In other words, instead of taking the easy way out and re-playing the discipline's founding rationale on a global scale, rehearsing the narrative of

¹² After trying to draw cosmopolitanism and emotion into a togetherness that her earlier work had simply asserted, Nussbaum seems to fall back into the "egalitarian cosmopolitanism" of the Stoics, who choose a lofty "indifference" as opposed to "compassion"—an indifference which, however philosophically justified, looks very much like a withdrawal from emotion.

culture's breaking away from the absolutism of Nature or the arrogant abstraction of a universalistic Reason, we should engage with that Nature (in the provocatively recalcitrant form of biology, for example), and engage with that Reason as it is embodied in various ways within the interaction of culture and globalization. For one example, in the discourse of human rights. For another, in the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, which I believe was unconsciously limited at the outset to the model of the nation-state, and which now needs to be expanded to a global scale. For a third, in the analogous challenge of extending the bureaucratic institutions of the welfare state beyond national borders.

Each of these examples could be elaborated at more length than is possible here. And each could be usefully complicated in turn by reference to the others. We are more likely to get beyond the usual impasse between the universality of human rights and the particularity of cultures, for example, if we interrupt this dialogue and, instead of setting rights in a context of culture, we set them in a context of *time*. Time does some of the same hard work as culture, the work of relativizing and specifying what appears to be abstract and universal. Think of time as an unexplored yet crucial dimension, for example, in defining the implicit priorities that then modulate into double standards (to pay attention to abuses in this country first may mean never paying attention to abuses in that country), as the assumption of urgency or emergency that allows for one case to be selected and another neglected by the will of a Great Power, as the implied but unspecified dimension of "progressive implementation" of human rights, as the commitment to back up one's abstract principles with the necessary infrastructure (or not), rather than the one-shot media blitz, as the dimension of memory, forgetting, and forgiveness involved in questions of truth and reconciliation. In order to ensure that media-generated panic does not permit intervention regulated only by Great Power opportunism, there was been a move in international civil society—to my mind, a necessary and desirable move-- to institutionalize the monitoring of human rights violation on a steady, regular basis, to subdue it to the unfashionable monotony of a bureaucratic time-scale. Notice that this sends us back into the domain of institutional rationality, where the to-and-fro could continue.

I have permitted myself what may look like a frivolously abstract discussion of disciplinary thinking not because I think this exercise can generate a criterion for distinguishing between better and worse versions of cosmopolitanism-- that criterion can only be substantive and political-- but because disciplines are worthy of serious attention as organizations of social power. Not enormous power, obviously, but some power. Like the welfare state, without which they could not exist, disciplines are a compromised, slightly disheartening example of ideas taking on institutional reality and institutional force. So it is worthwhile to conquer one's disappointment and try to understand how they take on such force as they can, or how they fail to do so. When I say that my criterion is political, I mean that what I want to know is how to do something about those aspects of globalization that are creating the most salient and unendurable forms of suffering and injustice. But I also assume that I have no direct access to politics, and that such knowledge will only come from a triangulation between priorities that are specifically political and priorities that are specifically intellectual and disciplinary: the impulse to use the intellectual tools we already have within the disciplinary situation we already occupy.

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The substantive issues in American debates about cosmopolitanism are familiar: American cultural identity and the uses of American power. But there is a surprise hidden away in these bland and unoriginal phrases. They refer to two quite different and indeed, it might seem, diametrically opposed versions of cosmopolitanism. If one thinks of Martha Nussbaum, cosmopolitanism will seem to signify a means of restraining or perhaps redirecting America's use of its political and economic power. In her 1994 essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," Nussbaum responded to a call by Richard Rorty for American academics to forget their divisive insistence on racial and ethnic identity and join together with their fellow Americans in an "emotion of national pride." Nussbaum asserted on the contrary that our "primary allegiance" is to "the worldwide community of human beings." The problem for her is not how little sense of unity Americans have with each other, but how little sense of unity they have with the rest of the world-- a world on which their actions and inactions impinge violently and massively, if mainly

unconsciously: “What are Americans to make of the fact that the high living standard we enjoy is one that very likely cannot be universalized, at least given the present costs of pollution and the present economic situation of developing nations, without ecological disaster?” (12-13). If life-expectancy at birth is 78.2 years in Sweden and 39 years in Sierra Leone, then “we are all going to have to do some tough thinking about the luck of birth and the morality of transfers of wealth from richer to poorer nations.”¹³ Moving from the economic and environmental to the political, many of Nussbaum’s allies have enlisted her cosmopolitan standard—the good of the human species-- against America’s history of abusive interventions in the affairs of other countries. So for example in New Left Review Daniele Archibugi has recently turned to cosmopolitanism in an effort to find moral and legal leverage that would condemn the NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia and help stop future interventions of the same kind.¹⁴ It is no less relevant to the US/UK campaign against Iraq that began in March 2003.

On the other hand, cosmopolitanism has also been prescribed as an antidote to the racial and ethnic divisiveness that Rorty associates with “unpatriotic” intellectuals and that leads him to call for American academics to express more patriotism. In this sense, cosmopolitanism is presented as a benign form of American patriotism. In the work of historian David Hollinger and literary critic Ross Posnock, for example, cosmopolitanism refers to a multicultural America’s ability to wear its separate racial and ethnic identities lightly and thus rise above them. In Postethnic America, Hollinger argues his preference for a cosmopolitan rather than a pluralist vision of multiculturalism, an ideal of America that, while appreciating diversity, “is willing to put the future of every culture at risk through the sympathetic but critical scrutiny of other cultures” (85). In Color and Culture Posnock argues for a deracialized culture, or what he calls, citing the political philosopher Jeremy Waldron, “the cosmopolitan recognition that one lives as

¹³ Martha C. Nussbaum, “Reply,” in Martha C. Nussbaum and respondents, For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 135.

¹⁴ Daniele Archibugi, “Cosmopolitical Democracy,” NLR, NS 4 (July/August 2000), 137-150.

a ‘mixed-up self’ ‘in a mixed-up world’ where ancestral imperatives do not exert a preordained authority” (3).¹⁵

To use the spatial language of geography, we could say that here we see cosmopolitanism on two different scales.¹⁶ And since Harvey is right to say that geography matters, we have in effect two different cosmopolitanisms, the one national and the other trans-national, which despite their structural resemblance cannot be asked the same questions or judged by the same criteria. Indeed, with regard to America, their political aims and effects might seem to be almost antithetical: in the one case, cosmopolitanism offers a check on and rebuke to American power; in the other it offers a source of national unity and pride. At any rate, the internal or domestic version of cosmopolitanism has certainly been received as if it were an expression of American nationalism, and in the international context a dangerous one. In a critique of Hollinger, the Canadian Will Kymlicka argues that, however appropriate to the United States, Hollinger’s “open, fluid, and voluntary conception of American multiculturalism” has a “pernicious influence in other countries” (73), countries to whose minority nationalisms, more deeply rooted in history, it does not apply.¹⁷ Thus Hollinger’s position “is more accurately called ‘pan-American’ than ‘cosmopolitan’” (78).

Somewhat less plausibly, this same charge is also aimed at the trans-national version of

¹⁵ David A. Hollinger, Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism, revised edition (NY: Basic Books, 2000); Ross Posnock, Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998). See also Paul Gilroy, Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Unfortunately, these two geographical scales of cosmopolitanism do not necessarily correspond to two different definitions of the nation. The same country can do both internal national solidarity and militaristic foreign policy, domestic welfare and foreign aggression, at the same time. Examples include the Cold War US or Bismarck’s Germany. Or, like the US now, it can indulge in a certain multicultural cosmopolitanism at home without this having any noticeable effect on its behavior toward other nations.

¹⁷ Will Kymlicka, “American Multiculturalism in the International Arena,” Dissent (Fall 1998), 73-79.

cosmopolitanism. Whatever comes from America, it appears, is American imperialism. Indeed, these days this is also true for cosmopolitan ideas that do not come from America. Daniele Archibugi, as I said, offers cosmopolitanism as a means of resisting the American-led bombing of the former Yugoslavia. But what his critics see in him is Americanism. According to Peter Gowan, also writing in New Left Review, Archibugi and the other New Liberal Cosmopolitans, or NLC, have repressed “the central fact of contemporary international relations,” namely, that one country, the United States, “has acquired absolute military dominance over every other state or combination of states on the entire planet, a development without precedent in world history” (81).¹⁸ And in Gowan’s view that fact returns from the repressed to take over Archibugi’s argument: “Any form of liberal cosmopolitanism project for a new world order requires the subordination of all states to some form of supra-state planetary authority” (83). We know who that authority is. The various institutions of so-called “global governance” that already exist are merely “lightly disguised instruments of US policy” (84). The international system is built around “American hegemony” (93), and American hegemony is what Archibugi ultimately expresses. The same sentiment is echoed by another New Left Review critic, Timothy Brennan: “if we wished to capture the essence of cosmopolitanism in a single formula, it would be this. It is a discourse of the universal that is inherently local—a locality that is always surreptitiously imperial” (81).¹⁹ Cosmopolitanism is imperialism, *American* imperialism, even when it is aimed *against* American imperialism.

This is not quite as incoherent as it sounds. Those who worry that human rights internationalism may be used as a tool of American national interest of course have a point. But unlike such impetuous champions of human rights as Michael Ignatieff and Samatha Power, Nussbaum and Archibugi are properly cautious about bestowing any special responsibility for

¹⁸ Peter Gowan, “Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism,” New Left Review, NS 11 (Sept/Oct 2001), 79-93.

¹⁹ Timothy Brennan, “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism,” New Left Review NS 7 (Jan/Feb 2001), 75-84.

action upon the US government. Their hopes are pinned on NGOs and international agencies like the United Nations. And it does not follow that if a nation is sufficiently dominant, any cultural products or ideas emanating from it can be labeled versions of its domination, which is to say its nationalism, whatever their apparent attempts at national self-critique. Even a super-power cannot be permitted to fill up the entire landscape, obliterating all distinctions around it, making anti-American indistinguishable from pro-American and leaving us to wonder whether either of these epithets is specific enough to do any real political work.

In a response to Kymlicka in the journal Constellations, Hollinger offers a clever and attractive way of dissipating this pervasive confusion. There are indeed two kinds of cosmopolitanism, Hollinger says. But the division is not between a larger trans-national kind, which is critical of the nation, and a smaller national kind, which is uncritical of the nation and critical instead of divisive identities within it. Hollinger draws a line, rather, between a full cosmopolitanism and an empty cosmopolitanism. On the empty side is the old, universalist cosmopolitanism of Martha Nussbaum, which demands primary allegiance at the level of the planet. And on the full side is a large and growing field of what Hollinger calls “New Cosmopolitans.” Though diverse, all of these reject the absoluteness of Nussbaum’s commitment to humanity as a whole and instead try to fill cosmopolitanism with historical substance, or in Hollinger’s words “to bring cosmopolitanism down to earth, to indicate that cosmopolitanism can deliver some of the goods ostensibly provided by patriots, provincials, parochials, populists, tribalists, and above all nationalists.” Those who have been qualifying cosmopolitanism with adjectives like rooted, vernacular, critical, discrepant, comparative, and actually-existing have been doing so, Hollinger argues, in order to load up the otherwise empty concept with “history, the masses of mankind, the realities of power, and the need for politically viable solidarities.”²⁰

Of course, there is a price to pay for thus lowering the concept into the actual,

²⁰ David A. Hollinger, “Not Pluralists, Not Universalists, the New Cosmopolitans Find Their Own Way,” Constellations, June 2001, 236-248.

compromising with local, national, and nationalist attachments. It is unclear that the “politically viable solidarities” that are now seen as filling or embodying cosmopolitanism have acted against the same targets that were designated by the concept in its empty or radically critical guise. Once this political energy is mobilized, to what extent is it mobilized against national projects? Cosmopolitanism would appear to belong, like Habermas’s public sphere, to that intriguing and frustrating set of terms—it would be interesting to speculate on whether or not they are restricted to the tradition of Kant—that are perpetually torn between an empirical dimension and a normative dimension. The trade-off is familiar. To the extent that it seems to float outside or above social life, a normative concept like cosmopolitanism will always be vulnerable to charges like elitism and inefficacy. It can only live up to its own critical and world-changing aspirations by being grounded in a constituency or constituencies. But to the extent that it is so grounded, becoming the possession of actual social groups, it takes on the less-than-ideal political characteristics of those groups, each of which can of course be seen as less than ideally cosmopolitan in its treatment of others. The response to Arjun Appadurai by Benedict Anderson and Aihwa Ong is the inevitable response of the empirical to the normative. What cosmopolitanism gains in empirical actuality and forcefulness, it surrenders or threatens to surrender in radical normative edge.

It is to Hollinger’s credit that he claims no way out of this dilemma, no possibility of simply choosing the actual *over* the normative or the abstract. He is well aware of the need to balance or negotiate commitments to justice on a global scale against solidarity with the most disadvantaged of one’s fellow citizens, solidarity that has found no better form for the moment than the welfare state. Cosmopolitanism in Hollinger’s “new” sense involves “respecting the instincts to give special treatment to those with whom one is intimately connected and by whom one is socially sustained, and respecting, further, the honest difficulties that even virtuous people have in achieving solidarity with persons they perceive as very different from themselves. It is out of respect for these instincts and honest difficulties that the New Cosmopolitanism looks toward nation-states, as well as toward transnational organizations, as potential instruments for

the support of the basic welfare and human rights of as wide a circle of humanity as can be reached.” It is as sharers in these “honest difficulties,” willing to face rather than ignore “the contradiction between the needs of the ethnos and the needs of the species,” that Hollinger can suavely enlist most of Nussbaum’s supposedly anti-cosmopolitan critics in the New Cosmopolitans’ camp.²¹

As I’ve said, I find this account very attractive, in particular because it confirms my own sense of urgent and unresolved business between engagements to cosmopolitanism abroad and to the welfare state at home. And yet to acknowledge that one occupies a dilemma can leave one suspiciously comfortable. I cannot help feeling that one has an intellectual and disciplinary duty to continue the conversation until one begins to encounter some discomfort. So let me see if I can continue it a bit further.

Hollinger’s New Cosmopolitans perform something like the disciplinary “synthesis” I was speaking about in the first part of this paper. They try to reconcile cosmopolitanism, seen as an abstract standard of planetary justice, with a need for belonging and acting at levels smaller than the species as a whole. Adding adjectives to cosmopolitanism, they try to bring abstraction and actuality together. But as I noted, this is precisely what Martha Nussbaum is doing when she drags emotion, time, imagination, and institutions into her version of cosmopolitanism. Indeed, she has been doing it at least since her initial essay of 1994, which is a brief for cosmopolitan “love,” love that is not directed at the near or the national. Though she does not announce the modification with a catchy logo-style adjective, she too is modifying cosmopolitanism. Thus she cannot stand, as Hollinger proposes, for “cosmopolitanism, unmodified.”

If Nussbaum does not stand to the “universalist left” of Hollinger’s broadly consensual cosmopolitanism, it’s also unclear that Will Kymlicka stands outside it on what Hollinger calls “the pluralist right.”²² And if so-- I will say more about this in a moment--then it would appear

²¹ Ibid.

²² In a commentary on David Held, Kymlicka declares himself in sympathy with Held’s cosmopolitan “efforts to strengthen the international enforcement of human rights” as well as his

that the lines separating the New Cosmopolitans from its Others will not hold. In which case we need some new and different lines.

Kymlicka's version of the difference between his position and that of cosmopolitans like Hollinger goes as follows: "liberal nationalisms wish to become cosmopolitan in practice, in the sense of embracing cultural interchange, without accepting the cosmopolitan ideology which denies that people have any deep bond to their own language and cultural community" (57). The idea here seems to be that "embracing cultural exchange" should not undercut, indeed should have no effect upon, the "deep bond" to one's cultural community. Hollinger's version of the difference between his position and that of pluralists like Kymlicka goes as follows: "Cosmopolitans are specialists in the creating of the new, while cautious about destroying the old; pluralists are specialists in the conservation of the old while cautious about creating the new." By "the new," Hollinger clearly means a new that does destroy, undercut, or move away from the old, and by "the old" he seems to mean bonds to one's cultural community. So both present the issue between them as a culture's right to persist in time.

This is worth saying because the temporal issue seems to divide Hollinger and Kymlicka more than, say, the spatial issue of whether cosmopolitanism is properly national or trans-national. Hollinger is more reticent about according special rights to national minorities, thereby weakening solidarity within the nation, but he and Kymlicka would seem to agree about the unlikelihood of achieving solidarity beyond the nation. "Transnational activism is a good thing,"

demand that the recognition of states should be contingent on "democratic legitimation." Will Kymlicka, "Citizenship in an Era of Globalization: Commentary on Held," in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón, eds., Democracy's Edges (Cambridge UP, date?), 112-126. Like Hollinger, Kymlicka rejects cosmopolitanism absolutely only in its (supposed) absolutist variant. "As an ideology, cosmopolitanism rejects all forms of nationalism, and opposes efforts by the state to protect national identities and cultures. It is clear that citizens of Western democracies are not 'cosmopolitan' in this sense" (Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski, eds., Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe [NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 57). This section of the present essay first appeared as part of a review of the Kymlicka/Opalski volume in Radical Philosophy, 116 (Nov-Dec 2002), 30-37.

Kymlicka writes, “as is the exchange of information across borders, but the only forum in which genuine democracy occurs is within national boundaries” (124). “People belong to the same community of fate if they *care* about each other’s fate, and want to *share* each other’s fate—that is, want to meet certain challenges together, so as to share each other’s blessings and burdens” (115). But there is little evidence of such feeling, he says, between Canadians, Mexicans, and Americans. I cannot imagine Hollinger seriously dissenting from this.

This empirical objection to a normative ideal, which many people of otherwise different positions might share, can also be expressed as a more divisive question of time. It may seem like a small amendment to add that there is *as yet* little evidence of trans-national solidarity. But to say “as yet” is to deny that what has been in the past has authority over present conduct. This denial would seem to be a distinguishing attribute of cosmopolitanism. Though as he says Hollinger is trying to give cosmopolitanism a history, the concept would seem to be so refreshing to him and to others because it offers to liberate us *from* history, or from the weight of historical identity and historical injustice. In this sense the quintessential anti-cosmopolitan is Samuel Huntington, whose view of the world dramatically overvalues the past, imagining that all the forces determining the present course of history are primal, archaic cultural identities.²³ By contrast, cosmopolitanism’s characteristic temporality is expressed in a few words from Jeremy Waldron. Waldron has been discussing “indigenous communities in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand” (103) and how, like an individualist in a state of nature, “they may yearn for the days of their own self-sufficiency” (104). Now, however, they find themselves both threatened and protected by larger political structures on which they are dependent, structures whose relation to them they must actively manage. Waldron writes: “Yet here we all are. Our lives or practices, whether individual or communal, are in fact no longer

²³ As opposed to Huntington, Kymlicka himself is too much of a liberal (or a cosmopolitan) in spite of his brief for minority rights, in the sense that he allows the concept of consent to eradicate all injustices other than conquest and colonization, for example those that led to immigration.

self-sufficient” (104).²⁴ “Yet here we all are”: rather than the undeniable differences in where we have come from, what matters is a shared condition of interdependency here and now.

But stop and think for a moment. It is only a short step from this attractive pragmatic disqualification of past injustice to an equally pragmatic disqualification of present economic inequality. In his own argument for cosmopolitanism and against artificially protecting cultures from the forces of change, Waldron proposes, rightly I think, that people do not in fact need “a” culture of the sort Kymlicka imagines when he talks of “belonging” to a culture, in other words culture seen as an integral whole. What people need is cultural “materials” (107). And these cultural materials can come to us from any number of diverse and distant sources; indeed, like the other goods we use every day, they can and do come from around the world. As Waldron puts it, “the materials are simply *available*, from all corners of the world, as more or less meaningful fragments, images, and snatches of stories” (108). This is empirically true, and for the purposes of his (empirical) argument about need, the point is well-taken. But the argument also has a hidden normative dimension. The (present) model of cultural transmission that it relies upon is that of the world capitalist system, which not only provides cultural materials “from all corners of the world,” but does so in precisely the cosmopolitan spirit of “yet here we all are.” How and where they are produced, and what inequalities and injustices may have been involved in their production—none of this is judged to be relevant. What matters simply is that here these materials are, “available.” One might say that cosmopolitanism has thus entered into the business of laundering culture, washing the commodity clean of whatever sweatshop-style indignities may have accompanied its emergence and distribution, and allowing or enjoining us to look upon it here and now as conveniently ready for our use.

The connection between cosmopolitanism and world capitalism will be news to no one; it was announced in 1848 in the Communist Manifesto. But even for those most eager to change the world, this connection can be interpreted in various ways. As Marx and Engels so strongly

²⁴ Jeremy Waldron, “Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative,” in Will Kymlicka, ed., The Rights of Minority Cultures (NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 93-119.

implied, historical forces that produce the most appalling economic consequences can issue in cultural consequences that are ambiguous or distinctly desirable. To see the connection through the lens of cosmopolitan presentism, for example, is to raise the question of whether there exists a more eligible approach to past injustices like those visited upon indigenous peoples, and if so what relation this approach might have to the rectifying of present economic injustice. Even the most ecumenical left cannot be in favor of a temporal leveling out in which the oldest and the most recent suffering count equally, time elapsed counting for nothing. (The absence from left discourse of a temporal grid or layering is part of the problem with post-colonial studies.) I can imagine no version of the left in which distance in time would not matter, in which there would be no statute of limitations on past crimes, no provision for forgetting as well as remembering, or for a passage from remembering *to* forgetting.

If there is such a thing as a left-wing cosmopolitanism, one would imagine it would collide with the liberal or “here we all are” version on the grounds of economic inequality. But this is by no means a straightforward matter. Kymlicka distinguishes between national minorities and immigrants on the grounds of consent. Immigrants have chosen to leave their country, and thus can be assumed to have consented to the culture of their new country. Indigenous peoples and national minorities like the Quebecois did not consent, but were colonized and conquered.²⁵ These historical injustices render them deserving of special rights and protections, Kymlicka concludes, that should not be accorded to everyone. His conclusion has been much contested. Even sympathetic critics have replied that the class of people who never consented to the majority culture is much, much larger than Kymlicka thinks. As Joseph Carens writes, Kymlicka has been obliged to concede “that refugees do not come voluntarily and that the assumption that other immigrants come voluntarily may be inappropriate given the vast economic inequalities in the world.”²⁶ Once the criterion of “economic inequality” has been put

²⁵ This distinction falls apart as soon as immigrants have offspring. The children of immigrants have consented to nothing

²⁶ Joseph H. Carens, Culture, Citizenship, and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice

in play, it is impossible to keep it in quarantine. It is not merely the free consent of the immigrant that is undermined by economic hardship. In a world and a nation that are so deeply divided between rich and poor, economic inequality replaces freedom with necessity almost everywhere one looks. How is it possible to adapt to the injustices of conquest and colonization, as Kymlicka does, but not do the same for example for the fear of starvation?

Ignoring the economic inequalities and injustices presumed by relations of free choice and consent is of course a standard charge brought against liberalism from the left. As far as possible, I repeat it here in an inquiring rather than a dogmatic spirit. Among the ways of interpreting the connection between cosmopolitanism and capitalism, it is conceivable to me that in some sense the commodity has transcended the political conditions of its own emergence and has now become, by virtue of its openness to re-signification, a positive model of some use even to capitalism's sternest critics. To make this proposal is not far from the spirit of Waldron's cosmopolitanism, which shares with Marxist dialectics an attention to the re-functioning of "cultural materials," wrenching them away from their original meanings.

The ideal type of the liberal cosmopolitan will perhaps be tempted to offer the above critique of Kymlicka not as a basis for demanding an end to economic inequality, but merely as a way of discrediting Kymlicka's special pleading for national minorities as an exceptional case. The liberal temptation is to treat everyone alike as capable of free consent, regardless of their social or economic location. And yet the temptation can be and has been resisted. Liberal support for the welfare state—certainly the strongest part of the liberal nationalist case for nationalism—does make economic inequality into an exceptional case.²⁷ So for the left one touchstone at present would seem to be how far that support goes, both financially and geographically. A left cosmopolitanism would not depend on the capitalist system to undo the enormous disparities of wealth and insecurity that make welfare necessary. In the long term it would look beyond welfare. And in the short term it would insist that welfare tasks like

as Evenhandedness (Oxford University Press, 2000), 55n.

²⁷ See for example Hollinger, Postethnic America, 148-149.

providing a safety-net and re-distributing wealth even to a limited degree from a trans-national rather than a merely national project.

In an effort to continue this line of inquiry, let me briefly consider the recent series of articles in the New Left Review, beginning in the year 2000, as if this debate were intended as a collective attempt to define a left-wing version of or at least position on cosmopolitanism. Viewed from this point of view, the debate is something of a disappointment. Daniele Archibugi's initial article was greeted by two more or less predictable lines of argument. First, by the complaint that his concept is socially empty. And second, by the objection that in taking aim at national sovereignty, he abandons the best defense the world's peoples presently have against American imperialism and thus places itself, unintentionally but decisively, on the side of American imperialism.

The complaint that the concept is fatally abstract, empty of any significant constituency, is as I said one that comes from any number of positions. There is nothing especially left-wing about it. It is the standard communitarian objection to liberalism's thinness, whether on the domestic or trans-national scale. When this objection pops up again in Craig Calhoun's recent and judicious survey of the field, it is hard to say whether it comes from a leftist perspective, a communitarian one, or simply from the disciplinary viewpoint of a sociologist.²⁸ If there is a distinctively left-wing version, it might center on the question of power. To echo a notorious quotation, how many divisions does cosmopolitanism have? Geoffrey Hawthorn makes gentle fun of Archibugi's idea of international democratic institutions putting pressure on states.²⁹

²⁸ Calhoun argues "how much the political theory of cosmopolitanism is shaped by liberalism's poorly drawn fight with communitarianism and thus left lacking a strong account of solidarity. This impedes efforts to defend the achievements of previous social struggles against neoliberal capitalism, or to ground new political action. Finally, I wish to offer a plea for the importance of the local and particular—not least as a basis for democracy, no less important for being necessarily incomplete. Whatever its failings, "the old home feeling" helped to produce a sense of mutual obligations, of "moral economy", to borrow the phrase Edward Thompson retrieved from an old tradition."

²⁹ Geoffrey Hawthorn, "Running the World Through Windows," New Left Review NS 5 ((Sept/Oct 2000), 101-110

Without arms and finances, how would they get the holders of power to listen to them (105)?

Nothing is going to change unless the cosmopolitans acquire power themselves (108).

Unfortunately, Hawthorn says nothing on the follow-up question of how power might be acquired, whether by cosmopolitans or by anyone else. And posing or not posing that follow-up is one criterion allowing us to distinguish a genuinely left discourse from one that is merely querulous.

In his contribution to the debate, Timothy Brennan offers a version of my welfare state case, but a version lacking any sense of dilemma. Cosmopolitans should leave national sovereignty alone, Brennan argues, for the nation-state is “a manageable (albeit top-heavy) site within which the working poor can make limited claims on power, and have at least some opportunity to affect the way they are ruled” (75).³⁰ An immediate problem with this argument is that, historically speaking, the working poor have made their most effective claims on power, have had the most effect on how they are ruled, in the more powerful rather than the less powerful states, and certainly not in those weaker states that Brennan would like to count as anti-imperialist. Anti-imperialism does not align neatly with either the economic ability or the democratic will to raise the lower threshold of welfare for the general population. There is no avoiding a sense of dilemma here.

Writing from the perspective of international law, David Chandler too worries about the undermining of national sovereignty by an emergent “‘human rights’ based order of international relations” (60), or what Bernard Kouchner of *Médecins sans frontières* calls “le devoir d’ingérence” (61), the obligation to intervene.³¹ Chandler responds to my review and I respond to his response in Radical Philosophy, 118 (2003), 25-32. The dangers of humanitarian intervention as camouflage for Great Power bullying are real. But Chandler doesn’t ask the

³⁰ Brennan distinguishes between cosmopolitanism, which means “world government and corresponding citizenship” (76), and internationalism, which “does not quarrel with the principle of *national* sovereignty” (77).

³¹ David Chandler, “‘International Justice,’” New Left Review NS 6 Nov/Dec 2000, 55-66.

pertinent questions of comparison and timing. What is the value of “sovereign equality” today as a line of defense for the weak compared with, say, human rights, given what their own sovereign governments are now doing to them and are likely to do to them in the near future? How much does the state’s legitimate violence really offer at a time when that violence is more likely to be aimed at its own citizens than at the representatives of globalization?

I call attention to this question of timing both because Brennan and Chandler use the language of temporality and because temporality once again seems to draw a line that very much needs to be drawn. Cosmopolitanism “is addressed to those who have an interest in transnational forms of solidarity,” Brennan writes, “but whose capacities for doing so have *not yet* arrived” (77–my italics). The problem with cosmopolitanism is that it is *prematurely* anti-nationalist. It thinks, Brennan goes on, “that the period in question is—for the first time in history—*already* substantially cosmopolitan” (76–my italics). I don’t think this is true—I don’t think, in other words, that the argument for cosmopolitanism depends on the assumption that cosmopolitanism is a *fait accompli*. But it is true, I think, that politics depends on timing and that getting the timing right is therefore all-important. Notice the extra twist that’s added by Chandler’s attempt to place cosmopolitanism in time. In his account, the system of international law that protects national sovereignty began as European tool and continued to express the European disdain for colonial peoples (to whom it was not taken to apply) until well after the League of Nations. In its origins, even the UN was “an instrument of American hegemony.” But then the argument turns: “In theory, however, a framework of international law had been created that limited the exercise of state sovereignty—including the right to wage war. In legal terms, at least, might no longer equaled right” (59-60). Despite the past tense, this is about a discontinuity between past and present. What began once upon a time as an instrument of hegemony has now been re-functioned, coming to serve at the present moment as an instrument for the *protection* of nations against that same hegemony. I don’t want to discuss the extent to which this claim is valid. What I want to emphasize is the validity of the principle and the possibility that it would also apply, at least in theory, to the “human rights internationalism” Chandler opposes. As he admits,

it too was fashioned by the wrong people for the wrong reasons. And yet one can go on to say, following his own example, that it too has now been re-functioned, and may yet be further re-functioned, so as to serve very different purposes. The current mobilization (I write in March 2003) against the US war in Iraq would seem to make a rather conclusive example. This is the dialectical point that Brennan fails to acknowledge when, having expressed his commitment to historical specificity, he suddenly forgets history entirely and defines cosmopolitanism as an ahistorical essence: “if we wished to capture the essence of cosmopolitanism in a single formula, it would be this. It is a discourse of the universal that is *inherently* local—a locality that is *always* surreptitiously imperial” (81—my italics). Presumably even when imperialism is its target.

It’s worth adding that while this re-functioning can mark a change in power that has already happened, it is also one of the means by which power can be induced to change. In other words, the example makes a case for “theory” or philosophy in general, as well as for cosmopolitanism in particular, as a potential force in the world. It suggests as well an old-fashioned case to be made for a distinctively left-wing or dialectical sense of time, or of how the past and the future are connected: a sense that is oriented to the exigencies of the present, like liberal cosmopolitanism, but has less reason to fear a paralyzing acknowledgment of past injustice, since such injustice can be incorporated into a more desirable future that is both continuous and discontinuous with it. Practically speaking, there is of course no guaranteed guide for choosing to re-function this rather than that discourse. But the fact that cosmopolitanism feeds off the world capitalist system, as its critics point out, can also be construed as a dialectical argument in favor of its eligibility. This means it is double-edged, to say the least, but also that it has power behind it. And in front it has a target of choice. The Bush administration’s mad unilateralist rampage since September 2001, with its repudiation of treaties, its refusal to participate in the International Criminal Court, its refusal to subject itself to a Security Council vote, and finally its invasion of Iraq, and so on, has been carried out in the name of America’s national sovereignty. There are other names we can invoke in trying to stop this rampage. We need not surrender all higher moral ground and restrict ourselves to the same

degraded talk of national self-defense.

* * *

We are told, one of the New Left Review contributors writes, “that war is now the ‘lesser evil,’ compared to the new moral crimes of ‘indifference’ or ‘appeasement.’ Liberal interventionists have emerged as the biggest advocates of increased military spending” (Chandler, 65). What’s wrong with cosmopolitanism in this view is that it sets itself to fight against metropolitan indifference, not realizing that is thereby helping lay the ground for imperial intervention. One might conclude from this argument that increasing indifference, or sustaining it, or at any rate de-criminalizing it has now become an anti-imperialist goal. This intriguing possibility comes unexpectedly close to the classical Greek expression of cosmopolitanism as it is presented by Martha Nussbaum. In Upheavals of Thought Nussbaum explains the “‘indifference’” of the Stoics as stemming from the position of “egalitarian cosmopolitanism” which holds that “we should have equal concern for all; and that equal concern is incompatible with special attachments to kin” (359). The cosmopolitan’s proper attitude toward the misfortunes of others will be “lofty”: “think of the person who is moaning about fortune as like a child who has lost a toy” (364).

Nussbaum is ambivalent at best about this “lofty,” indifferent version of Stoic cosmopolitanism. She struggles to weigh it down or thicken it, to re-invest it with passionate emotion. But in the eyes of various of her respondents, her argument collapses at the very moment when she forces us to imagine loving people far away in the same way that we love those closest to us. Nobody can believe it is possible, or can believe that if it were possible it would mean anything other than the end of love as we know it. Even Nussbaum herself seems to realize she has been unconvincing on this point.³² This is perhaps why her most recent discussion of cosmopolitanism moves from emotion to institutions like law and the welfare state. Unlike such all-too-human emotions as love, bureaucratic institutions produce the results of

³² She returns to the Adam Smith quote about the inconsistent reactions a European will have to an earthquake in China and to losing his little finger in Upheavals of Thought, 360-61.

compassion without stretching compassion's spatial and temporal limits to the breaking point, exhausting its finite resources of emotion and attention. Such institutions may be an iron cage, but they permit a freedom from the unceasing, infinite, debilitating demand for attention. Institutions require compassion, of course. But not in the overly symmetrical way Nussbaum suggests, which makes each an equal cause of the other. "The relationship between compassion and social institutions is and should be a two-way street," she says: "compassionate individuals construct institutions that embody what they imagine; and institutions, in turn, influence the development of compassion in individuals" (405).³³ But I can't help but feel that Nussbaum is missing the point of her own chapter here: institutions allow us to require citizens to feel *less* compassion. Institution-building is thus the only way in which cosmopolitanism can be saved from the impossible strain of knowing and caring about everyone everywhere at once. Having delegated the caring to competent others, one can both remember and, no less important, forget. As the saying goes, one can care less.

There can be no resolution between the good of humanity and the good of those closest to us that is anything other than provisional, of its moment in time. At this moment-- which is always an extended moment, taking in recent threats and achievements and pushing them into the near-future-- the only resolution I can imagine, the only program for cosmopolitanism I can imagine that is feasible without being trivial, is the extension of the welfare state beyond the borders of the nation and of the "developed" world. This means institutions for the transfer of income that will not depend on extraordinary outbursts of love or compassion, mechanisms as drab, humdrum, and everyday as a tax-- say, a tax on all international financial transactions. A tax which will be invisible, or to which, if it becomes visible, we will resign ourselves. That we will pay, or that will work with tiresome regularity, in a state of relative indifference.

³³ Nussbaum is repeating Rousseau's dilemma: you can't have democracy without first having more democratic-minded citizens, and you can't have democratic-minded citizens without first having a democracy that would create them.

Notes