
Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism*

In recent years, political philosophy has seen a resurgence of interest in the idea of cosmopolitanism.¹ In common parlance, the term 'cosmopolitanism' suggests a posture of worldly sophistication which is naturally contrasted with more provincial or parochial outlooks. Philosophical usage, although not unrelated, tends to be more specialized. Interestingly enough, however, there is no consensus among contemporary philosophers and theorists about how the precise content of a cosmopolitan position is to be understood, and this despite the fact that cosmopolitanism as a political doctrine has a rich history dating back to ancient times. Accordingly, one of my central aims in this essay is to call attention to two different strands in recent thinking about cosmopolitanism. One strand presents it primarily as a doctrine about justice. The other presents it primarily as a doctrine about culture and the self. Cosmopolitanism about justice and cosmopolitanism about culture are not

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¹ See, for example, Bruce Ackerman, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism', *Ethics*, 104 (1994); Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Cosmopolitan Patriots', *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (1997); Charles Beitz, 'Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment', *Journal of Philosophy*, 80 (1983); *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal*, ed. J. Bohman and M. Lutz-Bachmann, Cambridge, MA, 1997; *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. P. Cheah and B. Robbins, Minneapolis, MN, 1998; David Hollinger, 'Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the United States', *Immigration and Citizenship in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. N. Pickus, Lanham, MD, 1998; David Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, New York, NY, 1995; Will Kymlicka, 'From Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism to Liberal Nationalism', *The Enlightenment: Then and Now*, ed. S. Lukes and M. Hollis, forthcoming; Judith Lichtenberg, 'National Boundaries and Moral Boundaries: A Cosmopolitan View', *Boundaries: National Autonomy and its Limits*, ed. P. Brown and H. Shue, Totowa, NJ, 1981; Martha Nussbaum *et al.*, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Boston, MA, 1996; Thomas Pogge, 'Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty', *Ethics*, 103 (1992); Jeremy Waldron, 'Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative', *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, 25 (1992).

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the only possible forms of the view, and they are not mutually exclusive. Yet some defenders of cosmopolitanism seem clearly to have one form rather than the other in mind.

One way of coming to appreciate the difference between cosmopolitanism about justice and cosmopolitanism about culture is by taking note of the different positions to which they are opposed. Cosmopolitanism about justice is opposed to any view that posits principled restrictions on the scope of an adequate conception of justice. In other words, it opposes any view which holds, as a matter of principle, that the norms of justice apply primarily within bounded groups comprising some subset of the global population. For example, this type of cosmopolitanism rejects communitarian and nationalist arguments to the effect that the principles of distributive justice can properly be applied only within reasonably cohesive social groups: groups that share a common history, culture, language, or ethnicity, or which, for other reasons, are sufficiently cohesive that the identities of their members are partly constituted and defined by their membership.² At the same time, however, cosmopolitanism about justice is equally opposed to liberal theories which set out principles of justice that are to be applied in the first instance to a single society, conceived of as a co-operative scheme or an arrangement for reciprocal advantage, and considered more or less in isolation from all others. Indeed, some of the most vigorous proponents of a cosmopolitan approach to distributive justice have explicitly formulated their views in opposition not to communitarianism but rather to Rawls's doctrine that the principles of justice are to be applied to the basic structure of an individual society.³ While remaining otherwise sympathetic to Rawls's ideas, these cosmopolitan critics have sought to defend the application of his principles of justice to the global population as a whole.⁴ In short, although its proponents typically situate themselves within the liberal tradition broadly construed, cosmopolitanism about justice is no less opposed to liberal restrictions on the scope of justice than to communitarian or nationalist restrictions.

Cosmopolitanism about culture and the self, meanwhile, is opposed to any suggestion that individuals' well-being or their identity or their capacity for effective human agency normally depends on their membership in a determinate cultural group whose boundaries are reasonably clear and whose stability and cohesion are reasonably secure. Cosmopolitans see these ideas as involving a distorted understanding of culture and unduly restrictive conceptions of individual identity, agency, and well-being. Cultures, they maintain, are always in flux; change is the normal condition for a living culture. For the population that sustains a culture is itself constantly changing. Old generations with their memories and ties to the past gradually fade away. New

² See, for example, Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge, 1982.

³ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA, 1971.

⁴ See, for example, Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton, NJ, 1979; Thomas Pogge, *Realizing Rawls*, Ithaca, NY, 1989.

generations with new problems and experiences gradually attain maturity. And any cultural group may at any time be called upon to respond to new challenges—to wars, diseases, or natural disasters, for example, or to new discoveries, creations, or inventions. A group's responses to such challenges are then absorbed into, and thus serve to modify, the culture's history and self-understanding. Furthermore, the population that sustains any one culture will almost always have multiple forms of contact with other populations and their ideas, languages, artefacts, traditions, and practices. Through these multiple communicative routes, cultures routinely appropriate—sometimes in altered or distorted form and often with only partial comprehension—more or less coherent fragments of materials from other cultures. And when they do not appropriate the products of other cultures, often they react against those products—trying to ward them off and to resist their influence. But, of course, this too is a form of influence. In short, the cosmopolitan argues, cultures are constantly in flux, constantly changing, constantly being modified, updated, altered, supplemented, recast, and reconceived. Nor is this a sign of weakness or ill health. On the contrary, it is those extremely rare cultures whose populations are isolated from all others and which therefore exist like museum pieces, protected against the normal rough-and-tumble jostling of intercultural exchange, which are the likeliest to be brittle, fragile, and unable to perpetuate themselves when change comes, as, inevitably, it must do.

In addition to insisting on the ubiquity of cultural change, cosmopolitanism about culture emphasizes the fluidity of individual identity, people's remarkable capacity to forge new identities using materials from diverse cultural sources, and to flourish while so doing. Far from requiring immersion in a single, pristine culture if they are to achieve a coherent sense of self or to have available to them the kinds of choices that make a good life possible, some human beings flourish by exercising their inventiveness and creativity to construct new ways of life using the most heterogeneous cultural materials. In so doing, they demonstrate the very capacities that make it possible for human beings to create culture in the first place, and they enrich humanity as a whole by renewing the stock of cultural resources on which others may draw. In a marvellous article defending cultural cosmopolitanism, Jeremy Waldron quotes a passage from an essay by Salman Rushdie that makes the point quite eloquently. '*The Satanic Verses*', Rushdie says of the novel that changed his life forever,

celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Melange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. (Quoted in Jeremy Waldron, 'Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative', 751).

The claims to which cosmopolitanism about culture is opposed, play an important role in much communitarian and nationalist thought, as well as in many formulations of multiculturalism, and in that capacity they are

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routinely deployed as premises in anti-liberal arguments. Yet some liberals, too, have accepted such claims, and have sought to show that they can be effectively accommodated within a modified liberal framework.⁵ Cosmopolitanism about culture opposes these claims whether they are offered by communitarians, nationalists, multiculturalists, or liberals. Thus, like cosmopolitanism about justice, cosmopolitanism about culture, although appealing primarily to thinkers who situate themselves within a broadly liberal tradition, nevertheless finds itself in opposition to some formulations of liberalism as well as to many forms of nationalism and communitarianism.

Although the two kinds of cosmopolitanism differ in content, it is certainly no accident that the term 'cosmopolitanism' is applied to both positions. For the root idea of cosmopolitanism is the idea that each individual is a citizen of the world, and owes allegiance, as Martha Nussbaum has put it, 'to the worldwide community of human beings'.⁶ Cosmopolitanism about justice and cosmopolitanism about culture can both be seen as variants of this idea. For the cosmopolitan about justice, the idea of world citizenship means that the norms of justice must ultimately be seen as governing the relations of all human beings to each other, and not merely as applying within individual societies or bounded groups of other kinds. For the cosmopolitan about culture, meanwhile, the idea of world citizenship means that individuals have the capacity to flourish by forging idiosyncratic identities from heterogeneous cultural sources, and are not to be thought of as constituted or defined by ascriptive ties to a particular culture, community, or tradition.

There is, however, an ambiguity in the idea of world citizenship, and that ambiguity gets transmitted to these two variants. What is ambiguous is the way in which one is to understand the normative status of one's particular interpersonal relationships and group affiliations, once one is thought of as a citizen of the world. More specifically, the question is what kinds of reasons one can have, compatibly with one's status as a world citizen, for devoting differential attention to those individuals with whom one has special relationships of one kind or another—either relationships that are personal in character or ones that consist instead in co-membership in some larger group.

On one interpretation, world citizenship is fundamental, in the sense that the devotion of special attention to some people rather than others is legitimate only if it can be justified by reference to the ideal of world citizenship itself. This is the interpretation apparently favoured by Nussbaum. She says that '[n]one of the major thinkers in the cosmopolitan tradition denied that we can and should give special attention to our own families and to our own ties of religious and national belonging'.⁷ Cosmopolitans believe, according

⁵ See, for example, Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*, Oxford, 1989. See also David Miller, *On Nationality*, Oxford, 1995; Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton, NJ, 1993.

⁶ Nussbaum, 4. ⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

to her, 'that it is right to give the local an additional measure of concern'.⁸ However, she adds, 'the primary reason a cosmopolitan should have for this is not that the local is better *per se*, but rather that this is the only sensible way to do good'.⁹ Rather than attempting to divide one's attention equally among all the children of the world, for example, one should devote special attention to one's own children, but only because that is the most effective way of allocating one's benevolence. One must not suppose that one's own children are worth more than other children. This seems to imply that, in trying to justify our particular attachments and loyalties, we are faced with a dilemma. Either we must argue, as Nussbaum does, that devoting special attention to the people we are attached to is an effective way of doing good for humanity at large, or else we must suppose that the people we are attached to are simply worth more than others. I shall return to this dilemma later. For now, it suffices to note that, on the interpretation of world citizenship that Nussbaum appears to favour, special attention to particular people is legitimate only if it can be justified by reference to the interests of all human beings considered as equals. Cosmopolitanism, in this view, implies that particular human relationships and group affiliations never provide independent reasons for action or suffice by themselves to generate special responsibilities to one's intimates and associates.¹⁰

There is a more moderate way of understanding the idea of world citizenship. On this alternative interpretation, to say that one is a citizen of the world is to say that, in addition to one's relationships and affiliations with particular individuals and groups, one also stands in an ethically significant relation to other human beings in general. There is no suggestion, on this interpretation, that one's special relationships and affiliations need to be justified by reference to the ideal of world citizenship itself, or that any legitimate reasons we have for promoting the interests of the people we care specially about must be derivative from the interests of humanity as a whole. Instead, world citizenship is one important form of membership among others, one important source of reasons and responsibilities among others. Cosmopolitanism, on this more moderate interpretation, insists only that one's local attachments and affiliations must always be balanced and constrained by consideration of the interests of other people.

As I have said, the idea of world citizenship is ambiguous as between the two interpretations I have mentioned, the one more extreme and the other more moderate, and this ambiguity gets transmitted to the two variants of cosmopolitanism I have been discussing: cosmopolitanism about justice and cosmopolitanism about culture. Within cosmopolitanism about justice, the ambiguity manifests itself as an ambiguity about whether individual societies and other bounded groups are thought ultimately to be insignificant from the

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 135 f.

¹⁰ I have discussed Nussbaum's position at greater length in my review of *For Love of Country*, which appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, December 27, 1996.

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standpoint of justice or whether the claim is merely that traditional theories of justice greatly exaggerate their significance. In other words, the question is whether there is anything that the members of an individual society owe each other, as a matter of justice, that they do not owe to non-members. Or, to put the point in still another way, are there *any* norms of *social* as opposed to *global* justice: any norms that apply only within an individual society and not to the global population as a whole? The extreme view denies that there are, at least at the level of fundamental principle, although its proponents may concede that some distinction between social and global norms is justified on practical or instrumental grounds. The moderate view, by contrast, treats such a distinction as fundamental; it denies that global justice takes the place of social justice, even at the level of basic principle, and it accepts that the members of an individual society owe each other some things, as a matter of justice, that they do not owe to non-members. The cosmopolitan character of the moderate view lies in its insistence that there are, in fact, substantive norms of global justice in addition to the norms that apply within a single society, and in its denial that the content of social justice can be arrived at by considering the individual society as a closed system in isolation from all others. The principles of social justice, according to the moderate cosmopolitan, are not replaced, but they are constrained, by the principles of global justice.

Within cosmopolitanism about culture, the ambiguity in the idea of world citizenship manifests itself as an ambiguity about whether what is claimed is merely that individuals need not be situated within a single cultural tradition in order to flourish, or whether it is asserted, more ambitiously, that people cannot flourish in that way. In other words, the question is whether those who do not forge idiosyncratic identities from heterogeneous cultural materials, but whose aims and aspirations are structured instead by the values and traditions of a particular cultural community, are deemed just as capable of flourishing as people who are culturally more adventurous, and, relatedly, whether participation in the life of such a community is recognized as a potential source of special responsibilities to one's fellow members. The extreme view denies that adherence to the values and traditions of a particular community represents a viable way of life in the modern world, and, accordingly, is not inclined to treat an individual's relationship to a particular cultural community as a potential source of special responsibilities. The moderate view, by contrast, maintains only that people do not need to situate themselves squarely within a particular cultural tradition in order to thrive. It is quite happy to accept that some people will continue to do so, and that those who do may acquire special responsibilities to the other members of their communities.

The tension between these two versions of cosmopolitanism about culture is clearly exhibited in the article by Waldron mentioned earlier. At a minimum, Waldron argues, the fact 'that a freewheeling cosmopolitan life, lived

in a kaleidoscope of cultures, is both possible and fulfilling' undercuts any suggestion that 'all people *need* their rootedness in the particular culture in which they and their ancestors were reared'. While 'immersion in the culture of a particular community . . . may be something that particular people like and enjoy . . . they no longer can claim that it is something that they need'.¹¹ But Waldron is also tempted by a stronger claim, namely, 'that the hybrid lifestyle of the true cosmopolitan is in fact the only appropriate response to the modern world in which we live'.¹² Since Waldron never makes it clear whether, in the end, he is prepared to endorse this claim, the net result is that his paper exhibits an unresolved ambivalence with respect to the choice between moderate and extreme cosmopolitanism about culture.

The appeal of moderate cosmopolitanism, both about culture and about justice, is not difficult to appreciate. The fact that some people can and do flourish while drawing in idiosyncratic ways on culturally eclectic materials seems perfectly evident. Thus, the possibility that 'a freewheeling cosmopolitan life' can be fulfilling is undeniable. And moderate cosmopolitanism about justice seems equally plausible. Those people who do not happen to belong to our society, nation, or community are no less valuable than those who do, and their antecedent claims to a share of the earth's resources are no weaker. Furthermore, we interact with them at least indirectly, through our common participation in a network of interlocking economic, political, and technological structures and arrangements.¹³ Given all of this, it seems implausible to deny that there are substantive principles of global justice that govern our relations to them, or to insist that the principles of justice for a single society can be fully determined without reference to its relations to other societies.

Indeed, the moderate versions of cosmopolitanism that I have articulated may strike some people as being so plausible as to amount to little more than a set of platitudes. Yet Waldron is right to insist that some influential claims about the necessity of immersion in a single, cohesive culture appear to be undermined by the very possibility that moderate cosmopolitanism about culture affirms—the possibility of a fulfilling cosmopolitan way of life. Nor should we forget how threatening that possibility has sometimes seemed to people who wished to maintain the purity of their own culture, or the pathological forms that hostility to cosmopolitan eclecticism has all too often taken. And moderate cosmopolitanism about justice is no more vacuous or platitudinous than moderate cosmopolitanism about culture. Although it may not sound

¹¹ Waldron, 762. One might wonder whether Waldron is not here conflating the denial that *all* people need immersion in their culture with the denial that *anyone* does. For related criticism of this passage, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford, 1995, 85 f. See also J. Waldron, 'Multiculturalism and Melange', *Public Education in a Multicultural Society*, ed. R. Fullinwider, Cambridge, 1996.

¹² Waldron, 'Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative', 763.

¹³ I have discussed this point at greater length in 'Individual Responsibility in a Global Age', Chapter Two in this volume.

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particularly radical to assert that there are substantive principles of global justice which supplement and constrain the principles of justice for an individual society, the complete internalization of this claim would require far-reaching changes in many traditional theories of justice, not to mention the actual political practice of existing states and societies.

Whereas the moderate versions of cosmopolitanism may strike some people as being so obvious as to be vacuous or platitudinous, the extreme versions may seem so implausible as to be difficult to take seriously. For each denies the ultimate moral and justificatory significance of social affiliations whose importance in most people's lives, and whose *de facto* political importance, could hardly be greater. It may look as if the extreme versions of cosmopolitanism about culture and justice simply inherit the implausibility of the extreme interpretation of world citizenship, which implies that particular human relationships and group affiliations cannot by themselves give rise to special responsibilities or independent reasons for action. Since the conviction that we have special responsibilities to our families, friends, and communities is so deeply embedded within common-sense moral thought that even to call attention to it is to risk belabouring the obvious, it can seem puzzling that extreme versions of cosmopolitanism have managed to tempt as many philosophers and theorists as they have.

Part of the explanation may lie in what I will call 'Nussbaum's dilemma'. As we saw earlier, Nussbaum appears to think that, in trying to justify our particular attachments and loyalties, we are faced with a choice. Either we must argue that devoting special attention to the people we are attached to is an effective way of doing good for humanity at large, or else we must suppose that those people are simply worth more than others. What we cannot do is to affirm that all people are of equal worth, while simultaneously insisting that our special relationships to particular people obligate us to devote special attention to those people, whether or not doing so will promote the good of humanity at large. In other words, Nussbaum's dilemma implies that there is a price to be paid for treating particular relationships and affiliations as independent sources of reasons and responsibilities, and the price is that we must deny the equal worth of persons. This makes the appeal of extreme forms of cosmopolitanism look less puzzling. Given Nussbaum's dilemma, extreme cosmopolitanism is simply the inevitable consequence of a serious commitment to equality.

Yet this only pushes the puzzle back one level. The question at the next level is why 'Nussbaum's dilemma' should be regarded as a genuine dilemma. Surely many people who wish to affirm the equality of persons also take themselves to have underived special responsibilities to their families, friends and communities—responsibilities, in other words, that do not have their source in considerations about the good of humanity as a whole. It is, therefore, not at all apparent why a commitment to equality should be thought incompatible with a recognition of underived special responsibilities.

Interestingly, some of the strongest proponents of the idea that there is such an incompatibility have not been extreme cosmopolitans at all, but have rather been communitarian critics of liberalism, who have argued that the values of justice and equality, which they see as characteristic of liberalism and the Enlightenment, cannot be reconciled with the values of loyalty, tradition, and communal solidarity. A case in point is Alasdair MacIntyre's argument that there is a fundamental incompatibility between 'a morality of liberal impersonality' and what he calls 'the morality of patriotism'.¹⁴ In decisions about the allocation of scarce but essential resources, MacIntyre says, the standpoint of impersonal morality requires that the interests of all people be given equal weight, whereas the patriotic standpoint demands that one put the interests of one's own community ahead of the interests of other communities.¹⁵ No attempt to combine these two perspectives, he suggests, can ever 'be carried through without incoherence'.¹⁶ Thus, it seems that, for MacIntyre, 'Nussbaum's dilemma' is a genuine dilemma. A commitment to the equal worth of persons is incompatible with a recognition of underived special responsibilities to the members of one's own community. This implies that moderate cosmopolitanism, which purports to recognize both values, is untenable. Beyond this, MacIntyre also believes that, given the need to choose between equality and special responsibilities, consistent liberals must choose equality, which implies that they must end up as extreme cosmopolitans. Of course, MacIntyre would presumably see this as a reason for being suspicious of liberalism rather than as a reason for embracing extreme cosmopolitanism. But many extreme cosmopolitans would agree with him not only about the untenability of moderate cosmopolitanism, but also about the reality of 'Nussbaum's dilemma' and about the need for consistent liberals to accept the extreme cosmopolitan position.

Despite this, the reality of the dilemma cannot be taken for granted, for it flies in the face of the experience and conviction of many people. And if there is, in fact, no incompatibility between a commitment to equality and a recognition of underived special responsibilities, then the argument in favour of extreme cosmopolitanism that we are considering simply collapses. Equally, however, the argument against moderate cosmopolitanism collapses. Thus, a great deal turns on the question of whether 'Nussbaum's dilemma' is indeed a genuine dilemma. The fact that so many people actually do affirm the equal worth of persons, while acknowledging underived special responsibilities, establishes at least a weak presumption against the reality of the dilemma. At a minimum, we need persuasive reasons for thinking that people who suppose they can embrace both values simultaneously are mistaken.

¹⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Is Patriotism a Virtue?', *The Lindley Lecture*, Lawrence, Kansas, 1984, 18. For additional discussion of MacIntyre's position, see my 'Liberalism, Nationalism, and Egalitarianism', Chapter Four in this volume.

¹⁵ MacIntyre, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

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There are at least two different arguments that may appear to support the claim of incompatibility. The first begins from the premise that the equal worth of persons, if it is not to be just an empty slogan, must have implications for the way people are treated. It does not, of course, imply that each person must treat every other person equally in all respects. That would be an insane—as well as an unsatisfiable—requirement. However, it may be argued, the proposition that all people are of equal worth does imply that people should be treated equally unless there are good reasons for treating them unequally. And, it may be said, the fact that I have a special relation to a particular person is not a good reason. There is, as Godwin famously insisted, no magic in the pronoun ‘my’:¹⁷ no way the mere fact that a person is *my* friend or daughter or compatriot can provide a legitimate reason for assigning more weight to that person’s interests than to the interests of other equally worthy people. So if one is genuinely committed to the equal worth of persons, one must, unless one believes in magic, reject the idea that one has special responsibilities to particular people simply because of the nature of one’s relationship to those people.

The second argument that may appear to vindicate Nussbaum’s dilemma is this. Special responsibilities, it may be said, do not merely constitute a departure from equal treatment; taken seriously, their effect is to legitimate and, indeed, greatly to exacerbate global inequalities of wealth and power. For when the members of rich and powerful societies give each other’s interests priority over the interests of people in poor societies, the inevitable result is that material inequality is increased: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Thus, the reason why the recognition of special responsibilities cannot be reconciled with a commitment to equality is that the actual effects of taking such responsibilities seriously are predictably and massively inegalitarian. Given the way special responsibilities actually function, people who are committed to discharging them cannot possibly do more than pay lip service to the idea of equality.

We have, then, two arguments for the incompatibility of equality and special responsibilities. The first, which I will call the conceptual argument, is that a commitment to the equality of persons sets up a presumption in favour of equal treatment from which special responsibilities represent a conceptually unjustified departure. The second argument, which I will call the substantive argument, is that equality and special responsibilities require policies and practices that are diametrically opposed to each other. If we take equality seriously, we must act in ways that are incompatible with discharging our special responsibilities. And if we take our special responsibilities seriously, we must act in ways that contribute to the perpetuation of material inequality.

¹⁷ William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, London, 1793, bk. 2, ch. 2.

I believe that the first of these arguments—the conceptual argument—is not only mistaken but quite deeply mistaken. The fact that a particular relationship is mine is not only a legitimate reason for departing from equal treatment, it is the basic reason. What I mean by this is that if we attend closely to what interpersonal relationships involve, we will see that the participants in such relationships cannot attach value to them, in the ways that they manifestly do, without seeing them as providing reasons for unequal treatment. This means that interpersonal relationships cannot play the fundamental role that they do in human life unless people treat their own relationships as independent sources of reasons for action. Indeed, in certain cases, something even stronger is true. Since certain kinds of relationships—to put the point paradoxically—cannot exist at all unless the participants value them, and since the participants cannot value them without seeing them as providing reasons for unequal treatment, certain kinds of relationships cannot exist at all unless they are seen as providing reasons for unequal treatment. Thus, the claim that the ‘mere’ fact that a relationship is one’s own cannot provide one with legitimate reasons for action involves a deep error. Interpersonal relationships could not play the role they do in our lives, and in some cases could not even exist, unless they were treated by the participants as providing such reasons.

The crucial point, which I have developed at greater length elsewhere,¹⁸ is this. It is possible to attach purely instrumental value to a personal relationship. For example, one may value one’s relationship to a certain person solely because one sees it as a way to advance one’s career, or to realize one’s social aspirations. However, it is pathological to attach nothing but instrumental value to any of one’s personal relationships. And to value one’s relationship to another person non-instrumentally is, in part, to be disposed, in contexts that may vary depending on the nature of the relationship, to see that person’s needs, interests, and desires as, in themselves, giving one presumptively decisive reasons for action, reasons that one would not have had in the absence of the relationship. To say that these reasons are seen as presumptively decisive is not to say that they can never, in the end, be outweighed by other considerations. It is merely to say that, in the first instance, they present themselves as considerations upon which one must act. Thus, if one values one’s relationship to a particular person non-instrumentally, one will inevitably see it as a source of reasons for action: as a source, more specifically, of presumptively decisive reasons for treating that person differently from others. And this in turn is tantamount to saying that one will see the relationship as a source of special responsibilities. Furthermore, there are, as I have said, certain kinds of relationships that cannot be said to obtain at all if the participants do not value their relations to each other. For example, a relationship does not qualify as a friendship unless the participants attach non-instrumental

¹⁸ ‘Relationships and Responsibilities’, Chapter Six in this volume.

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value to it. Two people may interact on cordial and familiar terms, and their dealings with each other may, in that sense, be 'friendly'; nevertheless, their relationship does not count as a friendship if they do not value it. It follows that there can be no genuine friendships that are not seen by the participants as reasons for differential treatment.

One implication of these considerations is that there is a fundamental difference between regarding a relationship in which one is not a participant as valuable and valuing a relationship of one's own. Both affect one's reasons for action, but they do so in different ways. If I believe that some relationship in which I am not a participant is a valuable relationship, then I will, for example, believe that I should not gratuitously act so as to undermine it. But I need not see that relationship as providing me with reasons for action that differ in strength or character from the reasons that other comparably valuable relationships provide. By contrast, to value my own relationship to another person is precisely to see that person's needs and interests as reason-giving in a way that other people's needs and interests are not, even if those other people are themselves participants in equally valuable relationships of the very same kind. This is not because there is some magic in the pronoun 'my'. To suppose that it is a matter of magic is to misunderstand the structure of the human relationships in which people find fulfilment. More specifically, it is to overlook the fact that valued human relationships are partly constituted by patterns of perceived reasons.

It is worth emphasizing that these considerations apply to those who lead 'freewheeling cosmopolitan' lives no less than to people whose lives are situated within more traditional cultural frameworks. So long as 'freewheeling cosmopolitans' participate in and attach value to particular interpersonal relationships, they must inevitably see those relationships as sources of reasons for action. The fact that the cosmopolitan's relationships may cross national, cultural, or communal lines is beside the point, as is the fact that those relationships may defy custom or convention or may break new social ground. In so far as a cosmopolitan way of life is indeed a *way of life*—a way of orienting oneself toward and participating in the social world—it can be expected to generate an array of human relationships and associations no less rich and varied, and no less valued by the participants, than those associated with more traditional ways of life. And so long as the participants do indeed value those relationships, they will inevitably see them as generating reasons for differential treatment. This means that there is an ineliminably particularistic dimension to any way of life worthy of the name.

If this is correct, then the conceptual argument fails. It is simply not true that the idea of special responsibilities represents a conceptually unjustified departure from the kind of equal treatment that a commitment to the equal worth of persons requires. Or, to put the same point another way, there is no conceptual incoherence in affirming both that all people are of equal worth and that one has special responsibilities to those particular people with whom one stands in relationships of certain significant kinds.

That leaves the substantive argument. According to this argument, the practical implications of special responsibilities are sufficiently inegalitarian that a general practice of honouring such responsibilities precludes the implementation of substantively egalitarian policies or institutions. It may perhaps be compatible with a sincere affirmation of the abstract proposition that all people are of equal value, but it leaves no room for policies designed to reduce material inequality. It is, therefore, compatible only with a kind of formal commitment to abstract equality, a commitment that is devoid of significant practical implications.

But this argument is overstated. It is true, as I have said, that people cannot value their relationships at all without seeing them as providing reasons for differential treatment. However, the kinds of differential treatment for which those relationships are seen as providing reasons are highly variable. They depend not only on the nature of the relationships involved but also on the content of the background norms and institutions that fix the social context within which the relationships arise. In other words, people's judgements about the circumstances in which, and the extent to which, they have reason to give special weight to the interests of their intimates and associates are highly sensitive to the norms they have internalized and to the character of the prevailing social practices and institutions. Behaviour that is seen in one social setting as an admirable expression of parental concern, for example, may be seen in another setting as an intolerable form of favouritism or nepotism.

This means that social institutions can vary considerably in their character while still leaving ample room for people to behave in ways that give expression to the value they attach to their interpersonal relationships. Within a fairly broad range, people can modify the behaviour that serves this function to fit the institutional and normative context in which they find themselves. In particular, they can adapt their behaviour to more or less egalitarian institutions and policies. People who live in societies with relatively more extensive social welfare programmes, or more extensive policies of redistributive taxation, are not thereby prohibited from giving meaningful expression to the value they place on their most treasured relationships. To be sure, this kind of flexibility is not unlimited, and it is an interesting question where the limits lie. However, it is not necessary to fix those limits with any precision to see that a general practice of honouring special responsibilities need not preclude the implementation of significantly egalitarian policies, or deprive a professed commitment to equality of all practical implications.

This is not to deny that there is a tension between equality and special responsibilities. It is clear that the deployment of resources—whether material, motivational, or institutional—in the service of one value can often lead to a reduction in the resources devoted to the other. Thus, psychologically and politically, a focus on special responsibilities can and often does lead to a neglect of egalitarian concerns—and *vice versa*—even if it does not have to. This is the truth that the substantive argument exaggerates. Stripped of

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the exaggeration, what it tells us is that, despite the ways in which the two values are compatible, we should not expect that principles capable of accommodating them both will be easy to identify. And even if such principles were in hand, we should not suppose that it would then be easy, at the level of practice, to develop institutions, policies, and habits of conduct that would make possible their stable implementation. On the contrary, it is likely to require considerable social imagination and ingenuity, psychological sophistication and sensitivity, and political determination and skill. Nevertheless, none of this goes to show that a practice of taking special responsibilities seriously precludes a substantive commitment to equality.

If, as I have been maintaining, neither the conceptual argument nor the substantive argument is successful, then there is little reason to regard 'Nussbaum's dilemma' as a genuine dilemma. There is little reason, in other words, to suppose that a commitment to the equality of persons is incompatible with a recognition of underived special responsibilities. And if that is so, then we have been given no reason to accept the claims of extreme cosmopolitanism either with respect to justice or with respect to culture. Moreover, if equality and special responsibilities are neither substantively nor conceptually incompatible, and if many people do in fact take both values seriously, then moderate forms of cosmopolitanism have much to recommend them.¹⁹

Lest this make the case for moderate cosmopolitanism sound too pat, however, let me complicate matters by mentioning one limitation of my argument, along with two difficulties confronting even moderate forms of cosmopolitanism about culture.

The limitation is this. I have argued against extreme cosmopolitanism about justice and culture only in so far as those doctrines rely on the general scepticism about the legitimacy of underived special responsibilities that is characteristic of the extreme version of the cosmopolitan ideal of world citizenship. However, both doctrines might in principle be defended on narrower grounds. Thus, for example, there is room for a thoroughly globalist conception of justice which allows that individuals have special responsibilities to the members of their families and to other intimate acquaintances, but denies that they have such responsibilities to their fellow citizens or nationals. The claim, in other words, would be that, even though people do have some underived special responsibilities, the members of any given society owe nothing more to each other, as a matter of fundamental principle, than they owe to non-members. There is also room for a form of extreme cultural cosmopolitanism which agrees that individuals normally acquire special responsibilities through participation in personal relationships, but

¹⁹ For a defence of 'moderate nationalism' which argues that it converges with a moderate form of 'global humanism', see Stephen Nathanson, 'Nationalism and the Limits of Global Humanism', in R. McKim and J. McMahan (eds.) *The Morality of Nationalism*, New York, NY, 1997.

denies that membership in a cultural community can give rise to responsibilities of this sort. Whatever the merits of these positions, nothing I have said rules them out. I have argued against extreme cosmopolitanism about justice and culture only in so far as those views depend on general scepticism about underived special responsibilities.

Let me now turn to the first of the two difficulties facing even moderate forms of cosmopolitanism about culture. Particular communities, societies, and cultural groups, when they are in reasonably good order, typically incorporate relatively specific norms and standards that set out the responsibilities of individual members. Thus, individuals whose aims and aspirations are structured by their membership in such groups, and who see themselves as having special responsibilities to the other members of their groups, are typically confronted with a reasonably well-articulated set of expectations concerning the content of those responsibilities. They know, at least roughly, what their community or tradition expects of them. Furthermore, the community normally provides an institutional framework within which those responsibilities may be discharged, as well as a set of mechanisms, often of considerable psychological sophistication, which serve to nurture and support the motivations that individuals must have if they are reliably to fulfil their responsibilities. In short, the community normally supplies individuals with a reasonably clear statement of their responsibilities and encourages the development of the motivations that will lead them to discharge those responsibilities. It provides for them what might be called the 'infrastructure of responsibility'.

By contrast, those who lead freewheeling, cosmopolitan lives, having cut themselves free of the bonds tying them to particular communities and traditions, are deprived of the infrastructure that such a community provides. Indeed, individuals are often attracted to a cosmopolitan way of life precisely because they find a particular community's infrastructure too confining or oppressive, and seek to distance themselves from it. But then the difficulty is that the cosmopolitan life may not have a ready-made alternative infrastructure to offer. Despite my argument that even cosmopolitans will have particular relationships that they see as independent sources of reasons for action, there may be no developed institutions that serve to identify the responsibilities arising out of those relationships, or to encourage and channel the motivations that would lead individuals reliably to discharge them. Precisely because the relationships in question tend to be culturally eclectic and to cut across communal lines, they are unlikely to fall within a socially well-developed framework of institutional norms and expectations capable of supplying an infrastructure of responsibility. The danger for cosmopolitans, then, is the danger of moral isolation—of being cut off from the forms of social support that structure and sustain individual responsibility. As citizens of the world, ironically, cosmopolitans may find themselves without any social world in which they function as citizens.

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The second difficulty that even moderate forms of cosmopolitanism about culture must overcome is this. Recall the terms of Salman Rushdie's cosmopolitan celebration of hybridity, impurity, and mongrelization. '*Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that*', Rushdie wrote, '*is how newness enters the world.*' But of course, what non-cosmopolitan traditionalists fear, to put the matter symmetrically if inelegantly, is that it is also how oldness leaves the world. And although, as I have argued, there is clearly something both correct and important about what Rushdie says, the fears of the traditionalist also have something to be said for them. When rich and vibrant traditions, practices, and ways of life are modified or supplanted through the emergence of new cultural combinations and social possibilities, one of the results may be real loss: not simply the disappearance of primitive or benighted forms of thought and practice, but the loss of entire social worlds with their particular rhythms, forms of beauty and achievement, and patterns of personal interaction, and with their different ways of ordering human experience so as to create distinctive modes of fulfilment, of solidarity, and of consolation.

It goes without saying that elegiac reverence about older cultural forms can be as dangerous—and as silly—as triumphal optimism about newer ones, partly because each attitude needs to repress some banal but important truths: about the inevitability of change in the one case, and about the inescapability of the past in the other. It also goes without saying that the stances people take on matters of tradition and cultural innovation are legitimately dependent on variations in individual temperament and outlook. For all I know, they may be dependent on variations in birth order, genetic make-up, or social class. Yet these considerations themselves suggest, what should in any case be evident, namely, that it is as undesirable to have a political philosophy that rests on contempt or indifference toward the past as it is to have one that rests on anxiety or insecurity about the future. And if the challenge for communitarians and traditionalists is to counteract the impression that they sometimes violate the second of these provisos, the challenge for cosmopolitans is to counteract the impression that they sometimes violate the first.

Of course, the whole point of moderate cosmopolitanism is to combine a respect for traditional loyalties with an openness to cultural innovation. Yet there remains a suspicion that those of a liberal, cosmopolitan temperament cannot really make sense of the putative moral claims of the past as they are understood by those who take them seriously. There are a number of closely related reasons for this. The first has to do with the foundational role of choice within liberal theory. Although, in my judgement, communitarian critics of liberalism sometimes exaggerate that role, there can be no denying the fundamental justificatory significance of choice within at least the contractarian branch of liberal thought. Because the central function of choice within contractarian liberalism is precisely to deny the validity of structures of authority

and obligation that cannot command the voluntary consent of those who are subject to them, the idea that unchosen ties to a community or tradition can carry moral weight may seem, at the very least, completely alien in spirit.

Furthermore, freedom is a defining political value for any form of liberalism, whether contractarian or not. And it may seem that the content of the relevant forms of freedom cannot even be described without using the language of choice. The freedom of religion, for example, must mean that people can choose their religious affiliations without fear of penalty or loss of political status. The freedom of association, similarly, must mean that people may choose their own associates. But then it seems to follow that liberalism is committed to viewing traditional and communal affiliations as objects of choice, and to construing any moral claims those affiliations may generate as entirely dependent on the wills of the affiliates. Since this is not, of course, how individual affiliates may themselves interpret the force of their traditional or communal ties, liberalism seems committed to repudiating their moral self-understanding and to substituting a more thoroughly voluntaristic interpretation of the moral significance of such ties.

Finally, notwithstanding moderate cosmopolitanism's professed respect for traditional loyalties, its openness to the hybridizing and mongrelization of cultures may appear to render it incapable of attributing any moral significance to unchosen communal or traditional bonds. For the cosmopolitan endorsement of the intermingling of cultures may seem to carry with it a view of cultural affiliations as being, morally speaking, entirely optional. And this in turn may seem incompatible with accepting the capacity of inherited affiliations to make valid claims on individuals independently of their own choices or acts of will. Yet it is precisely to claims of this sort that those with traditional loyalties often see themselves as responding. Thus, cosmopolitanism's receptiveness to cultural innovation may seem to require a repudiation of the moral authority of established cultures and traditions, at least as it is understood by their adherents.

In view of these familiar considerations, many have concluded that a liberal cosmopolitan outlook must inevitably be tone-deaf with respect to the claims of tradition and the past. However, although no form of liberal cosmopolitanism can simply endorse the self-understandings of traditional communities, moderate versions of the view may argue that one can treat cultural affiliations as a matter of choice for political purposes without accepting a voluntaristic understanding of their moral significance. More specifically, moderate cosmopolitans may argue that, although the state should, within broad limits, give citizens the freedom to do as they choose, it need not claim, in so doing, that it is only the choices citizens make—rather than the reasons for those choices—that have normative significance. On the contrary, it may be argued, the state is perfectly capable of recognizing that people choose on the basis of what they see as compelling reasons and that those reasons sometimes include perceived obligations

deriving from inherited affiliations. Nor need the state deny the validity of such reasons. As a legal matter, it grants each individual the final word concerning his or her cultural affiliations; nobody is legally entitled to interfere coercively with the individual's determinations, and changes of affiliation are not subject to legal penalty or loss of political status. However, this does not mean that the state views the moral significance of such affiliations as deriving exclusively from acts of individual will, nor, for that matter, does the state endorse any particular analysis of their moral significance. In short, the state merely disallows the coercive enforcement of cultural affiliations; it does not offer a voluntaristic theory of their ultimate moral import.

This argument draws on two familiar liberal distinctions: between the public and the private, and between political values and moral values. More specifically, it may be viewed as an extension of a claim by Rawls, who says that an insistence on the right of citizens to alter their ends and attachments without jeopardizing their legal standing or 'institutional identity' is compatible with a recognition that many citizens will view their existing ends and attachments as essential to their 'moral' or 'noninstitutional' identity.²⁰ The argument is open to the objection that, if one allows that unchosen affiliations may indeed be a source of genuine obligations, then it is no longer clear why the state should disallow their coercive enforcement. But this, it may be replied, is just an instance of the familiar question of how liberal tolerance can be justified without relying on scepticism about value, rather than a special question about the capacity of liberal cosmopolitanism to accommodate the putative moral force of communal and traditional affiliations.

If this line of argument can be successfully developed, then moderate cosmopolitans may continue to maintain that the claims of the past and the lure of the future can both be accommodated through a kind of cultural division of labour. Those who see themselves as having compelling reasons to live within a traditional framework are free to do so; moderate cosmopolitanism neither denies the force of those reasons nor insists on a Procrustean redescription of them in voluntaristic terms. At the same time, those who see things otherwise and who seek to forge new cultural ties are equally free to do that; moderate cosmopolitanism certainly does not pass judgement on their failure to treat the claims of tradition or community as decisive.

Yet this irenic solution may not go deep enough. Cosmopolitans point to the ubiquity of cultural change in support of their openness to cultural innovation and their hostility to ideals of cultural purity. As we have seen, this often creates the impression that cosmopolitanism is insensitive to the claims of tradition. Yet to insist that cultures are always in flux is not to deny the very existence of distinct cultural traditions, and to oppose the idea of cultural purity is not to deny that allegiance to a particular cultural tradition can ever make sense. In fact, a proper appreciation of the ubiquity of

²⁰ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York, NY, 1993, 30–2.

cultural change should make it easier to see that genuine allegiance to a tradition can never be just a matter of blind adherence to past practices, but must always involve decisions about how earlier values and practices can best be applied in novel circumstances and about the form in which those values and practices can be extended and projected into an uncertain future. By highlighting these facts, cosmopolitan insights about the ubiquity of cultural change should promote sympathy for a certain kind of traditionalist project. The sort of project I have in mind would be concerned not with the purity of a cultural tradition but with its integrity. More specifically, it would be concerned with the question of how the integrity of a tradition can be maintained, and what would count as maintaining it, given the inevitability of cultural change, and given the mutual influence that diverse cultures are bound to exert on each other in an ever more densely interconnected world.

Those whose traditionalism takes this form will think it important to identify and perpetuate the values and practices on whose continuity the integrity of their tradition rests. At the same time, however, they will be prepared to reconceive those elements of the tradition that are no longer credible as they stand but which admit of illuminating reinterpretation; to abandon elements of the tradition that have come to seem unacceptable and which resist reinterpretation; and to promote the intelligent selection and incorporation into the tradition of new ideas and practices whose inspiration may be drawn from external sources, but which can be embraced without doing violence to the integrity of the tradition, and can instead serve to enrich it. This is, if you like, traditionalism with a cosmopolitan inflection. It affords a model of traditional engagement that incorporates the central insight of cosmopolitanism about culture, and, to the extent that it is viable, it suggests that the repertoire of cosmopolitan responses to the claims of tradition can extend beyond mere toleration.

Conclusion

I take the two difficulties just mentioned to reinforce one general moral of this essay, namely, that the task of defending moderate cosmopolitanism should not be thought of as a narrowly philosophical undertaking. In other words, it is not just a matter of producing cogent arguments in support of some abstract formulation of the view. Instead, moderate cosmopolitanism about justice will be a compelling position only if it proves possible to devise human institutions, practices, and ways of life that take seriously the equal worth of persons without undermining people's capacity to sustain their special loyalties and attachments. And moderate cosmopolitanism about culture will be compelling only if two things turn out to be true. The first is that some people

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succeed in developing recognizably cosmopolitan ways of living that incorporate the sort of stable infrastructure of responsibility that more traditional ways of life have always made available to their adherents. The second is that other people succeed in preserving the integrity of their traditions without succumbing to the temptation to engage in the doomed and deadly pursuit of cultural purity. Thus, some of the most important arguments in favour of moderate cosmopolitanism about culture will have to come not from philosophers or other academic theorists but from people engaged in a wide variety of what Mill called 'experiments in living'. And the vindication of either form of moderate cosmopolitanism will require not just argument but the exercise of creativity and imagination in the development of new practices, institutions, and modes of social organization. I have maintained that certain arguments purporting to undermine moderate cosmopolitanism from the outset are unsuccessful. Ultimately, however, the viability of moderate cosmopolitanism must depend on the success of human beings in negotiating a series of ineliminable distinctions—between justice and loyalty, tradition and choice, past and future, ourselves and others—without allowing those distinctions to calcify into rigid and destructive dichotomies.