

## **Liberal Political Theorists, the Cosmopolitan Tradition and Globalisation Discourse**

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*The label 'cosmopolitanism' has become increasingly popular in Anglo-American liberal political theory, arousing claims of a resurgent Kantian perspective. Cosmopolitanism and liberalism are related but distinct traditions, conjoined only in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century by Immanuel Kant, who insisted that liberal ideals be conceived as applicable to a single human community and as such articulated a 'liberal cosmopolitanism' perspective. Contemporary liberals appear to share the same orientation, yet it is argued here that the presence of a liberal discourse of globalisation in the work of many contemporary cosmopolitans must not be under-appreciated. Globalisation as a concept implies the existence of a single global socio-economic system, and is treated by contemporary theorists as a prerequisite of cosmopolitanism – yet Kant's work did not rely on such empirical assessments. While rejecting the argument upheld by some commentators that an acceptance of the reality and importance of globalisation as a context for action prevents today's theorists from adhering sincerely to cosmopolitan ideals, it is nevertheless argued that the status of Kant's legacy in the liberal cosmopolitan tradition has been transformed. As such, it may be safer to refer to theorists such as David Held and Charles Beitz as 'cosmopolitan liberals', rather than 'liberal cosmopolitans'.*

### **Introduction**

A significant number of Anglo-American liberal political theorists have, in the last decade or so, come to be identified with the label 'cosmopolitanism'. As such, we are encouraged to interpret their work as representative of a renascent Kantian perspective. However, it will be argued here that the cosmopolitanism of contemporary liberal political theory is not, in general, the same as the cosmopolitanism of Immanuel Kant. Cosmopolitanism and liberalism are of course distinct traditions, albeit intimately related. Cosmopolitanism is much older; it espouses a view of humanity as a single ethical community. It could be argued, however, that one of Immanuel Kant's principal innovations as a philosopher was to conjoin the two perspectives, creating a distinctive 'liberal cosmopolitanism'. Liberal ideas, for Kant, should therefore be applied to humanity in general. The theorists discussed in this article are credited with the same orientation: they are cosmopolitans, but also liberals. However,

due to a reliance on the concept of globalisation not apparent in Kant's work, they may be more accurately described as 'cosmopolitan liberals'. This article's intent is not necessarily to deride the normative foundations or even political efficacy of the contemporary cosmopolitan perspective in liberal political theory, but rather to question its discursive construction as a form of cosmopolitanism, or as a legitimate heir to Kantianism. In short, contemporary liberal theorists associated with the cosmopolitan tag are more dependent than Kant on an empirical analysis of the social, political and economic contexts of political action, encapsulated in 'globalisation discourse'. Although processes that we may reasonably refer to as globalisation are not new (Hobson, 2004; Pieterse, 2000), there is a widespread recognition of the intensity and importance of the current 'phase' of globalisation; globalisation discourse is relatively novel, yet identifiable in theorising, analysis and debates across social science and the humanities. Kant's theory, in terms of its application and formulation, of course had empirical referents, but not to the same extent as most contemporary cosmopolitans, or at least not in the same way (Dobson 2006: 180; Fine and Chernillo 2004: 34). As such, although it is possible to identify significant similarities between Kantian theory and contemporary cosmopolitanism, the rationales for advocating cosmopolitanism are not the same.

There is nothing wrong with contemporary cosmopolitanism's use of globalisation in itself, but if a more satisfactory understanding of cosmopolitanism is to be engendered, the role of globalisation discourse must be more fully appreciated. The assumption in this article is that context has a bearing upon political thought that too often is under-acknowledged; that is, it matters that contemporary cosmopolitans are working in ideational and/or material conditions of globalisation, and it matters that Kant was not. Exogenous ideational and material contexts necessarily produce discontinuities within traditions of thought, and we cannot fully understand any exposition of a particular tradition without examining how it differs from its forebears (Freeden, 1996). In fact, it appears that the role of globalisation discourse in contemporary cosmopolitan theory is precisely to provide a parsimonious account of what the context of pursuing certain political objectives now is. In related terms, globalisation discourse provides a sense that this context is new (albeit not without precedence), and that therefore new paradigms, or the rediscovery of old paradigms, are required. This article will assess whether – and if so, how – such an orientation is represented in contemporary Anglo-American cosmopolitanism. For the sake of parsimony, the various non-liberal cosmopolitan perspectives, although important to wider debates on the renaissance of cosmopolitanism, will not be discussed. Nor, for the same reason, will contemporary theorists outside Anglo-American political theory.

There is no suggestion, here, that the discourse of globalisation in question is not inherently normative. It should probably be associated with liberal norms, or a liberal interpretive lens. Attempts to associate globalisation discourse instead with the cosmopolitan tradition also appear plausible, although they will not be upheld in this article. Nevertheless, the normative foundation of the discourse is not particularly relevant here. What matters is that many contemporary cosmopolitan theorists tend to believe globalisation is 'given', or that globalisation discourse is necessarily referring to some verifiable truth or truths. Inevitably, of course, diagnoses of exactly what is given by globalisation

discourse vary among different scholars.

It is not assumed that Anglo-American liberal political theorists advocate a homogenous form of liberalism or cosmopolitan liberalism. Liberalism has always been a broad church, and will surely remain so for the foreseeable future. In particular, some contemporary theorists have a stronger association with Kant than others, in terms of his liberalism, as well as his cosmopolitanism. However, one of the most interesting aspects of contemporary cosmopolitanism is the fact that so many of its advocates utilise globalisation discourse. Globalisation asks different questions of different theorists, and thus various answers are produced. Nevertheless, it will be argued that there is a greater degree of uniformity among cosmopolitan liberals than is currently recognised, specifically relating to how globalisation is incorporated into otherwise discrete liberal approaches.

The article will first examine the relationship between liberalism, cosmopolitanism and globalisation discourse, particularly in relation to Kant's legacy. It will do so with reference to Robert Fine's critique of 'the new cosmopolitanism'. It will then assess contemporary cosmopolitan liberalism by looking at two forms of theorising, 'global justice' and 'cosmopolitan democracy', with reference principally to the work of Charles Beitz and David Held.

### **Liberalism, Cosmopolitanism and Globalisation**

Liberalism's central concern is individual freedom (Festenstein and Kenny, 2005). Obviously, liberals differ on how to interpret this imperative, and on what forms of political action and organisation are its best representatives. Grappling with these issues has been the occupation of liberal political theorists for centuries. A related dilemma is exactly *whose* individual freedom must be defended or advocated. In other words, how inclusive is liberalism? How inclusive can it be? Such questions have not been posed exclusively to liberalism, but to all traditions of thought emanating from the Enlightenment period. The most 'radical' solution – in terms of inclusiveness – comes from cosmopolitanism, a tradition of thought which emphasises the notion that humanity is a single ethical community. Cosmopolitanism is not liberalism. It is older than liberalism, probably as old as human civilization, and the ethical injunction represented by cosmopolitanism interacts dynamically with various different traditions.

Cosmopolitanism's greatest exponent, however, is the liberal thinker Immanuel Kant. It is through Kant's work that a distinct 'liberal cosmopolitan' perspective emerged. It is the general orientation of Kant's work, and not the details of specific obligations, which is important to this article's argument, but a brief account of the interpretation of Kant which informs the argument is necessary. Kant's aim was to realise individual freedom for every member of the human community, as outlined in his essay *Perpetual Peace* (1983; originally 1795). He did not endorse a world state as the appropriate political form for bringing about liberal cosmopolitanism, but only because of fears about a world state's capacity to impinge upon individual freedoms. It remains the case that his articulation of universal

obligations is the most important aspect of his work. Certainly, it is the aspect of his work for which he is most known outside the realm of political theory, particularly in the discipline of International Relations (IR). In IR, to ask about the relevance of Kantianism is to ask about the waning of the Westphalian order in favour of some form of global political system based on universal ethics (see Brown, 2005; Laberge, 1998). *Perpetual Peace* is credited with providing the clearest outline of Kant's cosmopolitan vision, but it is perhaps *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (2006; originally 1798) which suggests the possibility of distinguishing Kant's liberalism from his cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, 1997: 36). Whereas *Perpetual Peace* details cosmopolitan law and cosmopolitan rights, *Anthropology* details the universal ethical impulse upon which such systems must be based, and as such presents cosmopolitanism as a regulative principle by which all human action must be judged (Kant, 2006: 235-8).

Recent scholarship on Kant supports this interpretation. Katrin Flikschuh (2000) argues that Kant's philosophy was inspired by the fact that all human beings shared the experience of living on Earth, irrespective of what may be happening on Earth. She arrives at this opinion through re-evaluating the importance of Kant's *Rechtslehre*. The planet's spherical surface is a 'striking and recurring image' in *Rechtslehre*; it is often overlooked, but does indeed have 'metaphysical resonance':

Kant's... account of political obligation acquire[s] a dimension whose significance remains, ultimately, difficult to express. The argument is no longer *simply* about the most fair or efficient or most rational way of carving up available space and resources – the bread and butter of many current discussions of distributive justice. It points beyond such tangible distributive questions to something altogether more abstract and more general – to some conception of 'the human condition', for want of a better term, which those more tangible distributive questions and answers are framed by (Flikschuh, 2000: 181-2)

Crucially, furthermore, Flikschuh claims that it is possible even for theorists 'who approach [Kant's] writings from a predominantly empirical and practice-oriented perspective' to draw upon this image, without agreeing – or even acquainting themselves – with Kant's metaphysical approach to ethics (2000: 197-8). For Martha Nussbaum, one of the most important things about Kant is that he accepts the Stoic view that '[w]hatever form political institutions take, they should be structured around a mature recognition of equal personhood and humanity'; Kant's debt to Stoic cosmopolitanism is thus under-appreciated if we consider his work on political and institutions alone – he appropriates 'the deep core' of Stoicism. For Kant, each person deserves

to be treated as an end no matter where in the world he or she dwells. In Kant as in Stoicism, this idea is less a specific political proposal than a regulative ideal that should be at the heart of both moral and political reflection and supplies constraints upon what we may politically will (Nussbaum, 1997: 35-6).

Similarly, Fernando Tesón, in discussing the core ‘Kantian question’ about the level of duty owed by human beings to one another in an international system, argues that it is possible

to be a Kantian in the first sense (that is, believe in some form of rights-based liberalism as the best organisation of civil society) and ask the Kantian question, yet disagree with Kant on the answer to that question. And... one could be a full Kantian, agreeing with the defence of the liberal state *and* with Kant’s answer to the international dilemma in *Perpetual Peace* (Tesón, 1998: 103-4; emphasis original).

In sum, then, the duties we may owe to each other are distinct, for Kant, from the notion that every human being is owed such duties, to a greater degree than traditionally acknowledged by liberals.

As such, most liberal thinkers since the Enlightenment have subscribed to something ‘less’ than cosmopolitanism, in that they imagine that their proposed political projects are inclusive of a smaller proportion of humanity or, more accurately, in that different groups of individuals are afforded different degrees of ethical significance. Essentially, if individual freedom is to be realised, it must be done so in the most appropriate context. Traditionally, this almost always leads to the endorsement by liberals of the nation-state as a political organisation, of states as the most reliable vehicles for enacting or defending individual freedom, and of nationally-organised liberal movements. Where liberals have articulated a political project of planetary scope, this has usually taken the form of ‘liberal internationalism’, in which nation-states co-operate in service of some minimal, common objective. For various reasons, therefore, liberalism has traditionally granted ethical significance to states. Immanuel Kant acknowledged that the global action required by liberal cosmopolitanism could be co-ordinated by nation-states, but nevertheless states were seen merely as aggregations of individuals, and as such Kant believed they had to be locked into a system of extensive universal obligations (Brown, 2005). In any case, Kant was writing at a time when the state system was in its infancy, and when a number of countries were experiencing liberal revolutions – as noted in *Perpetual Peace* – and he seemed to genuinely believe that the emerging system was compatible with his cosmopolitan ethics (Mertens, 2002).

At stake here, then, is whether the same ethical position is genuinely present among the contemporary liberal thinkers that have adopted the cosmopolitan label. Ostensibly, today’s thinkers also fuse liberalism and cosmopolitanism in the style of Kant. However, this fusion must be characterised not as liberal cosmopolitanism, but rather as ‘cosmopolitan liberalism’. The placing of the term ‘liberalism’ second syntactically is intended to capture the notion that the goal of individual freedom is more important, ethically, than the universal or global articulation of this goal; that is, liberalism is more important than cosmopolitanism to the cosmopolitans of contemporary liberal theory. There is a sense that many contemporary liberal political theorists fuse liberalism and cosmopolitanism because they have been empowered to do so by exogenous real-world conditions, not compelled to do so by endogenous ethical standards.

The argument here is similar to that offered by Robert Fine. Fine has commented on the cosmopolitanism of contemporary Anglo-American liberal political theory from a critical, broadly Hegelian perspective. His account refers to a 'new cosmopolitanism', the emergence of which he traces to the end of the Cold War. The new cosmopolitanism, for Fine, is bound up with a 'diagnosis of the age' in which we live, which finds a globalised economy and a declining state. Accordingly,

[i]t perceives the integrity of contemporary political life as threatened by the globalization of markets and by regressive forms of revolt against globalization, and aims to reconstruct political life on the basis of an enlightened vision of peaceful relations between nation-states, human rights shared by all world citizens, and a global legal order buttressed by a global civil society (Fine, 2003: 452).

The new cosmopolitan 'intuition', therefore, is that

the national framework that once prevailed in the Westphalian order has now been irrevocably undermined by social factors connected with the phenomenon of globalization (Fine, 2003: 457).

Somewhat awkwardly, Fine locates the new cosmopolitanism across several disciplines in social science and the humanities. He argues that several different approaches and schools of thought have contributed to the identification of 'the global' as an object of study. Fine's equation of cosmopolitanism with the study of 'the global' (that is, of the multifaceted process of globalisation, and its implications) is problematic: surely not every scholar analysing some aspect of globalisation can be associated, even tenuously, with the cosmopolitan tradition. Fine does add that the 'nub' of the new cosmopolitanism is exploring the normative possibilities of globalisation (2003: 456-7); it is this orientation that his account of new cosmopolitanism focuses on, but nevertheless the confusion is indicative of one of the problems with Fine's work, as will be argued below.

It should be stressed that the purpose of Fine's work is critique, not hermeneutics. This does not mean, however, it is not possible to gain insight into the nature of contemporary cosmopolitanism from Fine's analysis. His main critique is of the new cosmopolitanism's 'time-consciousness'. The new cosmopolitanism, according to Fine, upholds the assumption that globalisation represents a radical break from the Westphalian age of sovereignty, nation-states and nationalism, and that only now have universal ethics become meaningful. For Fine, this drastically downplays the complex morality of the state system, and moreover, presents a simplified, monolithic portrait of current socio-economic conditions (Fine, 2003: 459-60; see also Kiely, 2007). The new cosmopolitanism has a tendency to 'understate the ties that bind the present to the past and overstate the ties that bind it to the future' (Fine and Chernilo, 2004: 32). Fine is not actually opposed to the universal ethics ostensibly advocated by the new cosmopolitanism – rather he is opposed to the way that the notion of globalisation is mobilised to justify the cosmopolitan project.

It is this argument that encourages Fine to depict the new cosmopolitanism as a form of

cosmopolitanism disconnected from Immanuel Kant. Fine espouses a fondness for the staunch moral purpose at the heart of Kant's work:

Kant admitted that the idea of a cosmopolitan order was 'fantastical', without precedent in world history, and that European states were in fact relating to one another ever more like the atomised individuals in a Hobbesian state of nature... He maintained in defiance of the prevailing currents of nationalism that the idea of a cosmopolitan order was nonetheless *right*, a duty everyone ought to fulfil whether or not it accorded with their inclinations, a duty incumbent upon rulers however great the sacrifices they had to make, a duty that was valid whether or not public opinion or the state recognised it, a duty that was binding even if there were not the slightest possibility of its realisation (Fine and Chernilo, 2004: 33-34).

He argues, therefore, that theorists of the new cosmopolitanism lack Kant's instincts and sense of duty. They rely too heavily on an empirical account of a world amenable to universal ethics. The new cosmopolitanism is too 'equivocal' on what would be required ethically in a world without globalisation. Moreover, in bringing equivocation into the Kantian tradition, contemporary cosmopolitanism, according to Fine, 'loses something of the sheer radicalism of Kant's conception of cosmopolitan right' (Fine and Chernilo, 2004: 34). This article is not the place to evaluate such a claim, but again Fine's critical perspective is serving a useful, and perhaps unintended, hermeneutic purpose. It should be stressed, however, that we are talking about tendencies here: neither Kantian cosmopolitanism nor the new cosmopolitanism is based exclusively on either ethical or empirical grounds, and Fine is wrong not to state this explicitly.

Overall, Fine is probably too harsh on 'the new cosmopolitanism'. There is obviously nothing wrong with political theorists assessing their social, political and economic context before theorising. It seems inevitable, in fact, that theorists would seek to incorporate this assessment into any normative theory subsequently produced. Such a scenario is certainly not a barrier to radicalism, as Fine (tentatively) suggests. Nevertheless, this does not make Fine wrong to question the extent to which Kantian ethics are reproduced in the new cosmopolitan perspective. However, a more thorough inquiry is clearly required before this prognosis can be verified. It cannot be assumed that globalisation discourse wholly transforms the cosmopolitan tradition, simply on the basis that contemporary cosmopolitan theorists generally utilise a particular discourse of globalisation. Fine is at least partly guilty of this.

## **Cosmopolitan Liberalism**

### Global justice

The most important contemporary form of cosmopolitanism in Anglo-American liberal political theory is probably theorising on 'global justice'. What is most striking about this theorising is the lack of attention given to the notion of justice. It appears that, for the theorists in this question, 'global' is far more important than 'justice' when it comes to theorising. What they mean by justice is revealed, unsurprisingly, by references to John Rawls. Despite the fact that John Rawls is not part of renascent cosmopolitanism, his landmark text *A Theory of Justice* (1972) is the cornerstone of all recent work on justice. Rawls' influence can clearly be seen in the work of prominent cosmopolitan theorists such as Charles Beitz (1999a), Thomas Pogge (2002), Simon Caney (2006) and Brian Barry (1998). For the sake of brevity, only Beitz's work will be reviewed here; it is assumed that his work is broadly representative of the general orientation of 'global justice' theorists. Beitz was undoubtedly among the first to articulate 'global justice' from a liberal perspective with reference to the growth of transnational socio-economic processes, and his work is still widely referred to. Crucially for the argument here, this applies in particular his handling of John Rawls' perspective.

In his landmark work *Political Theory and International Relations* (1999a; originally 1979), Charles Beitz fully endorses Rawls' conceptualisation of and approach to social justice. Beitz's innovation was the dictate that principles of justice must be realised on a worldwide basis:

For the purposes of moral choice, we must... regard the world from the perspective of an original position from which matters of national citizenship are excluded by an extended veil of ignorance (Beitz, 1999a, 181).

It would be wrong to assume that such a position cannot be arrived at through ethical inquiry alone. However, this is not the principal theoretical strategy indulged by Beitz. Beitz arrives at his opinion via an empirical assessment of socio-economic change. Crucially, he accepts Rawls' invective that institutions of justice are only sustainable if founded upon 'an ongoing scheme of social co-operation' (see Rawls, 1972). Clearly, this statement is intended by Rawls to limit the applicability of his difference principle. It previews the opinion he later develops that there should not be a single, global redistributive system (Rawls, 1999). Beitz argues not that Rawls' caveat is unfair, but rather unnecessary, because the world now has 'a global scheme of social co-operation' (1999a: 143). Its basis is 'the increasing sensitivity of domestic societies to external economic, political and cultural events... [and] the growth of centres of economic power beyond effective regulation of individual states' (1999a: 3-5). In other words: globalisation. Significantly, Beitz points out that it is not globalisation that causes global *injustice*, but rather the fact that social justice principles have not kept pace with global change (1999a: 145). Beitz's references to liberal globalisation discourse are somewhat under-developed, perhaps due to the fact that his major work was published in 1979, during the early stages of theorising about and media commentary on globalisation (Dobson, 2006: 180). Yet the train of thought he is invoking, or even initiating, is unmistakable. In later works he is much clearer about the influence of globalisation on his perspective (see Beitz, 1999b). He accepts Rawls' approach to social justice verbatim, but disagrees with his empirical analysis:

If social co-operation is the foundation of distributive justice, then one might think that international economic interdependence lends support to a principle of global distributive justice similar to that which applies within domestic society (Beitz, 1999a: 144).

Crucially, it is not simply the case for Beitz that there is a global economy or society which represents a co-operative scheme. He also claims that there is a 'global regulative structure', that is, the political architecture by which distribution can be done. He is not arguing for the creation of this structure, but rather stating that it already exists (1999a: 146).

It may be possible to interpret Beitz's work as a purely moral invective aimed at liberalism's traditional tendency to accept the necessity or even utility of nation-states. As such, Beitz's invocation of globalisation discourse is merely supportive of his theory, rather than constitutive. Language, even the highly technical jargon of political theory, is never free of ambiguity; ambiguity is often deliberately built into theory, to widen its appeal and applicability (Freeden, 1996). However, the extent of discussion about the empirical reality of interdependence, and its implications for justice, in *Political Theory and International Relations* indicates the critical role of globalisation discourse in Beitz's theorising. The fact that Beitz owes such a large intellectual debt to Rawls suggests – given Rawls' emphatic rejection of cosmopolitanism – that his cosmopolitanism is grounded to a larger extent than currently acknowledged in empirical considerations.

There is a difference of emphasis between Beitz's work and some of his cosmopolitan counterparts with regard to globalisation's effect on the state. Beitz's account of globalisation emphasises the decline of the state more than, say, David Held's account. Of course, the general liberal account of globalisation is strongly associated with the transformation of the nation-state, of which the state's loss of its traditional functions is the most important aspect. But Beitz clearly peddles the decline thesis more enthusiastically than some liberal political theorists. This may be due, partly, to the time at which his book was written. The discourse on economic interdependence which emerged in the late 1970s was, as noted above, and as most political economists would argue, somewhat crude in this regard. It is also true that Beitz's political theory has more interest in state capacity than other examples of renascent cosmopolitanism – like, again, David Held's 'cosmopolitan democracy' – given that his primary objective is redistribution. Thus Beitz's opinion on the state is replicated, to a large extent, by most 'global justice' theorists (see Barry, 1998; also Caney, 2006).

Interestingly, sympathetic commentator Andrew Dobson celebrates the break of contemporary cosmopolitanism from Kant. He labels traditional cosmopolitanism 'thin' for failing to incorporate an account of how all human beings interact in social, political and economic processes, and thus have profound effects on each other's lives. In doing so, he explicitly criticises Kant for relying on moral duty rather than 'causal responsibility' in making the case for cosmopolitanism (Dobson 2006: 165, 170-2, 183). The new, 'thick' cosmopolitanism, in associating itself with material and ideational conditions of globalisation, according to Dobson, is a more attractive guide to purposive political action. Dobson's articulation of 'thick cosmopolitanism' is helpful in that it sheds light, albeit somewhat crudely, on the

nature of contemporary cosmopolitan theory. However, if it is the case that the 'global justice' thesis is a fundamentally different version of cosmopolitanism, Dobson is far too relaxed when proclaiming this. Surely this would raise important theoretical questions about what it means to be a cosmopolitan. Dobson's essential problem, therefore, appears to be his failure to recognise the inherent intricacy of traditions of thought in political theory. Furthermore, his equation of 'thicker' with 'better' contains no answer to Robert Fine's argument, noted above, that contemporary cosmopolitanism is actually less attractive than Kantianism, precisely because it is less reliant on an unequivocal ethical standpoint.

### Cosmopolitan democracy

The 'cosmopolitan democracy' project is a very different approach to cosmopolitanism. Its progenitor in Anglo-American scholarship is undoubtedly David Held. The logical foundation of Held's political theory is his understanding and justification of democracy. Democracy, for Held, is derivative of the notion of individual autonomy. Autonomy refers to an individual's capacity to exercise genuine choice, and participate fully in their society's decision-making processes. This style of theorising is of course reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's perspective on how we should conceive of the individual and freedom (see Sullivan, 1989). Held believes that individuals should have choice and participation in decision-making across seven separate 'sites of power'. These sites, though not in themselves remarkable, are the body, individual welfare, cultural life, civil society, the economy, the means of violence and coercion, and legal and regulatory institutions (Held 1995, 136). Unsurprisingly, Held uses this concept, via the concept of equal moral worth, to justify representative democracy and democratic accountability, as the mechanisms by which individuals exercise control over their societies – therefore following quite closely the path from Kant tread by Jurgen Habermas (Held, 1995; see also the work of Gillian Brock (2002a; 2002b) for a similar approach to cosmopolitanism. Although Brock's political theory is based largely on Held's, she spends more time engaging in debates relating to the resurgence of cosmopolitanism). Clearly, Held's commitment to democracy involves more than elections, representation and accountability, etc. He is unquestionably a *social* democrat, in that he is concerned with the content of individuals' and societies' authority, not simply the means by which they exercise it. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of decision-making and accountability are the principal concern of cosmopolitan democracy.

It is important to note at this point that the only relationship between Held and Kant established is a shared understanding of liberal values, that is, of how to conceive and pursue the goal of individual freedom. Cosmopolitanism (in its liberal form, as endorsed by Kant) requires that these values apply to all of the world's individuals equally, with variegated treatment justified only on practical rather than ethical grounds. Clearly, Held and Kant also share this commitment, but this does not mean that they share it for the same reasons. It may be that there is an easier path to cosmopolitanism inherent in Held's reasoning, given that his perspective – like Kant's – is grounded unambiguously in individualism, in contrast to the Rawlsian contractarianism of the 'global justice' perspective. However, a closer examination of Held's view than usually undertaken by commentators on contemporary

cosmopolitanism is required in order to ascertain whether Held actually takes this route.

As with the contemporary 'global justice' perspective, liberal globalisation discourse is a major presence within 'cosmopolitan democracy' theorising. Democracy, according to Held, has traditionally operated at the national level, that is, liberals have traditionally sought its operationalisation at the national level. The nation itself constituted a distinct polity, a national political community within which effective political organisation, communication and negotiation occurs, and from which a sense of shared responsibility develops. Held's explicit argument is that this idealised picture of democracy at the national level is no longer accurate or viable, due to globalisation. The implication is that democracy – as derivative of individual autonomy – was viable as a national project, prior to globalisation. The fact that he does not explicitly state this means it may be logically possible to judge that Held would reject *a priori* any articulation of democracy centred around nation-states, or some other political unit below the global level, meaning that 'cosmopolitan democracy' is a cosmopolitan form of liberalism, dependent far more on a universal ethic than the empirically-verifiable process of globalisation. However, there is reason to believe that 'cosmopolitan democracy', in theory as well as practice, is in fact dependent upon conducive socio-economic conditions more so than Kant's original liberal cosmopolitan project.

Globalisation, for Held, undermines democracy within nations in two specific ways: first, it has undermined the power of states, meaning that national leaders, the people's main representatives, no longer have the ability to carry out the democratically-determined wishes of the nation. Second, it has problematised the very notion of a 'nation' as a territorially-, culturally- and politically-demarcated group of individuals. In these conditions, political communities no longer function according to the traditional assumptions of liberal democracy (Held, 1995: 16). In order for democratic mechanisms to correlate with the actual nature of social and economic organisation, they must be transplanted to supranational fora, and ultimately the global level. Universal conceptions of constitutionalism and citizenship form part of the 'cosmopolitan democracy' project. For Held, of course, it is not just that political power needs to be shifted upwards, to catch up with socio-economic trends; he also believes that global governance mechanisms have already begun to emerge. Politics is already catching up: it is our values which are lagging behind. Thus global governance mechanisms must be augmented, where necessary, but most importantly democratised (Held 1995: 92). Clearly, Held is aiming not simply to globalise democracy, but also to democratise globalisation. It is not simply the case that the latter precedes the former, but nevertheless there is an ambiguity of purpose in Held's work arguably to a far greater extent than in Kant's.

Held's vision for the 'globalisation of democracy' is, of course, highly nuanced. He states unambiguously that the global level is not the only level to which political power – and along with it democracy, citizenship, etc, to enable autonomy across the sites of power – must be transposed. For Held, globalisation is a conflation of countless *transnational* phenomena which, although replete with global aspects and global implications, are not manifested exclusively at the global level. Individuals should therefore exercise power, via democratic mechanisms, at the level most appropriate to the

particular issue in question. Sometimes this will be the global level, but regional, national and subnational levels are also incorporated into cosmopolitan democracy (Held 1995: 216).

It is possible that Held's vision for democracy is influenced by his specific understanding of globalisation, which is more sophisticated than most contemporary cosmopolitans in Anglo-American liberal political theory. Held is a prominent scholar within the discipline of International Political Economy as well as political theory, and as such has theorised specifically about the nature of globalisation. His landmark book *Global Transformations*, co-authored with Anthony McGrew, Jonathan Perraton and David Goldblatt (1999), offers a 'transformationalist' account of globalisation. Transformationalism is based on the work of sociologists Manuel Castells and Anthony Giddens, and political economist Jan Aart Scholte. Castells' work is noted for its emphasis on transnational networks as an increasingly relevant mode of social and economic interaction. Giddens' association of advanced modernity with the compression of time and space and the death of distance is also influential. Jan Aart Scholte has had the most direct influence on transformationalism; he defines globalisation as a process of respatialisation, in that its essence is the creation of a 'supraterritorial' space, which interacts dynamically (and dominantly) with forms of territorial space. Essentially, however, there is little difference between transformationalism and the general liberal discourse on globalisation propagated by, as we have seen, global justice theorists. It demonstrates more proficiently the role of technological change, as a feature of modernity, in creating conditions of globalisation. And it shows that globalisation is far from a monolithic process: respatialisation operates differently at different times and places, and has differential outcomes. The account of the state's transformation, as suggested above, is probably the main difference of emphasis, regarding globalisation, between Held's work and 'global justice' theorists. *Global Transformations* endorses the literature on the 'internationalisation' of the state; this is entirely consistent with the notion that the nation-state's function as the bastion of democracy has been undermined, but not with the notion that the national level as a sphere of authority and power has universally declined. Thus the 'cosmopolitan democracy' project, in the hands of David Held, incorporates proposals on re-democratising nation-states in novel ways, as well as democratising the global level.

Given the prominent role of globalisation discourse in Held's work, what can be established about the legacy of Kantian cosmopolitanism in the 'cosmopolitan democracy' project? Interestingly, Held has seemingly been reluctant to define cosmopolitanism. His most important work on cosmopolitan democracy, *Democracy and the Global Order* (1995) offers no meaningful definition, other than the unsatisfactory assertion that international or political action beyond the nation-state, undertaken from a liberal or social democratic perspective, represents cosmopolitanism. There is an interesting passage in Held's contribution to the collection (co-edited by Held with Anthony McGrew) *Governing Globalization* (2002a), which states that cosmopolitanism,

connotes the ethical and political space which sets out the terms of reference for the recognition of people's equal moral worth, their active agency and what is required for their autonomy and development (2002a: 313).

The problem is that Held describes cosmopolitanism, glibly, as ethical *and* political. Indeed, in relation to 'space' it *is* both ethical and political; all traditions of thought connote, in some way, a particular space which 'sets out the terms of reference' for their ambitions. It is the unique relationship between a particular ethical standpoint and the political world that gives cosmopolitanism its essential character, whether conjoined with liberalism or (a combination of) other traditions. Held belongs in the cosmopolitan tradition – he does not abandon the notion that universal ethics matter for their own sake. But no matter what the influence of Kant on his articulation of liberal values, there is a lack of clarity on the extent to which Kant's cosmopolitan ethics are reproduced, due to globalisation discourse. No criticism is being implied here: perhaps it would be foolish to attempt to articulate a version of liberalism today *without* referring to globalisation. Nonetheless, the fact is that liberal globalisation discourse is central to 'cosmopolitan democracy'.

In fact, in an appendix to his latest monograph, *Global Covenant* (2004) – which moves abruptly away from 'cosmopolitan democracy' – Held does finally offer a detailed definition of 'cosmopolitan principles'. He offers this set of principles as the basis of cosmopolitanism:

1. equal worth and dignity;
2. active agency;
3. personal responsibility and accountability;
4. consent;
5. collective decision-making about public matters through voting procedures;
6. inclusiveness and subsidiarity;
7. avoidance of serious harm;
8. sustainability (Held, 2004: 171).

Leaving aside idiosyncrasies and questions of terminology, these principles represent a fairly uncontroversial form of liberalism. Assuming social justice can be derived from these principles, they actually represent a highly generalised form of liberalism which might also incorporate Rawlsian projects. It seems that the only thing that would necessitate a specifically global or transnational application of these principles would be an empirical assessment that such an application would be the most appropriate on grounds of practicality. Many liberals may choose the nation-state as the place to enact these principles, whereas Held, on the basis of a belief in globalisation, chooses supra- and sub-national levels. Moreover, these principles actually appear to contain a clause which *requires* an empirical assessment. Held clarifies the sixth principle by stating that,

those significantly affected by public decisions, issues or processes, should, *ceteris paribus*, have an equal opportunity, directly or indirectly through elected representatives, to influence and shape them. By significantly affected, I mean... that people are enmeshed in decisions and forces that have an impact on their capacity to fulfil their vital

needs. According to principle 6, collective decision-making is best located when it is closest to and involves those whose life expectancy and life chances are determined by significant social processes and forces (2004: 174).

Of course, globalisation means that the closest appropriate location for governance and democracy is often the regional or global level. The 'inclusiveness and subsidiarity' principle seems to operate like Beitz's 'ongoing scheme of social co-operation' requirement of social justice. Democracy only becomes global when social and economic life becomes global. It is possible, it seems, that such a principle can operate within a global scheme of democracy, so long as the global scheme is amenable to multiple levels and centres of authority. Thus the political universalism inherent in schemes such as 'cosmopolitan democracy' is shaped by the empirical analysis, but never *entirely* contingent upon it. It may be that, for Held, 'inclusiveness and subsidiarity' is entirely consistent with the *desire* for global political action on the basis of universal ethics – which may or may not be produced by the other principles – but actually necessitates the identification of amenable social, economic and even political conditions before such ambition can be realised.

## **Conclusion**

This appraisal of contemporary cosmopolitanism in Anglo-American liberal political theory is obviously not exhaustive. Other liberal approaches, such as the 'capabilities' approach represented by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2006), provide an alternative strategy to 'global justice' and 'cosmopolitan democracy' for the renewal of cosmopolitanism. Charles Jones' work on human rights provides a bridge between the 'capabilities' approach and the contractarianism of Charles Beitz (see Jones, 1999). All of these theorists, however, seem to share the proclivity to utilise a liberal discourse of globalisation in constructing their theories, found here in 'global justice' and 'cosmopolitan democracy' theorising – although further inquiry is of course required.

This is not to say that cosmopolitanism in contemporary liberal political theory constitutes a clean break from Immanuel Kant's liberal cosmopolitan project. We must acknowledge, above all else, that different cosmopolitanisms may have different relationships with Kant's multifaceted legacy, and be careful not to assume that globalisation, or belief in globalisation, transforms the cosmopolitan tradition in an all-encompassing fashion. To some extent, contemporary cosmopolitan theorists have left themselves vulnerable to the critique of theorists such as Robert Fine by not devoting enough time to explicating the relationship between globalisation discourse and the cosmopolitan tradition.

Globalisation clearly features prominently in the renaissance of cosmopolitanism within Anglo-American liberal political theory. Proponents of cosmopolitanism may assert, with some justification, that this is inevitable, and that it is right for political thinkers to consider the context of theorising. While this may be true, it should not spare contemporary cosmopolitanism from an investigation into what

effect the role of globalisation discourse has on the relationship between cosmopolitan projects of the present, and those of the past. Kant of course considered the context of his theory; arguably, he actually promoted a trading system that liberals would today probably identify as globalisation, as a way to foster cosmopolitan sentiments. But his own cosmopolitan sentiments were not dependent upon it (Stevenson, 2002; Fine and Chernillo, 2004: 34). Contemporary cosmopolitans seem more dependent on the invocation of globalisation. There is enough to suggest that various aspects of their cosmopolitan projects – due wholly to self-imposed theoretical clauses – would invite more serious scrutiny without it. Contemporary cosmopolitan theory is not simply ‘liberalism for a global age’, that is, a perspective based largely on the need for liberal theorists to respond to massive socio-economic changes, interpreted in accordance with a liberal outlook. The invocation of globalisation obviously has far more complex origins, not least because both the cosmopolitan and liberal traditions have complex natures, and are in practice intricately intertwined. Nevertheless, the deliberate use of globalisation discourse enables a particular portrait of the context of doing cosmopolitanism in today’s world, in order that cosmopolitanism, invariably, appears more attractive. Not only did Kant not uphold the same view of context, his work was clearly less reliant on the existence of particular contextual conditions. Held and Beitz, *et al*, have (for various reasons) attempted to rewrite cosmopolitan theory in accordance with a particular reading of context, and thus transformed the rationale for doing cosmopolitanism.

It is entirely possible that these theorists would share Kant’s vision anyway, without globalisation. Perhaps, speaking critically, they are lazy Kantians: not entirely dependent on a conducive socio-economic context, but happy to make use of one if it provides extra justification for certain political objectives, thus lessening the burden of the ethical argument. Such hypothetical questions, while intriguing, are not at stake here. What is at stake is what ideational matter contemporary cosmopolitanism is actually composed of. There is enough evidence to conclude with confidence that these theorists belong in the cosmopolitan tradition. In sharing a broadly liberal outlook on change, and in pursuing certain political goals long associated with liberalism, they each belong also in the liberal tradition. To generalise, while some theorists follow Kant more than others, what is on offer is a universally-inclusive form of liberalism, which transcends liberalism’s traditional attachment to the nation-state as the benchmark of inclusiveness, for both practical and ethical reasons. Crudely, it is cosmopolitan liberalism, not liberal cosmopolitanism. The question of whether considerations of practicality or considerations of ethical duty come first is ultimately unanswerable – which may of course be exactly what cosmopolitan theorists intended. It gives their projects a degree of independence from Kant’s perceived ethical obstinacy, while nullifying the charge that contemporary cosmopolitanism represents little more than a pragmatic and ultimately unambitious response to the neoliberal globalisation project.

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