

Course: Poli Sci 2H03

Subject: Cosmopolitanism: Beyond the State?

Instructor: Dr. Vermilyea

Section: Evening, T01

Date: Oct.24, 2012

Arguments against human rights as a global medium - Turner

- They are irredeemably associated with Western values
 - e.g., focus on individualistic claims instead of the more global community
 - Not all forms of Western rights are individualistic, just like not all Asian thoughts are communal
 - Must be careful not to over-emphasize distinctions between Western and Asian notions of individual and community
- They are not enforceable
 - Certain rights are more enforceable like habeas corpus (can't imprison without just cause)
 - Bulk of human rights are less enforceable, especially those with strong cultural components
- Little discussion about what obligations might correspond to such rights
 - Idea of human rights is problematic because it doesn't require any obligations from the individual

3 versions of citizenship

- Liberal theory of citizenship - minimalist
 - Role of the state is to protect the freedom of citizens
 - Best achieves aim by removing obstacles to free exchange in the marketplace
 - Very republican stance
 - Role of government is to celebrate sovereignty of individual
 - Utilitarian role of government
 - Maximizes happiness (which is measured by individual wealth)
- Social theory of citizenship
 - Rests on understanding that the state has a role to play in mitigating the negative aspects of the capitalist market by providing a safety net to protect workers against unemployment/sickness and support them in retirement
 - Idea of welfare state
 - e.g., universal healthcare, employment insurance, disability coverage
 - Idea of the state that has a role to play in terms of moderating capitalism
- Citizenship as virtue
 - Education of the citizen in virtues is essential in achieving personal autonomy
 - Citizens need training in order to gain a job
 - Liberal idea
 - Distinction between end goals of education
 - Neo-liberals - become productive members of capitalist market
 - Also to become better members of the community
- Evidence that liberal and social views of citizenship are in crisis
 - Lack of social capital (i.e., involvement in community)
 - Distrust of politics
- Ideal image of this world citizen that a lot of people argue is needed/will help mitigate some of the negative aspects of what is going in our world
 - Dream that globalization will make possible world governance within which cosmopolitanism can flourish

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- Turner argues that this idea of global citizenship is much too abstract and too vague to carry conviction or commitment
 - Even idea of nation state is too abstract to carry commitment
 - People's commitments are more local/regional based
 - Geography of emotions is important in creating civic loyalties and commitments
 - Idea that in order for us to have a civic bond, we must have a connection to a certain place (including cultural memories)
 - This is a big challenge if we are imagine a world government
 - Hard to do on a national scale, let alone a world scale
- Patriotism, which is the love for one's country, can still be maintained
 - Doesn't rule out respect for other countries
 - Patriotism and cosmopolitanism can be combined

Nationalism and citizenship

- Nation-state citizenship and nationalist ideology have been, in the modern world, powerful agencies for creating individual identities
- Nationalism embraced negative images of outsiders, and, as a result, modern politics became a politics of friend or foe
- 2 main challenges:
 - No specific political community on world stage
 - Can say we have a Canadian political community, but not one internationally
 - Continue to have these robust forms of national citizenship
 - This overly strong allegiance to particular countries

Historical and sociological roots of cosmopolitanism

- Hospitality towards strangers evolved out of the norms of protected trade
 - Trade tended to promote tolerance
 - As we become more connected as societies, we have an interest in maintaining similar value systems and not going to war with one another
- Contemporary: cosmopolitanism has been closely associated with the human rights revolution, but has often been dismissed because it is allegedly western, elitist, and interventionist
 - Will bring about a standardization of cultures
 - Everything is acceptable as long as falls within the norms of Western ideology
- Ignatieff promotes a minimalist defence of rights
 - Very liberal idea
 - Democratically elected governments should only intervene in other countries if in violation of human rights
 - Intervention should only be taken if human rights are being severely violated and it becomes an international threat
 - Cultural relativism: idea that beliefs/customs/practices are relative to the culture that they are being practiced in
 - Idea that no right or wrong
 - Can't have overarching arguments for morality

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- All particular to cultures
- Ignatieff critical of using this argument against human rights
 - Thinks that the West has conceded too much against local customs
 - e.g., female circumcision
 - Mistake to regard fundamentalism as the only voice of Islam
 - Ignores the diversity of internal voices
 - A lot of disagreement over what is good/right, there is still agreement over what is insufferably wrong
 - There is diversity in human happiness but unity in human misery

Irony and cosmopolitanism

- Crux of Turner's argument
 - Gets around criticism that cosmopolitanism can't happen because there is no overarching power
- The ability to respect others requires a certain distance from one's own culture, namely an ironic distance
- Irony may only be possible once one already has an emotional commitment to a place
 - Patriotism may be not only compatible with irony, but its precondition
 - Understanding of patriotism is less nationalistic (like the US) and more accepting
- Notion of irony, virtue, and cosmopolitanism
 - The ability to respect other cultures is to have a distance from one's culture (ironic distance)
 - Irony might only be possible once someone has an emotional commitment to a place
 - Our only way to be cosmopolitan is to have a culture of our own through which we'll have a connection
- Tolerance of others comes from an uncertainty of the ultimate authority of one's own culture
 - Ingrained into our understanding of what it means to be in an advanced democracy
 - Use linear progression of cultural advancement, and place West on top is ingrained
 - Difficult for most to imagine
- Cosmopolitan virtue can involve a careful engagement with so-called primitive cultures

David Held

- Cosmopolitan principles (7)
- (1) equal worth and dignity
 - Everyone should have an equal status in the world, regardless of region/gender/etc.
 - Without acknowledging this basic principle, we can't move forward with cosmopolitanism
- (2) active agency
 - Human agency must be conceived as the ability to act otherwise
 - Everyone should have a choice to shape their community
 - Capacity of humans to reason, be self-reflective, and self-determining
 - Must also be able to coexist with others without infringing on their ability to do the same
- (3) personal responsibility and accountability
 - People will choose different cultural/social/economic projects
 - Such differences should be recognized and accepted

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- (4) consent
 - Commitment to equal worth and personal responsibility
 - Basis of collective agreement and governance
- (5) reflexive deliberation and collective decision-making through voting procedures
 - To suggest that we need to make decisions that take into account the will of all is too strong a requirement to make
 - Must emphasize inclusiveness in process of consent and the importance of public deliberation and voting mechanisms
 - A democracy doesn't really mean that everyone agrees, but rather the possibility of public deliberation exists and there are mechanisms to make decisions
- (6) inclusiveness and subsidiary
 - Decisions need to be made as close to the area affected as possible rather than some centralized, abstract authority making these decisions
 - Democracy is best located when it is closest to and involves those whose lives are affected
 - Necessity of decentralization and centralization of power
- (7) avoidance of serious harm and the amelioration of urgent need
 - Trumping other less urgent needs
 - Prioritize basic needs of humans
 - Suffering is both systematic and also unnecessary
 - e.g., serious harm that is occurring (like starvation) is unnecessary and avoidable
 - Challenges to combat this harm are ethical, political, and might be psychological
 - They do not arise from a lack of resources
 - Problem of alleviating human suffering does not come down to an essential reason

Cosmopolitan law and authority

- A form of law that entrenches the 7 principles
- The principles specify the organizational basis of legitimate public power
- Idea of rightful authority - which has so often been connected solely to the sovereign state - has to be rethought and recast

Legal cosmopolitanism

- Posits and ideal of a global legal order in which people can enjoy an equality of status with respect to the fundamental institutions of the legal system
- At center is legalis homo - equal legal standing and personal rights
- Legal cosmopolitanism is universalizing and potentially inclusive

Political cosmopolitanism

- Involves advocacy of regional and global governance and the creation of political organizations and mechanisms that would provide a framework of regulation and law enforcement across the globe
- States should have a somewhat, and in some areas a markedly, diminished role in comparison with institutions and organizations of regional and global governance

Economic cosmopolitanism

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- Needs to address the fact that geopolitics is driven too often by sectional economic interests
- Aims to establish fair conditions for economic competition and cooperation as the background context of the particular choices of human agents

Cultural cosmopolitanism

- Denotes the capacity to mediate between national traditions, communities of fate, and alternative styles of life
- Encompasses the possibility of dialogue with the traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding the horizons of one's own framework of meaning and prejudice

Habermas

- On a global level, both the competence for political action of a world government and a corresponding basis of legitimation are lacking
- The UN is a loose community of states
 - It lacks the quality of a community of world citizens, who can legitimate their political decisions

Questions

- What does this story about Mehran Nasser (the man living in the Charles de Gaulle airport) say about the prospects of cosmopolitanism? Is Nasser's story the case of an unfortunate loophole, or does it represent the fundamental logic of the state system?
- Can cosmopolitanism be a patriot? Can citizenship be deterritorialized? Skeptics of cosmopolitanism argue that a genuine democracy cannot be without territory, because love of country is a necessary prerequisite for pride in the democratic community. Do you agree?