Cultural Identity and Cosmopolitanism: Locating The ‘Individual’ In The Complex Debate

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Abstract
From the very inception, the nebulous core shared by all cosmopolitan views is the idea that all human beings, regardless of their political affiliation, do (or at least can) belong to a single community, and that this community should be cultivated. Different versions of cosmopolitanism envision this community in different ways, some focusing on political institutions, others on moral norms or relationships, and still others focusing on shared markets or forms of cultural expression. Cosmopolitanism can acknowledge the importance of cultural attachments for the good human life while denying that this implies that a person's cultural identity should be defined by any bounded or homogeneous subset of the cultural resources available in the world. In this paper, I shall argue that any conception of a cosmopolitan structure should consider individual as its basic unit. The individual, in this case, may or may not be the bearer of a particular culture. It should be a grand union of autonomous individuals, based on certain universal guiding principles, the most important of all being the mutual recognition of the ‘limits to liberty’. I shall also propose that any attempt to formalize a cosmopolitan structure in absence of some universally accepted moral ‘limits to liberty’, shall be disastrous, and the dependence on any external agency or institution to map these ‘limits’ is problematic. In absence of certain universal value system, the very conceptualisation of a cosmopolitan society is void, and the membership of this society should not be guided or depended on the cultural identity of an individual. Only such a structure can respect the identity of an individual beyond its cultural limits, which is very important for its overall development, and its dignity as a rational autonomous being.
Introduction:
Since 1989, cosmopolitanism has evolved as a new understanding within social sciences. Two dominant reasons for this new development include: a) the recognition that humanity has entered an era of mutual interdependence on a world scale and the conviction that this worldly existence is not adequately understood within the terms of conventional social sciences, and b) the development of normative and frankly prescriptive theories of world citizenship, global justice and cosmopolitan democracy. Cosmopolitanism, however, is an ancient concept with its initial inklings being traced in the discussions of Greek philosophers. The term itself derives its meaning from Greek term ‘kosmopolites’, which means ‘citizens of the world’.

Discussions on the nature of a cosmopolitan world order can also be found in the writings of enlightenment thinkers- most prominently in the writings of Kant who wanted to establish a sense of ‘perpetual peace’ based on his vision of a ‘Federation of Nations’ rather than a ‘world state’. However, the modern understanding of cosmopolitanism has to be seen in consonance with the development of globalization, democratization and post cold war era. The debates about a ‘new cosmopolitanism’ was centred around the consensus that new ethical and political standards might be required to meet the needs of ethical and political relationships in the global era where new modes of ethical and political associations are under formation. There is a dominant belief that the essence of cosmopolitanism is the idea of moving beyond one’s own specific political, communal, territorial, cultural attachments to give allegiance to the wider human community. Three core values of cosmopolitanism, as highlighted by David Held include:

   a) Individuality- ultimate unit of concern and analysis.

   b) Universality- every person, irrespective of class, gender, race or religion is equally worthy of respect and recognition by others.

   c) Generality- the whole humanity is entitled to fair and impartial treatment.¹

As cosmopolitanism evolved as a fashionable topic of discussion in social sciences recently, it also spawned a new set of questions based on the systemic and structural issues. One of the important issues was related to the capacity of the concept to negotiate with different sociocultural identities in order to harmoniously locate them on its ‘universalist’ agenda. The multiculturalists had successfully exposed this cultural agenda thereby demolishing the grand project. However, the multiculturalists never tried to question the very existence of nation-

states and worked within its framework in order to claim ‘recognition’ for historically marginalized cultural identities. Externally too, the weakening of nation-states, under the aegis of globalization, is clearly reflected in the writings of the scholars like Held. Cosmopolitanism, during these hard times, evolved as a seminal challenge to the very understanding of nation-state and its sustainability. But the important question that still remained was- How can cosmopolitanism accommodate the issues of cultural identity. In a way, it is not only the question about the sustenance of movements based on identity issues, but also a question about ‘liveability’ of the cultural identities under the threat of ‘individuality’ and ‘universality’ which are claimed to be the basic values of a cosmopolitan social order.

In this paper I try to first understand the meaning of cultural identity and how does it evolve in the process of an intercultural interaction of an individual. This shall be centred on two basic observations: a) the socio-cultural construction of the ‘individual self’ and its limitations, and b) intercultural interaction of the ‘individual self’ and its impact in the process of re-identification’. Another question that follows from this discussion is about the process of re-identification’ and can the individual self evolve itself to ‘universalist’ identity system, and if ever, are the values of this system mutually exclusive to its cultural bonding and affiliations. This exposes the issues within cosmopolitanism which are being currently debated world over. Here I would look into two such issues. Firstly the issue of ‘methodological nationalism’ versus ‘Cosmopolitan universalism’ as developed in social sciences. Secondly the cosmopolitan definition of ‘culture and self’ shall be discussed to understand the sustainability as well as the limitations of a ‘universalist’ agenda. For the first dimension, arguments of institutional cosmopolitanism as reflected primarily in the writings of Kant, Habermas, Beck and Held will be considered. For the second part, I emphasize on Scheffler’s distinction between cosmopolitanism as a doctrine of justice and cosmopolitanism as a doctrine of culture and self. This shall be followed by a discussion about the possibility of a cosmopolitan world society and the probable challenges such a system shall face both at a normative as well as functional levels. In this section I shall try to differentiate between ‘cosmopolitan way of living’ from a ‘cosmopolitan world order’, thereby trying to establish that a ‘cosmopolitan world order’, if ever possible, should be a natural evolution of ‘cosmopolitan way of living’ and it should not be forced to cultivate a ‘cosmopolitan way of living’. Any attempt of such kind would undermine and compromise freedom of ‘individual’ which is after all the basic unit of analysis in cosmopolitanism.
Understanding Cultural Identity

It is now a widely accepted fact that the imaginations and choices of an individual are broadly constructed by the cultural setting he grows up in. With a renewed emphasis on what it means to be a human, there has grown a realization that the existence of viable and flourishing cultural communities is a precondition for intelligible understanding and action. One’s cultural community provides with the evaluative resources which enable it to both make sense of the world and to appraise phenomenon as valuable and valueless, worthwhile and worthless, moral and immoral. Culture, in a way, becomes the resource in enhancing and deepening of one’s personal faculties of reflection and judgement. The use of categories provided by our community for understanding may be so un reflexive, so imperceptible, that we may not even realize that we are seeing the world through the lens provided by these evaluative stems. Culture is subterranean, pervading deep structures of cognition. Whereas liberals are quite happy with extending respect to a culture because it enhances the worth of its individual members, they are reluctant to emphasize the worth of group identities. Bhikhu Parekh\(^2\) cites three important aspects related to cultural affiliations of an individual. First, human beings are culturally embedded in the sense that they grow up and live within a culturally structured world and organize their lives and social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance. This does not mean that they are determined by their culture in the sense of being unable to rise above its categories of thought and critically evaluate its values and system of meaning, but rather that they are deeply shaped by it, can overcome some but not all of its influences, and necessarily view the world from within a culture, be it the one they have inherited and uncritically accepted or reflectively revised or, in rare cases, one they have consciously adopted.

Second, different cultures represent different systems of meaning and visions of the good life. Since each realizes a limited range of human capacities and emotions and grasps only a part of the totality of human existence, it needs other cultures to help it understand itself better, expand its intellectual and moral horizon, stretch its imagination, save it from narcissism to guard it against the obvious temptation to absolutise itself, and so on. This does not mean that one cannot lead a good life within one’s own culture, but rather that, other things being equal, one’s way of life is likely to be richer if one also enjoys access to others, and that a culturally self-contained life is virtually impossible for most human beings in the modern, mobile and interdependent world. Nor does it mean that all cultures are equally rich and deserve equal

respect, that each of them is good for its members, or that they cannot be compared and critically assessed. All it means is that no culture is wholly worthless, that it deserves at least some respect because of what it means to its members and the creative energy it displays, that no culture is perfect and has a right to impose itself on others, and that cultures are best changed from within.

Third, every culture is internally plural and reflects a continuing conversation between its different traditions and strands of thought. This does not mean that it is devoid of coherence and identity, but that its identity is plural, fluid and open. Cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions with each other, define their identity in terms of what they take to be their significant other, and are at least partially multicultural in their origins and constitution. Each carries bits of the other within itself and is never wholly *sui generis*. This does not mean that it has no powers of self-determination and inner impulses, but rather that it is porous and subject to external influences which it assimilates in its now autonomous ways.

The dominant question here is - Does the cultural expression of a ‘individual self’ limit the scope of other means of cognitive understanding or the experiential epistemology of an individual within one’s own culture block the way for an alternative understanding of the world view. We need to reconsider the arguments of some of the communitarians to carry forward this debate. Michael Sandel argues that individualism generally fails to deal adequately with the problem of personal identity, for ‘to be capable of a more thoroughgoing reflection, we cannot be wholly unencumbered subjects of possession, individuated in advance and given prior to our ends, but must be subjects constituted in part by our central aspirations and attachments, always open, indeed vulnerable, to growth and transformation in the light of revised self understandings. And in so far as our constitutive self understanding comprehend a wider subject that the individual alone, whether a family or tribe or city or class or nation or people, to this extent they define a community in a constitutive sense.’

What Sandel is arguing is that an epistemological principle can be transformed into an ontological principle: ‘This notion of community describes a framework of self understanding that is distinguishable from and in some sense prior to the sentiments and dispositions of individual within the framework.’ The shared understandings are constitutive of our identity, and therefore ‘the bounds of the self are no longer fixed, individuated in advance and given prior to experience.’ But as John Haldane remarks, ‘even if this were

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4 Ibid. 174.
5 Ibid. 183
granted it would not follow from it that subjects of these relationships are anything other than distinct persons.’\(^6\) That individuals share notions of justice compassion, and self understanding does not imply that the boundaries of those individuals melt into a vast fondue of communal understandings. On this question of epistemological framework provided by a particular culture, Thomas Aquinas argued that, ‘it is one thing which is understood both by me and by you. But it is understood by me in one way and by you in another that is by another intelligible species. And my understanding is one thing, and yours, another, and my intellect is one thing, and yours another’. This is a severe challenge to the communitarian approach which implies that cultures are hermetically sealed one from another, that if you and ‘I’ are in the ‘same culture’ we must have the same ‘self understanding’.

Jeremy Waldron provides a categorical criticism to what Macintyre wrote lyrically in After Virtue - “It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what is a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are”.\(^7\) Waldron observes: “… these are heterogeneous characters drawn from a variety of disparate cultural sources: from first-century Palestine, from the heritage of Germanic folklore, and from the mythology of the Roman Republic. They do not come from something called ‘the structure of our culture.’”\(^8\) As Waldron asks, “What if there has been nothing but mélange all the way down? What if cultures have always been implicated with one another, through trade, war, curiosity, and other forms of inter-communal relation? What if the mingling of cultures is as immemorial as cultural roots themselves? What if purity and homogeneity have always been myths?”\(^9\) And just as the identity of each necessarily cosmopolitan culture may be a shifting focus within overlapping influences, so the identity of the person may be a shifting focus within overlapping influences. That is not to say that there are no ethnic or national characteristics, no commonalities among persons that distinguish them from others. There clearly are. But pointing that out is no refutation of cosmopolitanism or of a theory of identity consistent with

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cosmopolitanism. Indeed, it would be impossible to recognize the common nature of humanity in the absence of any identifiable differences; the ‘same’ cannot be recognized without the ‘other’, the ‘one’ without the ‘many’. Recognizing that we adopt beliefs and self-understandings that we believe to be true, useful, interesting, moral, amusing, and so on from other persons, other cultures, and other languages is not shameful; it is just a recognition of reality. The communitarian approach implicitly denies that one’s identity might be constituted by universalist, individualist, cosmopolitan self-understandings. The devout Muslim or Christian, for example, may very well see her attachment to a universalist religious faith as constitutive of her identity in ways that her being American, Albanian, or Arab is not. Such identities are quite common -- and therefore possible -- and collectivist and communitarian theorists have offered little reason to believe that they are unhappier or poorer than are more localized identities. We can distinguish, then, among at least three different broad understandings of personal identity10: a) ‘thick’ theories, which are associated with a wide variety of collectivists and communitarians, according to which the individual is constituted by all (or perhaps just by most, or by the most important) of the elements of a complex culture, with all of those elements considered as necessary and unchangeable conditions of identity; b) ‘thin’ theories, which are associated commonly with Immanuel Kant and his followers, according to which individual identity is associated with a purely formal characteristic of consciousness as such, such as the transcendental unity of apperception; and c) ‘focal’ theories, such as the ‘succession’ theory of Aristotle and the ‘closest continuer’ theory of Nozick, which are both ‘thinner’ than the collectivist theories, for individual elements of identity may be added or subtracted without obliterating the identity of the person, and ‘thicker’ than the formal or abstract theories, for each person is identified, individuated, and distinguished from others by reference to contingent characteristics. Focal theories recognize that personal identity can be a matter of both circumstance and choice. They capture better the way in which the elements of one’s identity can change over time, without merely dissolving into unconnected and disparate parts. Unlike thick theories, they do not rule out the widely observed and acknowledged movement of persons from culture to culture, without loss of self. Unlike thin theories, they acknowledge that one’s commitments are not simply phenomenal ornaments somehow stuck on to a merely noumenal transcendental object (or subject), which is posited as a kind of substrate – or pin cushion – that is itself devoid of characteristics. Unlike both thick and thin theories, focal

theories of personal identity provide a plausible part of the metaphysical foundation for an increasingly globalized world of free persons.

This comprehensive understanding of the ‘focal theory of identity’ sets the relation between cosmopolitanism and cultural identity. However before moving to this complex understanding we need to see how the multiculturalists try to carry forward this debate based on their emphasis on ‘recognition’. Multiculturalism is the unintentional byproduct of the collapse of a grand vision—of a culturally homogeneous nation state—between homogeneity and autonomy. The initial wave of a new understanding of cultural identities came as a result of the ‘struggles for identity’ which brought the question of ‘recognition’ to the centre stage. Hegel in *Phenomenology of the Spirit* conceptualized recognition as the distinctive need of human beings. In recent theory, philosophers Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth have hinged their political theories around recognition. It was argued that the recognition of the self through being ‘seen’ or recognized by others therefore enters the constitution of self identity in a fundamental sense. It indicates that people need approval and respect of others in order to develop self esteem, self confidence, and self respect. In a way, it is also helpful in developing a ‘self understanding’ of an individual. ‘Human integrity’, argues Honneth ‘owes its existence, at a deep level, to the patterns of approval and recognition.’

Charles Taylor’s influential essay *The Politics of Recognition* extends the concept of recognition from individuals to cultures, even as he provides a persuasive philosophical argument that all cultures possess equal worth: “[T]he further demand we are looking at here is that we all recognize the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their worth.”

This understanding of culture and ‘recognition’ by the multiculturalists takes the argument of communitarians to a new direction, especially with regard to the construction of ‘self understanding’. Claiming that ‘recognition’ is a seminal component of ‘self construction’, multiculturalists brought about the realization that plural cultures need to be respected and validated through explicit acts of recognition. There are, however, effective limitations to the claims of multiculturalists. Some of these are based on the importance of ‘Redistribution’ as forwarded by Nancy Frazer. Further it also overlooks the tendency among some cultural communities to act as what Rajeev Bhargava calls ‘oppressive communities’. Some of the liberal multiculturalists like Bhikhu Parekh seem to be familiar with these problems. He

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believes that all cultures may not deserve equal respect. However he maintains, that multiculturalism would only argue that no culture is completely worthless. Though on the question of ‘recognition’ he also believes that, ‘A culture cannot appreciate the value of others unless it appreciates the plurality within it; the converse is just as true.’

Multiculturalists also find it difficult to accommodate arguments regarding ‘multiple identity systems’, some with which individual is born and some that is acquired in the process of its interaction with other cultural systems. The large scale migration and the opening up of cultural communities have made this issue even more prominent. Central to this understanding is the fact that an individual ‘identifies’ and ‘re-identifies’ itself in the process of interaction with different cultural identities. It represents an ideal form of evolution of the individual ‘self’ in the globalized world. This has made the discussions regarding interculturality more relevant and the cosmopolitans try to portray this permeability as the basis of ‘intercultural citizenship’. Intercultural citizenship is a different name for interchange of opinion among different cultural actors. It is this interchange that promotes plurality and human solidarity. It holds that we are capable of overcoming our cultural ‘egoism’ and of in doing the point of view of other cultures within our sense of belonging to the human race and also that the capacity to engage constructively with conflicting values is an essential component of practical wisdom and empathetic pluralism in the process of intercultural dialogue. It also emphasizes on the need to locate the solidarity beyond national selfishness and global exclusion. The basis of genuine interculturality, in which both cultural and individual identity is enhanced rather than threatened, is recognition of the need and value of ‘living together’. But the question is – does such a grand utopia of a cosmopolitan world order respect and cherish individual identities?

**Cultural Identities and the Issues within Cosmopolitanism**

To understand the issues within cosmopolitanism it is important to first differentiate cosmopolitanism from the ideals of multiculturalism and nationalism. It is different from multiculturalism in that it is not limited by the frontiers of individual nation-states. Multiculturalism accepts differences and promotes collective rather than individual identities whereas cosmopolitanism advocates recognition of cultural diversity and openness across globe as a whole. Similarly on the one hand where cosmopolitanism puts the morally autonomous individual at the centre of its philosophical outlook and favours self-reflection and criticism, nationalism on the other hand celebrates collectivity, within territorial

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dimensions and based on emotional factors. Two important issues within the cosmopolitan debate refer to: a) understanding the contradictions between the universalists versus the community embedded perspectives, and b) to view cosmopolitanism as a doctrine about ‘culture and self’ and thereby trying to relate it to the question of cultural identity.

The first issue in question relates to the debate between the universalists and the community embedded perspectives. Kant construed cosmopolitanism as an international political order designed to establish ‘lawful external relations among states’ and a ‘universal civic society’. He called for the establishment of an ‘external legal authority’ capable of forcing states to abide by the law and respect the rights of other states, since without this authority every state could simply interpret and enforce international laws according to their own moral and political judgement. He was opposed to the formation of ‘world state’ instead embraced ‘Federation of Nations’, based on a mutual co-operation and voluntary consent among a plurality of independent states. His aim was to establish ‘perpetual peace’. Kantian cosmopolitanism was a profound attempt to address the contradiction between the universalism of the ‘rights of man’ and the national basis on which rights were accorded. It looked to the generation of republican forms of government across all political communities, so that the universality of the rights of man could become a reality; to the development of international law and establishment of a Federation of Nations to ensure that wars between states, perceived as the major threat to the rights of man, could be regulated and eventually overcome; and to cosmopolitan rights in the strict sense of the term to provide a universalistic minimum for strangers to fill the gap in the system of rights left open by international law.  

Even Hegel echoed Kant in declaring it a matter of ‘infinite importance’ that ‘a human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, catholic, protestant, German, Italian, etc.’ Freedom, Kant wrote, ‘contranscend any limit we are to impose’. He placed cosmopolitanism within a progressive philosophy of history. However, Hegel observed, the freedom to transcend every limit also has a negative, destructive aspect. Freedom beyond all limits, Hegel wrote, is ‘the freedom of the void’. Kant referred to the dangers of a world state, that it might conceal the interests of a world power or present its particular interests as if they were the universal interests of humanity or that it might itself secure a monopoly over global power. Hannah Arendt also argued that world government

provides no solution for it had its own capacity for barbarism. ‘The right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself’.15 In the changing contours of world politics under the pressure of globalization, David Held highlights the changing nature of nation states. He believes that there has been a shift from government to ‘multi level governance’ from the modern state to a multilayered system of power and authority. Here he proposes his conception of a ‘cosmopolitan democracy’. He believes that only a cosmopolitan outlook can, ultimately, accommodate itself to the political challenges of a more global era, marked by overlapping communities of fate and multilayered politics. Unlike political nationalism, cosmopolitanism registers and reflects the multiplicity of issues, questions, processes and problems which affect and bind people together, irrespective of where they were born or reside.

Ulrich Beck, however, believes that territorially based states and closed societies are simply becoming more interconnected as a result of globalization. We need to move beyond and develop a methodological understanding of this change. Recently Ulrich Beck has campaigned persistently and urgently for the overcoming of the tradition of ‘methodological nationalism’ and the development of ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’. He presents cosmopolitanism as the reconciliation of the universalism of the enlightenment and the methodological nationalism of the social sciences: on the one hand, it presupposes a ‘universalistic minimum’ to be upheld at all costs and ‘universal procedural norms to regulate the cross cultural treatment of difference; on the other hand it does not negate nationalism but presupposes it and transforms it into cosmopolitan nationalism.’16 The cosmopolitan vision, according to Beck, permits people to ‘view themselves simultaneously as part of a threatened world and a part of their local situation and histories.’ It indicates ‘recognition of difference beyond the misunderstandings of territoriality and homogenizations’.17 Beck seems to be arguing against the claims of scholars who believe that cosmopolitan values are just an extension of national sentiments at a global level. Scholars like Kwame Appiah, however, believe that cosmopolitan patriotism should convey a sense of belonging to a particular community is a necessary aspect of turning cosmopolitanism into a desirable and reliable project.18

17 Ibid., p. 30.
Universalists like Waldron believe that cosmopolitanism ‘is a way of being in the world, a way of constructing an identity for oneself that is... opposed to the idea of belonging to or devotion to or immersion to a particular culture.’\(^{19}\) Seyla Benhabib\(^{20}\) also believes that it entails the vindication of the right of every human being “to have rights”, that is, to be a legal person, entailed to certain inalienable rights, regardless of the status of their political membership. Cosmopolitan universalism, in fact, centres around “stateless” individuals with competitive normative demands centred around communities at the subnational and transnational level. Janna Thompson emphasises on the need for a cosmopolitan sense of world citizenship and countervailing forces created by the rise of demands and international neo-liberal economic policies and the resurgence of ethno-national, cultural and religious forms of communal identity at the substate level.\(^{21}\)

Habermas tried to overcome the contradiction between universalism and state patriotism by forwarding the idea of ‘constitutional patriotism’. He asserts that while patriotism in general may read as a disposition to trust in and identify with the state, constitutional patriotism demands loyalty only to the constitutional principles of the state and not the state itself.\(^{22}\) Kymlicka warns that constitutional patriotism may be used by existing nation states to crush minority rights and seek to construct a cosmopolitanism that will also protect national minorities.\(^{23}\)

The central question is- do human beings have potential to reconcile the global citizenship, cultural openness and recognition of otherness with an allegiance to relatively closed and culturally homogeneous collectivism. To the advocates of ‘multiple identities’ it would not matter. How does it matter if another identity is added to the list of identities we are already have? But it does certainly matter if this identity is posed as opposed to one of the most prominent and dominant identity system which has provided liveability conditions and space for evolution to the human self i.e. the identity of being a national citizen. It’s not that the ‘citizen’ does not recognize the commonalities of issues surrounding human civilization at


global level nor is it not attached to it or responsive to it. But the dichotomy truly exists when we try to consider the struggles for identity that took shape in several nations and the probable impact such cosmopolitanism would have on these movements for recognition. Under the framework of nation states, the state was duty bound to understand these demands and respond to it. A clear illustration has been the redistributive policies of the state and other similar attempts to ensure that different cultures are not only ‘recognized’ but are also ‘respected’. Will the structure of cosmopolitan institutionalism recognize these demands as valid or will their demands be subsumed in the veil of universalism. We should also be vigilant that the new ideal of a cosmopolitan world order is not hijacked by the influential and dominant nations to forward its own hegemonic agenda. These are the major fears of accepting a cosmopolitan identity which otherwise looks very attractive at its outset.

Scheffler differentiated between cosmopolitans who treat cosmopolitanism as a doctrine of justice and those who treat it as a doctrine of culture and self.\(^{24}\) Though he believes that these are not the only possible forms of the view, and they are not mutually exclusive. Yet it becomes imperative to understand them differently based on the divided loyalty of dominant scholarship in this regard. According to Scheffler, cosmopolitans about culture and self believes that when two cultures interact, there is always two possibilities- firstly, either there is mutual appreciation for some elements which either culture would adopt or they would find it problematic and would try to resist its influence. In both these cases a kind of ‘creative interaction’ is vigilant. So, cosmopolitans believe that cultures are constantly in flux, being modified, updated, recast and reconceived. Further 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 doing so. It is believed that if an individual was to have a coherent sense of self or to have available to them the kinds of choices that make a good life possible it should flourish by exercising its creativity to construct new ways of life using the most heterogeneous cultural materials. This invariably improves the stock of cultural resources on which others may draw.

The question is that whether the idea of world citizenship advocated within cosmopolitanism is optional or is it asserted. This specially connotes to the argument that individual cannot be situated within a single cultural tradition in order to flourish. Does it mean that an individual cannot flourish in that way? What if the aims and aspirations of an individual is structured by the values and traditions of a particular cultural community. The extreme view denies that

adherence to the values and traditions of a particular cultural community represent a viable way of life in the modern world. The moderate view however is ready to accept that some people will continue to do so. Waldron argues that 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.’ 25 However, even Waldron seems to be tempted by a stronger claim that ‘the hybrid lifestyle of the true cosmopolitan is in fact the only appropriate response to the modern world in which we live.’ 26 So this ambiguity is even clear in the views of Waldron.

On the other hand, Nussbaum seems 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, whether or not doing so will promote the good of humanity at large.

We should look at the issue from a larger framework. Equal worth of all persons should never imply each person must treat every other person equally in all respects, what it could probably mean is that people should be treated equally unless there are good reasons for treating them unequally. One must understand that there are special responsibilities towards individuals whom they are closely attached and this cannot be shared. 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 from it. But even cosmopolitan life may not have a readymade alternative infrastructure to offer. There may be no institution too 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. 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. Scheffler argues that 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. A moderate form of

cosmopolitanism, according to Scheffler, can only sustain firstly some people 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. Secondly other people should 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. This understanding of cultural identity of an individual and its probable situation in the cosmopolitan world brings forth and celebrates another important value of human existence i.e. the liberty of an individual to make choices.

**Cosmopolitanism- the way ahead**

Cultural cosmopolitanism is not at loggerheads with national culture; it does not deny cultural difference or the enduring significance of national tradition. It is not against cultural diversity. Few, if any, contemporary cosmopolitans hold such views. Rather cultural cosmopolitanism should be understood as the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities of fate and alternative style of life. It encompasses the possibility of dialogue with the traditions and discourses of others with the aim of expanding the horizon of one’s own framework of meaning and prejudice. Political agents who can ‘reason from the points of others’ are better equipped to resolve, and resolve fairly, the challenging transboundary in sense that create overlapping communities of fate. The development of this kind of cultural cosmopolitanism depends on the recognition by growing numbers of peoples of the increasing interconnectedness of political communities in diverse domains, and the development of an understanding of overlapping ‘collective fortunes’ which require collective solutions- locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

But can this opinion be forced? For a better understanding of the concern, we need to differentiate between ‘cosmopolitan way of living’ and a ‘cosmopolitan world order’. The stage in which we live today is a form of ‘cosmopolitan way of living’ whereas cosmopolitan world order refers to an attempt to institutionalize cosmopolitanism to make it ‘the way of living’. Cosmopolitan way of living is based on the belief that there are global concerns which affect humanity at large. The issues of environmentalism, human rights etc. are issues where a general consensus may be drawn, issues where a grand scale human solidarity can be expected. In a globalized world, with efficient

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technological and communication development it has become possible to extend participation and share concerns about problems that human civilization faces. The ‘cosmopolitan way of living’ transcends human concern beyond cultural identities based on the proposition that there are issues that render our support beyond the boundaries of our location both cultural and national. We are in such and the issues are permeating and affecting every section of our society on a day-to-day basis. However, ‘cosmopolitan world order’ is a distant dream. We don’t know how it would shape. It is based on the perception that the nations of the world will come together and gradually lose its political and normative importance. Every individual shall become ‘citizen of the world’ and no matter how this institutional frame takes shape, the citizens will be prioritizing their cosmopolitan identity over their other identities.

The most important aspect that we must be vigilant about is about the nature of this future possibility. Let us not forget that globalization was endorsed by many as if it would bring seminal change in the way human beings lived. No doubt the changes were seminal, but how far were they positive? There are still doubts about the imperialist agenda being forwarded in the name of globalization by some affluent world powers. The ever increasing income gaps within societies, and the development of few nations at the cost of others is an explicit example. So let us not be over optimistic about a cosmopolitan world structure. Any social change has its own advantages and disadvantages and cosmopolitanism is no exception. A cosmopolitan world order cannot be created nor can it be sustained until and unless it deals with the identity questions. As of now the advocates of cosmopolitanism themselves seem to be confused about how to deal with this specific issues. In such a situation, what is important is that the development of cosmopolitan world order, if ever possible should evolve naturally from the cosmopolitan way of living and should not force a ‘cosmopolitan way of living’. Any attempt to force ‘a way of living’ will leave the questions regarding cultural identity unresolved which can be counterproductive to the sustenance of such a system. Any idea of a cultural cosmopolitanism has to survive and jostle for recognition alongside deeply held national, ethnic and religious traditions. The project of universalism should not undermine the importance of cultural identities because it will then fall prey to the same criticism which has been historically attached to the ‘oppressive cultures’, which is to compromise individual liberty. In an attempt to challenge cultural particularities, it should not evolve as a reductionist counter ideology. As an ideal it should celebrate and enhance human freedoms and aim at constructing a free society where individuals can freely interact, deliberate and decide their own future. Let us not forget that cosmopolitanism is after all a cultural and cognitive orientation, not an inevitability of history.

References


