

What's left of cosmopolitanism?

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Over the past few decades, most Western democracies which contain national minorities have offered them a degree of cultural and in some cases territorial autonomy. In *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported?** the Canadian political theorist Will Kymlicka lays out principles that justify this unusually happy experience after the fact. Then he considers whether the experience and the principles are also applicable to the countries of Eastern Europe. His answer is yes: liberal pluralism *can* be exported. There are differences, of course – Eastern Europe's history of alien imperial occupation, the fragility of its democratic structures and traditions, the threat many feel from neighbouring states tugging on the loyalties of 'kin' minorities, and so on – but he concludes that these differences are not sufficient. And, for reasons that might give one pause, Kymlicka gets considerable sympathy from the fifteen respondents, occupying the centre of the book, who might have been expected to give more weight to the differences. On the whole, they put up only weak barriers to this new liberal pluralist import. The book's atmosphere is strongly anti-protectionist.

Though he is not even faintly alarmed by the title's free trade metaphor, Kymlicka is not uncritical of the Western democracies. On the contrary, much of his quarrel is with them – perhaps as much as with the Eastern Europeans. Western liberals believe that they have kept culture out of the public realm, using the public/private line so as not to take sides for or against any one culture. Kymlicka calls this belief 'the myth of ethnocultural neutrality'. He demonstrates that the so-called secular or civic nation has never been free of ethnic partisanship. Culturally speaking, 'thin' versions of national identity have always been thick with hidden privileges for the majority culture. And if majority culture has always received public support,

he argues, then there are no grounds for relegating endangered minority cultures to the private sphere. The state can no longer be 'indifferent to the ability of ethnocultural groups to reproduce themselves over time' (16).

Kymlicka wants his argument with liberalism to be explicitly philosophical. He notes that 'the theory of liberal democracy presented at the philosophical level does not clearly defend, or even allow for, the sorts of minority rights being pushed at the political level' (xiii). His aim is to bring the two levels back into sync by adjusting the philosophical level to the facts on the ground. Yet the book gives a great deal of weight – more than it recognizes – to the facts on the ground, to actuality, and thus indirectly to the powers that have produced and continue to produce that actuality. One might describe it as more pragmatic than philosophical. Or one might say that it poses some surprisingly interesting questions about the relation between philosophy and actuality, or philosophy and power.

If one admits that liberalism has in fact privileged the majority culture, what follows? For Kymlicka, it follows that minorities should have 'the same powers of nation-building' as the majority, '*subject to the same liberal limitations*' (27). The limitations are that minorities must be held to the same standards as majorities: there can be no tolerating of intolerance. The positive part of the equation is less clear. Kymlicka suggests that minority and majority nation-building powers parallel each other at different scales but do not collide, even though both sets of powers are being exercised within the same nation-state. Yet there are obviously certain powers – for example, over foreign policy – that the minority can enjoy only if the majority gives them up, and vice versa. So the real

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issue is which rights and powers are meant. Kymlicka's prime examples are cultural rights – control over place names, the language and content of schooling and local media, and so on. Cultural rights are both clearly desirable and – compared to what minorities might be asking – relatively unthreatening. When he talks about culture, his paradigm seems to be a language rather than, say, a religion: a necessary means of self-expression rather than an optional apparatus of obfuscation and oppression. His minorities are almost all model minorities. They are interested in autonomy, but they are emphatically not interested in secession.

Shaken by the results of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, nearly everyone today is terrified by the prospect of secession and thus unwilling to question national borders. Yet it is no secret that many borders now treated as sacrosanct – and not merely those drawn up after World War II by the colonial powers – were imposed from without, arbitrarily and unjustly. Kymlicka's respect for existing borders – which, like much of the book, seems eminently reasonable but of course restricts in advance what can be done for transnational minorities – is only one of the ways in which this volume quietly abstains from protest against those who exercise power now and have exercised it in the past. Another is the quiet consensus among the East European respondents that the pressure on them to respond is not obnoxious intervention and is no cause of legitimate resentment. They seem to share the conviction that the fate of their countries depends in large part on their eventual admission to the EU, and that admission to the EU depends on looking presentable with regard to minorities. Romania's political class, we are told, 'accepted new standards for minority protection ... sometimes against their personal beliefs', because 'NATO and the EU regarded the resolution of minority problems as a compulsory criterion for integration' (275). Kymlicka offers no objection to NATO and the EU (or for that matter the World Bank, which has decided to make respect for minority rights a criterion in evaluating development projects) using the leverage that the current balance of power has bestowed upon them.

Contemplating Kymlicka's acceptance of power inequalities like these, one might conclude that he has abandoned the ethical ground from which to condemn inequalities of cultural power. Is the preference given to majority culture within a nation, to which he objects, any more scandalous than the present economic and political dominance of Western over Eastern Europe or the past dominance that allowed those same powers in 1918 and 1945 to draw borders wherever they liked,

ignoring local populations? How can he object to the first point and not to the latter two? But Kymlicka's position becomes more coherent if we think of it as first and foremost an attempt to defend the Western nation-state. He appears to have decided, like most European states themselves, that it is only by conceding minority rights that they can save themselves from more serious ethnic fragmentation and disorder. From this perspective, the protection of the existing nation-state is not an added benefit of the protection of minorities; it's the point of the whole exercise. Hence the refusal to see any scandal in the exceptional powers the Western democracies jointly had and have – that is, the international order in which Western nation-states presently flourish. But this is a problem. As Francis Mulhern notes in his essay on Tom Nairn, 'any appeal to nationality is always a coded declaration for, or against, a substantive social state of affairs'.¹ The Bush administration's mad unilateralist rampage since September 2001, which has been carried out in the name of America's national sovereignty, does not compel us to resist only by voluntarily giving up all higher moral ground and restricting ourselves to the same degraded talk of national self-defence. When Kymlicka defends national sovereignty by urging strategic concessions to minorities, we are entitled to ask what substantive state of affairs is furthered. If he is interested in the rights of minorities largely because they threaten the nation-state, by the same token he seems uninterested in the rights of others who are *not* minorities, and this because they do *not* threaten the nation-state. Kymlicka defines national minorities as 'groups that formed complete and functioning societies on their historic homeland prior to being incorporated into a larger state' (23). This definition includes such groups as, for example, the Québécois in Canada and indigenous peoples in general. It excludes, for example, immigrants, refugees, guestworkers, the Romanies of Eastern Europe (who are internationally recognized as a minority), and (in the US context) African Americans. The issue for these other groups, he says, is greater ease of integration into the dominant society. The issue for national minorities is the opposite: protecting them against the pressure to integrate. But integration and autonomy do not exhaust the possible issues for members of these groups. And, since Kymlicka invites us to think pragmatically, let us add that this strong distinction seems likely to divide these two categories from each other politically, with disabling consequences for movements seeking to draw members from both sides of the line in a common pursuit of social justice. Taken up as he is with the problematic

of cultural identity, Kymlicka shows no interest in getting these collectivities together in a more inclusive, less identitarian one.

Here we return to the title's complacency about free trade. The other side of Kymlicka's hypersensitivity to culture is obliviousness to economics. Like Samuel Huntington, Kymlicka sees culture both as irreducible and – if not granted the autonomy it deserves – as the prime source of the major clashes of the future. He predicts confidently that 'ethnocultural conflict' will continue and increase in strength even when democracy and economic prosperity have been achieved. Indeed, he calls this 'the most important lesson that the West has had to learn' (84). Yet if the traditional liberal argument that ethnocultural conflict is a substitute for modernization and economic well-being has not been proven, as one of Kymlicka's respondents notes, neither has it been refuted, at least in Eastern Europe, 'since the desired level of modernization and economic well-being – which could arguably stop mobilization on the basis of ethnic affiliation – has not been achieved, and is nowhere in sight' (136). Kymlicka does not bring it any closer when he defines the holders of minority rights in such a way as to generate friction with others who are also seeking economic well-being.

Yet this does not bring satisfactory clarity to the politics of the international domain. That domain has always been murky for Marxists, and recent events have not made it less so. Consider the difficulty of assigning Kymlicka a political label. To Eastern Europeans, his it-works-for-us-and-it-should-work-for-you liberalism might well look like cosmopolitanism in the pejorative sense. Sticking up for the rights of minorities within the borders of another, weaker nation is a classic means of overriding and undercutting that nation's sovereignty. Yet Kymlicka speaks against cosmopolitanism, and his defence of national sovereignty would seem to claim the value that comes from its (undeclared) resistance to the United States, seen as cosmopolitanism's source. On this view, Kymlicka would be joining together Canada and Eastern Europe, which have national minorities, in a common and representative antagonism to the superpower that denies its own national minorities and instead sees itself as a 'nation of immigrants'. From this perspective, American cosmopolitanism could almost be defined by the erroneous assumption that the immigrant, who has freely consented to leave his/her homeland behind, can serve as an implicit universal subject. Yet dominant opinion in the United States would surely back Kymlicka's effort to pressure the Eastern Europeans on minority rights. And supposing that the United States

did put its power behind this effort, it would not have been proven beyond any doubt that the Left should oppose it. As we have seen, Kymlicka's liberalism by no means takes its political bearings from power, supporting those and only those who set themselves against it. Nor should it be encouraged to do so from the left. Whatever a left counterpart to liberal cosmopolitanism may be (if such a creature exists), it must flee the self-sacrificing romanticism of lost causes and seek the power to implement its ideas.

Kinds of cosmopolitanism

The substantive issues in American debates about cosmopolitanism are familiar: American cultural identity and the uses of American power. But there is a surprise hidden away in these bland and unoriginal phrases. They refer to two quite different and indeed, it might seem, diametrically opposed versions of cosmopolitanism. If one thinks of Martha Nussbaum, cosmopolitanism will seem to signify a means of restraining or perhaps redirecting America's use of its political and economic power. In her 1994 essay 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism', Nussbaum responded to a call by Richard Rorty for American academics to forget their divisive insistence on racial and ethnic identity and join together with their fellow Americans in an 'emotion of national pride'. Nussbaum asserted on the contrary that our 'primary allegiance' is to 'the worldwide community of human beings'. The problem for her is not how little sense of unity Americans have with each other, but how little sense of unity they have with the rest of the world – a world on which their actions and inactions impinge violently and massively, if mainly unconsciously. 'What are Americans to make of the fact that the high living standard we enjoy is one that very likely cannot be universalized, at least given the present costs of pollution and the present economic situation of developing nations, without ecological disaster?' If life-expectancy at birth is 78.2 years in Sweden and 39 years in Sierra Leone, then 'we are all going to have to do some tough thinking about the luck of birth and the morality of transfers of wealth from richer to poorer nations.'² Moving from the economic and environmental to the political, many of Nussbaum's allies have enlisted her cosmopolitan standard – the good of the human species – against America's history of abusive interventions in the affairs of other countries. So, for example, in *New Left Review* Daniele Archibugi has recently turned to cosmopolitanism in an effort to find moral and legal leverage that would condemn the NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia and help stop future interventions of the same kind.³

On the other hand, cosmopolitanism has also been prescribed as an antidote to the racial and ethnic divisiveness that Rorty associates with ‘unpatriotic’ intellectuals and that leads him to call for American academics to express more patriotism. In this sense, cosmopolitanism is presented as a benign form of American patriotism. In the work of historian David Hollinger and literary critic Ross Posnock, for example, cosmopolitanism refers to a multicultural America’s ability to wear its separate racial and ethnic identities lightly and thus rise above them. In *Postethnic America*, Hollinger argues his preference for a cosmopolitan rather than a pluralist vision of multiculturalism, with Kymlicka representing pluralism. Hollinger’s own ideal is an America that, while appreciating diversity, ‘is willing to put the future of every culture at risk through the sympathetic but critical scrutiny of other cultures’. In *Color and Culture* Posnock argues for a deracialized culture, or what he calls, citing the political philosopher Jeremy Waldron, ‘the cosmopolitan recognition that one lives as a “mixed-up self” “in a mixed-up world” where ancestral imperatives do not exert a preordained authority’.⁴

To use the language of geography, we could say that here we see cosmopolitanism on two different scales.⁵ And since geography matters, we have in effect two different cosmopolitanisms, the one national and the other transnational, which despite their structural resemblance cannot be asked the same questions or judged by the same criteria. Indeed, with regard to America, their political aims and effects might seem to be almost antithetical: in the one case, cosmopolitanism offers a check on and rebuke to American power; in the other it offers a source of national unity and pride. At any rate, the internal or domestic version of cosmopolitanism has certainly been received as if it were an expression of American nationalism, and in the international context a dangerous one. In a retort to Hollinger, Kymlicka argues that, however appropriate to the United States, Hollinger’s ‘open, fluid, and voluntary conception of American multiculturalism’ has a ‘pernicious influence in other countries’, countries to whose minority nationalisms, more deeply rooted in history, it does not apply. Thus Hollinger’s position ‘is more accurately called “pan-American” than “cosmopolitan”’.⁶

Somewhat less plausibly, this same charge is also aimed at the transnational version of cosmopolitanism. Whatever comes from America, it appears, is American imperialism. Indeed, these days this is also true for cosmopolitan ideas that do not come from America.

Daniele Archibugi, as I said, offers cosmopolitanism as a means of resisting the American-led bombing of the former Yugoslavia. But what his critics see in him is Americanism. According to Peter Gowan, also writing in *New Left Review*, Archibugi and the other New Liberal Cosmopolitans have repressed ‘the central fact of contemporary international relations’, namely that one country, the United States, ‘has acquired absolute military dominance over every other state or combination of states on the entire planet, a development without precedent in world history’. And in Gowan’s view that fact returns from the repressed to take over Archibugi’s argument: ‘Any form of liberal cosmopolitanism project for a new world order requires the subordination of all states to some form of supra-state planetary authority’. We know who that authority is. The various institutions of so-called ‘global governance’ that already exist are merely ‘lightly disguised instruments of US policy’. The international system is built around ‘American hegemony’, and American hegemony is what Archibugi ultimately expresses.⁷ The same sentiment is echoed by another *New Left Review* critic, Timothy Brennan: ‘if we wished to capture the essence of cosmopolitanism in a single formula, it would be this. It is a discourse of the universal that is inherently local – a locality that is always surreptitiously imperial’.⁸ Cosmopolitanism is imperialism, American imperialism, even when it is aimed against American imperialism.

This is not quite as incoherent as it sounds. Those who worry that human rights internationalism is being used as a tool of American national interest have a point. In the traditional American debate between so-called isolationists and so-called internationalists, Perry Anderson has recently observed, American national interest is taken for granted as the proper and inescapable criterion by both sides.⁹ It is true that, unlike such impetuous champions of human rights as Michael Ignatieff and Samatha Power, Nussbaum and Archibugi are properly cautious about bestowing any special responsibility for action upon the US government. Their hopes are pinned on NGOs and international agencies like the United Nations. I suppose that even Nussbaum could be accused of unintentionally softening up public opinion for US interventions that she herself might deplore. Still, it does not follow that if a nation is sufficiently dominant, any cultural products or ideas emanating from it can be labelled versions of its domination, which is to say its nationalism. Even a superpower cannot be permitted to fill up the entire landscape, obliterating all distinctions around it, making anti-American

indistinguishable from pro-American and leaving us to wonder whether either of these epithets is specific enough to do any real political work.

In a response to Kymlicka in the journal *Constellations*, Hollinger offers a clever and attractive way of dissipating this pervasive confusion. There are indeed two kinds of cosmopolitanism, Hollinger says. But the division is not between a larger transnational kind, which is critical of the nation, and a smaller national kind, which is uncritical of the nation and critical instead of divisive identities within it. Hollinger draws a line, rather, between a full and an empty cosmopolitanism. On the empty side is the old, universalist cosmopolitanism of Martha Nussbaum, which demands primary allegiance at the level of the planet. On the full side is a large and growing field of what Hollinger calls 'New Cosmopolitans'. Though diverse, all of these reject the absoluteness of Nussbaum's commitment to humanity as a whole and instead try to fill cosmopolitanism with historical substance, or in Hollinger's words 'to bring cosmopolitanism down to earth, to indicate that cosmopolitanism can deliver some of the goods ostensibly provided by patriots, provincials, parochials, populists, tribalists, and above all nationalists'. Those who have been qualifying cosmopolitanism with adjectives like rooted, vernacular, critical, discrepant, comparative, and actually-existing have been doing so, Hollinger argues, in order to load up the otherwise empty concept with 'history, the masses of mankind, the realities of power, and the need for politically viable solidarities'.¹⁰

Of course, there is a price to pay for thus lowering the concept into the actual, compromising with local, national and nationalist attachments. It is unclear that the 'politically viable solidarities' that are now seen as filling or embodying cosmopolitanism have acted against the same targets that were designated by the concept in its empty or radically critical guise. Once this political energy is mobilized, to what extent is it mobilized against aggressively national projects? Cosmopolitanism would appear to belong, like Habermas's public sphere, to that intriguing and frustrating set of terms – it would be interesting to speculate on whether or not they are restricted to the tradition of Kant – that seem perpetually torn between an empirical dimension and a normative dimension. The trade-off is familiar. To the extent that it seems to float outside or above social life, a normative concept like cosmopolitanism will always be vulnerable to charges like elitism and inefficacy. It can only live up to its own critical and world-changing aspirations by being grounded in a constituency or constituencies.

But to the extent that it is so grounded, becoming the possession of actual social groups, it takes on the less-than-ideal political characteristics of those groups, each of which can of course be seen as less than ideally cosmopolitan in its treatment of others. What cosmopolitanism gains in empirical actuality and forcefulness, it threatens to surrender in radical normative edge.

It is to Hollinger's credit that he claims no way out of this dilemma, no possibility of simply choosing the actual *over* the normative or the abstract. He is well aware of the need to balance or negotiate commitments to justice on a global scale against solidarity with the most disadvantaged of one's fellow citizens, solidarity that has found no better form for the moment than the welfare state. Cosmopolitanism in Hollinger's 'new' sense involves

respecting the instincts to give special treatment to those with whom one is intimately connected and by whom one is socially sustained, and respecting, further, the honest difficulties that even virtuous people have in achieving solidarity with persons they perceive as very different from themselves. It is out of respect for these instincts and honest difficulties that the New Cosmopolitanism looks towards nation-states, as well as towards transnational organizations, as potential instruments for the support of the basic welfare and human rights of as wide a circle of humanity as can be reached.¹¹

It is as sharers in these 'honest difficulties', willing to face rather than ignore 'the contradiction between the needs of the ethnos and the needs of the species', that Hollinger can suavely enlist most of Nussbaum's supposedly anti-cosmopolitan critics in the New Cosmopolitans' camp.

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

If Nussbaum does not stand to the 'universalist left' of Hollinger's broadly consensual cosmopolitan-

ism, it's also unclear that Kymlicka stands entirely outside it on what Hollinger calls 'the pluralist right'.¹² And if so – I will say more about this in a moment – then it would appear that the lines separating the New Cosmopolitans from its Others will not hold. In which case we need some new and different lines. My preference would be for lines that will split apart the cosy collectivity of the New Cosmopolitans, restoring some antagonism to a subject that notoriously lends itself to painless pieties – lines involving history and economics, or time and money.

Laundering culture

Kymlicka's version of the difference between his position and that of cosmopolitans like Hollinger goes as follows:

liberal nationalisms wish to become cosmopolitan in practice, in the sense of embracing cultural interchange, without accepting the cosmopolitan ideology which denies that people have any deep bond to their own language and cultural community. (57)

The idea here seems to be that 'embracing cultural exchange' should not undercut, indeed should have no effect upon, the 'deep bond' to one's cultural community. Hollinger's version of the difference between his position and that of pluralists like Kymlicka goes as follows:

Cosmopolitans are specialists in the creating of the new, while cautious about destroying the old; pluralists are specialists in the conservation of the old while cautious about creating the new.¹³

By 'the new', Hollinger clearly means a new that does destroy, undercut or move away from the old, and by 'the old' he seems to mean bonds to one's cultural community. So both present the issue between them as a culture's right to persist in time without interference.

The temporal issue seems to divide Hollinger and Kymlicka more thoroughly than the spatial issue of whether cosmopolitanism is properly national or transnational. Hollinger is more reticent about according special rights to national minorities, thereby weakening solidarity within the nation, but he and Kymlicka would seem to agree about the unlikelihood of achieving solidarity beyond the nation. 'Transnational activism is a good thing', Kymlicka writes, 'as is the exchange of information across borders, but the only forum in which genuine democracy occurs is within national boundaries.' 'People belong to the same community of fate if they *care* about each other's fate, and want to *share* each other's fate – that is, want to meet certain challenges together, so as to share each other's blessings and burdens.'¹⁴ But there is little evidence of such feeling, he says, between Canadians, Mexicans and Americans. I cannot imagine Hollinger seriously dissenting from this.

Yet this empirical objection to a normative ideal, which many people of otherwise different positions might share, can also be expressed in terms of time. It may seem like a small amendment to add that there is *as yet* little evidence of transnational solidarity. But to say 'as yet' is to deny that what has been in the past has authority over present conduct. This denial would seem to be a distinguishing attribute of both national and transnational cosmopolitanism. Hollinger is trying to give cosmopolitanism a history, but the concept would seem to be so refreshing to him because it offers to liberate us *from* history, or from the weight of historical identity and historical injustice. In this sense the quintessential anti-cosmopolitan is Samuel Huntington, whose view of the world dramatically overvalues the past, imagining that all the forces determining the present course of history are primal, archaic cultural identities.¹⁵ By contrast, cosmopolitanism's characteristic temporality is expressed in a few words from Jeremy Waldron. Waldron has been discussing 'indigenous communities in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand' and how, like an individualist in a state of



nature, 'they may yearn for the days of their own self-sufficiency'. Now, however, they find themselves both threatened and protected by larger political structures on which they are dependent, structures whose relation to them they must actively manage. Waldron writes: 'Yet here we all are. Our lives or practices, whether individual or communal, are in fact no longer self-sufficient.' Rather than the undeniable differences in where we have come from, what matters is a shared condition of interdependency here and now.¹⁶

It is a short step from this pragmatic disqualification of past injustice to an equally pragmatic disqualification of present economic inequality. In his own argument for cosmopolitanism and against artificially protecting cultures from the forces of change, Waldron proposes, rightly I think, that people do not in fact need 'a' culture of the sort Kymlicka imagines when he talks of 'belonging' to a culture – in other words, culture seen as an integral whole. What people need is cultural 'materials'. And these cultural materials can come to us from any number of diverse and distant sources; indeed, like the other goods we use every day, they can and do come from around the world. As Waldron puts it, 'the materials are simply *available*, from all corners of the world, as more or less meaningful fragments, images, and snatches of stories'.¹⁷ This is empirically true, and for the purposes of his (empirical) argument about need, the point is well taken. But the argument also has a hidden normative dimension. The model of cultural transmission that it relies upon is that of the world capitalist system, which not only provides cultural materials 'from all corners of the world', but does so in precisely the cosmopolitan spirit of 'here we all are'. How and where they are produced, and what inequalities and injustices may have been involved in their production – none of this is judged to be relevant. What matters simply is that here these materials are 'available'. One might say that cosmopolitanism has thus entered into the business of laundering culture, washing the commodity clean of whatever sweatshop-style indignities may have accompanied its emergence and distribution, and allowing or enjoining us to look upon it here and now as conveniently ready for our use.

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

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

Beyond welfare

If there is such a thing as a left-wing cosmopolitanism, one would imagine it would collide with the liberal or 'here we all are' version on the grounds of economic inequality. But this is by no means a straightforward matter. Kymlicka distinguishes between national minorities and immigrants on the grounds of consent. Immigrants have chosen to leave their country, and thus can be assumed to have consented to the culture of their new country. Indigenous peoples and national minorities did not consent, but were colonized and conquered.¹⁸ These historical injustices render them deserving of special rights and protections, Kymlicka concludes, that should not be accorded to everyone. His conclusion has been much contested. Even sympathetic critics have replied that the class of people who never consented to the majority culture is very much larger than Kymlicka thinks. As Joseph Carens writes, Kymlicka has been obliged to concede 'that refugees do not come voluntarily and that the assumption that other immigrants come voluntarily may be inappropriate given the vast economic inequalities in the world'.¹⁹ Once the criterion of 'economic inequality' has been put in play, it is impossible to keep it in quarantine. It is not merely the free consent of the immigrant that is undermined by economic hardship. In a world of nations that are so deeply divided between rich and poor, economic inequality replaces freedom with necessity almost everywhere one looks. How is it possible to adapt to the injustices of conquest and

colonization, as Kymlicka does, but not do the same, for example, for the fear of starvation?

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

The liberal cosmopolitan will perhaps be tempted to offer such a critique of Kymlicka not as a basis for demanding an end to economic inequality, but merely as a way of discrediting Kymlicka's special pleading for national minorities as an exceptional case. The liberal temptation is to treat everyone alike as capable of free consent, regardless of their social or economic location. And yet the temptation can be and has been resisted. Liberal support for the welfare state – certainly the strongest part of the liberal case for nationalism – does make economic inequality into an exceptional case.²⁰ So for the Left one touchstone would seem to be how far that support goes, both financially and geographically. A left cosmopolitanism would not depend on the capitalist system to undo the enormous disparities of wealth and insecurity that make welfare necessary. In the long term it would look beyond welfare. And in the short term it would insist that welfare tasks like providing a safety net and redistributing wealth even to a limited degree form a transnational rather than a merely national project.

Notes

1. Francis Mulhern, 'Britain after Nairn', *New Left Review* NS 5, September–October 2000, pp. 53–66; 59.
2. Martha C. Nussbaum, 'Reply', in Martha C. Nussbaum and respondents, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1996, p. 135.
3. Daniele Archibugi, 'Cosmopolitical Democracy', *New Left Review*, NS 4, July–August 2000, pp. 137–50.
4. David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, revised and expanded edn, Basic Books, New York, 2000; Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture:*

Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1998. See also Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, Belknap/Harvard, Cambridge MA, 2000.

5. Unfortunately, these two geographical scales of cosmopolitanism do not necessarily correspond to two different definitions of the nation, or two different moments in time. The same country can have both internal national solidarity and militaristic foreign policy, domestic welfare and foreign aggression, at the same time, like the Cold War USA or Bismarck's Germany; or, like the USA now, can indulge in a certain multicultural cosmopolitanism at home without this having any noticeable effect on its behaviour towards other nations.
6. Will Kymlicka, 'American Multiculturalism in the International Arena', *Dissent*, Fall 1998, pp. 73–9; 73, 78.
7. Peter Gowan, 'Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism', *New Left Review*, NS 11, September–October 2001, pp. 79–93; 81, 83, 84, 93.
8. Cited by Gowan, *ibid.*, p. 81.
9. Perry Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary', *New Left Review*, NS 14, March–April 2002, pp. 5–25.
10. David A. Hollinger, 'Not Pluralists, Not Universalists, The New Cosmopolitans Find Their Own Way', *Constellations*, June 2001, pp. 236–48.
11. *Ibid.*
12. In a commentary on David Held, Kymlicka declares himself in sympathy with Held's cosmopolitan 'efforts to strengthen the international enforcement of human rights' as well as his demand that the recognition of states should be contingent on 'democratic legitimation.' Will Kymlicka, 'Citizenship in an Era of Globalization: Commentary on Held', in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordón, eds, *Democracy's Edges*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 112–26. Like Hollinger, Kymlicka rejects cosmopolitanism absolutely only in its (supposed) absolutist variant. 'As an ideology, cosmopolitanism rejects all forms of nationalism, and opposes efforts by the state to protect national identities and cultures. It is clear that citizens of Western democracies are not "cosmopolitan" in this sense' (*Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported*, p. 57).
13. Hollinger, 'Not Pluralists, Not Universalists'.
14. 'Citizenship', pp. 124, 115.
15. In comparison with Huntington, Kymlicka is too much of a liberal (or a cosmopolitan) in spite of his brief for minority rights, in the sense that he allows the concept of consent to eradicate all injustices other than conquest and colonization, for example those that led to immigration.
16. Jeremy Waldron, 'Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative', in Will Kymlicka ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, pp. 93–119.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 107–8.
18. This falls apart as soon as immigrants have offspring. The children of immigrants have consented to nothing.
19. Joseph H. Carens, *Culture, Citizenship, and Community: A Contextual Exploration of Justice as Evenhandedness*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 55n.
20. See, for example, Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, pp. 148–9.