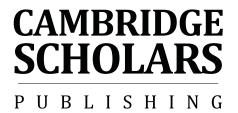# The Local Meets the Global in Performance

The Local Meets the Global in Performance

Edited by

Pirkko Koski and Melissa Sihra

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

PIRKKO KOSKI AND MELISSA SIHRA

The 15th World Congress of the International Federation for Theatre Research in Helsinki, Finland, in 2006 had as its theme the "Global vs. Local". This theme sought to explore the relationship between contemporary global and local experiences, and to consider how theatre and performance responds to and informs this interface. With regard to current globalized super-structures, the materiality and cultural specificity of theatre and performance can serve as an important counterbalance to world trade and communication which often has no local address. It is important to consider how globalization impacts in different ways upon every local context. Globalization can be regarded as a set of social as well as economic processes, where the two are inextricably linked in terms of cultural production and human subjectivity. Yet, however much globalization pervades contemporary experience, it is a notoriously (perhaps sometimes deliberately) difficult concept to define. Armand Mattelart refers to globalization as, "One of those tricky words, one of those instrumental notions that, under the effect of market logics and without citizens being aware of it, have been naturalized to the point of becoming indispensable for establishing communication between people of different cultures."[1] Capital, workers and other commodities are constantly on the move and the hegemonic market influences the distribution of resources both in national and international economic systems. Neoliberalism, the commitment to a particular "idea" of freedom in terms of the ostensible unfettered circulation of goods and trade and the liberation of capital outside of social contexts and their obligations is, unsurprisingly, a bedrock of globalization. Neoliberalism, that is, "freedom" in quotation-marks, privileges certain bodies, goods, cultures and economies through a naturalized process of selection. Globalization often operates through a deliberate neoliberal strategy of abstraction, predicated upon essentially unequal notions of "universality". Implicated in this is the problematic erasure and mystification of ethical consequences

---

[1] Armand Mattelart cited in Schirato & Webb, *Understanding Globalisation,* 1.

of the social labour of production which enables global capitalism. Tony Schirato and Jen Webb describe globalization as, "the editing out of one broad spectrum of social issues, perspectives and values, and [the] editing in of another as the only valid reality."[2] If globalization is considered in terms of cultural as well as economic production, we can see how the exclusion of cultural specificities and identities displays what Pierre Bourdieu terms symbolic violence with material effects. Bourdieu's term for the combination of ideologies that naturalize power imbalances is 'doxa': "By using doxa we accept many things without knowing them, this is what is meant by ideology".[3] It is true that the embedded structural rationality of the system "threatens" the communicative rationality of the world of experience and human interactivity. Schirato and Webb observe this to be the,

> Westernisation of the globe. Though cultural products of course flow across and around the globe, most of the flow is from the West out, or it is regulated by Western marked forces. [T]he effect then is of a single commodity/identity world, the destruction of the local […] and the reimagining or renarrativizing of traditions as commodities.[4]

Theatre and performance, when rooted in the local and expressive of subjective specificities, goes some way then to interact with, and perhaps challenge, the self-determining hegemony of globalization.

Globalization has, on the one hand, linked "distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events that are occurring miles away and vice versa," and, on the other hand, has been defined as an "integration of national economics into the global economy through trade and investment rules and privatization, aided by technological advances."[5] The role of national cultures especially, and popular national movements, has led to differing conclusions. Certainly, local and global identities are inextricably interwoven. As Arjun Appadurai writes, "locality is always emergent from the practices of local subjects in specific neighborhoods"[6], and it can also be regarded as "primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial [and] constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the

---

[2] Shirato & Webb, *Understanding Globalisation,* 6.

[3] Eagleton, "Doxa and Common Life: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu", 265-277.

[4] Schirato & Webb, *Understanding Globalisation,* 155.

[5] Anthony Giddens / Colin Hines according to Joost Smiers, 13.

[6] Appadurai, *Modernity at large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 198.

relativity of contexts."[7] This implies a variety of localities - those which are ontologically as well as geographically present, in addition to those transmitted by global networks.

The IFTR/FIRT World Congress aimed at exploring the ways in which the fields of theatre and performance respond to, and are shaped by, the global and local, teasing-out the intricacies of this complex relationship. It is imperative to consider what the "global", "transnational," or "international" signify when coupled with contexts of theatre and performance, and what role there is for "local" theatrical events in our globalizing world, as well as the ways in which performances are linked to global networks and transnational flows of capital. As theatre scholars, we must negotiate the plurality of values marking world culture and interrogate the ways in which pluralism itself is a concept fraught with difficulty. The relationship between national identity-formation and theatre is also central to a discussion of culture, performance and globalization, where the emergence of globality has inevitably altered the role of theatre as a site for national constructions. In making a significant contribution to the discussion of these ideas, it also emerged during the Congress that the concepts "local" and "global" are not always in opposition with one another, but rather, are entangled and that there is, as yet, no conclusive answer to these issues.

The disciplines of theatre and performance studies are beginning to offer expert knowledge about contemporary practices across a world spectrum and to contribute a theoretical grasp of the relationship between performance and culture in the rapidly changing climates of globalization and transnational mobilities. The questions around theatre, globalization and local phenomena have been addressed in a number of recent publications: *Theatre Journal* (57:3) published a special volume dedicated to the subject in 2005, as did *Contemporary Theatre Review* (16:1) in 2006. In 2009, *Global Changes - Local Stages: How Theatre Functions in Smaller European Countries*, edited by Hans van Maanen, Andreas Kotte and Anneli Saro (Rodopi, 2009), focused on different European states. With an understanding of historicity and ethical consequence, Dan Rebellato discusses the terms 'globalization' and 'theatre' and the meaning that they have in his lively and committed book *Theatre & Globalization* (2009). Also in the same year, Patrick Lonergan's book, *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* (2009), observes how "globalization – as a cultural phenomenon, an economic process, a mode of rhetoric – can help us to understand very different

---

[7] Ibid., 178.

kinds of theatre."[8] These recent volumes have therefore begun a discussion which is, at this point in time, nascent and evolving.

Theatre and performance occurs in time and space, and exists between the audience and performer as a communicative event. This world of experience and human interactivity cannot easily be overshadowed by global networks or commercial systems and remains a potent force of expression and, at times, resistance. Theatre and performance events, because of their often inherent localism, have become globally more important than ever, but the consequences of this are not unambiguous. With some reservation, Rebellato considers the potential of performance: "[I]n broad terms, the uniqueness of each theatrical performance does in some sense tie theatre to place; so can this be a source of political strength?"[9] The essays in this collection respond in different ways to this question of political efficacy, and local and global engagements in terms of theatre, performance and contemporary human experience.

Since 2006, the authors in this volume have developed the ideas that they presented in their congress papers and explore a variety of ways in which theatre has become a resonant site for the encounter between the local and global. The collection includes 10 chapters chosen out of the 350 research papers which were delivered at the IFTR World Congress. The variety of writers and topics not only represents different continents - the researchers' individual approaches are also based upon their local traditions, mirroring the variety of research traditions from global viewpoints. The anthology concludes with a reflection upon the ideas put forth in this volume, and the broader connectivities of the local and the global, between Janelle Reinelt and Marvin Carlson.

Juha Sihvola (Finland), in his essay "The Global and the Local in Ethics, Education and Representation", links the field with a more general approach to globalization. In our world, we have innumerable economic, cultural and political ties, and no one can be genuinely independent. From the viewpoint of philosophical cosmopolitanism, Sihvola discusses, "which kind of philosophical position would be most appropriate in order to establish a balance between the various global and local affiliations and obligations human beings may ever have."

The collection focuses very much upon the postcolonial subject and the situated knowledge which foregrounds partiality and difference that runs alongside hegemonic agreements. In her essay, "Internationalism, Performance and Public Culture", Lynette Hunter (USA), concentrates on

---

[8] Lonergan, *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era,* 4.

[9] Rebellato, *Theatre & Globalization*, 52-53.

the governing structures around global and national discourses. For Hunter, globalization cannot work without nation state structures, "the medium through which global economics and ideologies are affected." Alongside hegemonic structures, however, are running "strategies for living and agency that are not primarily infected by those structures." Her essay contends that, "The braided way highlights the possibilities of common strength from contiguous but quite different aims and agendas, and can include those of national and global governing structures."

Nehad Selaiha (Egypt) gives a very personal view of the experience of globalization and the stimulation of the global imagination in her career in "Reconstructing the 'Local': a Personal Narrative." According to Selaiha, under the impact of globalization and in view of the disruptive and gradual erosion of local communities and cultures, artists and intellectuals "tend to create their own cultural affiliations and construct their own cultural habitats." Cultural identities have become fluid, relative personal choices, although assumptions of a monolithic 'culture' lead to the problematic sense that "people sharing time and place will also automatically share modes of thought, traditions and customs."

Several chapters discuss notions of exilic and diasporic theatre. Yana Meerzon (Canada), in "On Theatre and Exile: Towards a Definition of Exilic Theatre as a Form of Glocalization", and Yasushi Nagata (Japan) in "Two Benefits of Liberalization: A Cross Section of the Korean Diaspora Theatre in Russia and Japan", survey phenomena where theatre has roots and traditions in another country. Instead of representing the source or the target culture these productions create a new identity of their own. Meerzon suggests that "a definition of exilic theatre demands the understanding of cognitive processes and artistic tendencies taking place at the moment of cultural explosion and language change." She argues that "cultural, spatial and temporal displacement influences cognitive processes of an *émigré* artist [and that] exilic theatre is a utopian experience based on the dialogical principles of *glocalisation*, which ensures not only bilingualism as a state of permanent translation but also artistic struggle between traditions." Nagata discusses the diasporic theatre of Koreans and the works of two dramatists of Korean origin, Anatoly Kim and Kohei Tsuka, in the former Soviet Union and in Japan. In the Russian Far East, Koreans who had lived there since the end of the nineteenth century were forced under Stalinism to move into Central Asia. In Japan, Korean immigration began as a result of Japanese colonization. These two dramatists "offer an example of [the ability] to maintain an ambiguous identity and set of affiliations, whilst also aspiring to assimilate into the local, majority culture." Nagata's essay displays the significance of

identity in complex historical processes and the differing strategies in solving its problems.

Denise Varney (Australia), in "Perfect Unhappiness: Globalisation in the Suburbs", points out that feminist globalization scholars "have criticized the dominant economist model of globalization for its marginalization and/or exclusion of feminist and/or gendered approaches to globalization." In her analysis of German playwright and director Anna Langhoff's *Frieden Frieden* and Australian playwright Katherine Thomson's *Harbour,* Varney considers the ways in which women and men are situated within local and global structures, "drawing attention to the performative mode through which the subject engages with contemporary culture", with emphasis on class, gender and ethnicity. In terms of the complexity of the interrelationship between localism and the global, Varney points out Langhoff's problematising of the binary in terms of how the local is posited here as oppressive, limiting and impersonal. Varney contends that, "With its aura of liveness and presence, its capacity for different embodiments of the global subject and its balancing of real and theatrical space-time co-ordinates, theatre is a prime location for the interplay of the local and the global."

In "The Lure of the Local, the Seduction of the Global: Locating Intermediality in Eddie Ladd's *Scarface**", Heike Roms (Wales) discusses the difficulty of asserting where the performance is located and the ambivalent position of the "cosmopolitan consciousness" in the midst of local perspectives, mass media and commercialism. Roms analyses *Scarface** as a means through which to meditate upon the relationship of theatre and performance to the local and the global, observing a mutuality of purpose in this interface. For Roms, this is "a performance piece that engages with questions of globalization through an intermedial play with the "non-reproducible liveness" and "intractable localness" of theatre." Crucially, she posits that: "Instead of regarding theatre's local nature as being *per se* in opposition to globalization, it may thus be argued that globalisation's concomitant experience of space as interconnectivity […] presents not a departure from, but a development of, spatial experience that is already figured in theatre's suspension between a "somewhere" and an "elsewhere"."

Another perspective upon the complexity of the local and the global is put forth by Joanne Tompkins (Australia) in "Balancing the 'Local' and the 'Global' in Theatre for the International Stage: The Stage Adaptation of David Malouf's *Johnno*". Tompkins analyses the tensions between the local and the global in terms of cultural specificity, reception and meaning with regard to *Johnno's* staging in Brisbane and then in the UK as a co-

production with the Derby Playhouse. Tompkins argues that the same production is local in one context and "universal" in the global market, where "the perceived need to universalize representations of the "local" can be seen to compromise, rather than enhance, theatricality and meaning." Tompkins analyses the relationship between local/global aesthetics, with the aim of considering "how the "global" and the "local" operated, and to consider the factors that might contribute to a more equitable balance in subsequent international theatrical endeavours." Tompkins provocatively asserts that, while "People love to hate globalization for its perceived economic inequities and dilution of cultures that result from its reputation for depicting a homogenous sense of time and space", utopian potentialities can occur in global interactions. Tompkins contends that we cannot inhabit a pre-globalised reality, so we need to perceive of "the local that is globalised *and* the global that is localized: both 'locations' interact to produce the globalised product." Tompkins thus offers a "study of a simultaneously global and local theatrical production [which] provides a starting point for discussing productive interactions between local and global depictions of culture."

At ground level, theatre audiences often engage with questions of national or cultural specificity in relation to their local contexts of production and meaning. Indeed, one of the functions of theatre and cultural performance is its communality, in the sense of creating unity and (often imagined) political and cultural identities. The particularity of national cultures and theatres under global influences is complex but, paradoxically, it is often forgotten that national cultures are not monolithic. Certainly, the confluences of the national and the global have yet to be surveyed in depth from historical perspectives. Farah Yeganeh (Iran) discusses this communal function in a historical context, regarding an ancient Iranian passion-play tradition, in her essay "Ta'ziyeh as Theatrical Event." Framing Yeganeh's cultural and aesthetic analysis of "Ta'ziyeh – the only kind of traditional musical theatrical performance in the Islamic Near and Middle East", is the contention that ritual and "[t]heatre is a part of a bigger whole, a part of a wide range of communications, [where] the stage is the means of visibility." For Yeganeh, "Attendees at a ritualistic performance are not mere observers [and] the *symbolic level* becomes activated through the foregrounding function of encoded actions." In this chapter we see the power of the local in terms of the mutually dependent embodied actions which take place between performer and spectator to enable transformation and expressions of identity.

In "The Struggle for Local Sudanese Theatre in Colonial and Postcolonial Times" Shams Eldin (Sudan) discusses the development of the Sudanese theatre and international influences in his national theatre's history. According to Eldin, "Sudanese theatre has been a hybrid utterance that mimics Western theatre forms, albeit without having mastered its internal mechanisms and precise theatrical conditions." Yeganeh and Eldin thus present a grass-roots and long-span addition to the discussion of the nation-state versus globalization.

In their discussion on the relationship between the local and global in theatre and performance, Marvin Carlson and Janelle Reinelt agree that the two concepts are not in opposition, but are, rather, in many ways entangled, something which is reflected in this volume as a whole. Reinelt and Carlson pay attention to current post-colonial realities, the themes of exile and the exilic and the ways in which audiences play a vital role in the intertwining of the global and the local in performance. Carlson observes that the traditional way of looking at postcoloniality has been to consider it in terms of the European experience and the spread of European culture around the globe, and the "desire on the part of the colonial, now the postcolonial subject, to reassert a kind of authentic experience." However, "That very simple idea quickly became more and more complicated as studies showed that on both sides of the equation – the colonial and the local, the situation was vastly more complex than this." Reinelt and Carlson consider a number of international productions and how such events bring to the fore important issues relating to globalization and its relationship with the local. Further, Reinelt points out that, "The global-local category as a hyphenated concept has become a slogan now, a cliché even. It first arose because the local was supposed to save the global from totalisation, but in fact the global-local concept became, in reality, so complex that this opposition was not useful anymore." Their engagement with the essays in this book, and the broader issues of the global and the local, marks an important intervention into how we process experience in a variety of cultures around the world today. In terms of the possibilities inherent to the relationality between localized and globalized realities that this volume seeks to explore, Reinelt concludes that in theatre festivals around the world, "The exchange of the interaction produces something like the local and familiar, but also different, since the local itself is transformed under these conditions. The global also becomes something else, in turn, as in these essays."

Works Cited

Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: UMP, 1996.

Eagleton, Terry, "Doxa and Common Life: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu". In Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Mapping Ideology.* London: Verso, 1994.

Lonergan, Patrick, *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Rebellato, Dan, *Theatre and Globalization*. Houndmills, Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Shirato, Tony & Webb, Jen, *Understanding Globalisation.* London: Sage Publications, 2003.

Smiers, Joost, *Arts under Presure. Promoting Cultural Diversity in the Age of Globalization.* The Hague & London and New York: Hivos & Zed Books, 2003.

THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL IN ETHICS, EDUCATION AND REPRESENTATION

JUHA SIHVOLA

> The same person can be, without any contradiction, an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theater lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, a jazz musician, and someone who is deeply committed to the view that there are intelligent beings in the outer space with whom it is extremely urgent to talk (preferably in English).[1]

The above often-cited passage from the Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen's book *Identity and Violence* highlights the fact that most people are inclined to see themselves as simultaneously belonging to a variety of groups. Each of these belongings may to some extent define a person's identity, but none of them does so completely and exclusively. Human identities are inescapably plural. Sen's example also highlights the fact that there are different aspects in our identities. Some of them are consciously chosen, some belong to a person's origin and environment, some are narrowly particular, and some are shared with a larger, but still more or less local group.

The various aspects of our identities do not only provide answers to questions about who we think we are; at least some of them also carry with them ethical attachments. It is very common to think that we have particular ethical obligations with respect to those who are near and dear to us. This view, however, also brings with it serious problems. What are the most important belongings that define our ethical obligations? First, what are the roles of family, country, ethnic group, religion, politics, class, gender in our constitution as moral agents? Second, and perhaps more importantly, how do our local affiliations relate to the global ones in the definition of our moral obligations? Answers given by philosophers to the

---

[1] Sen, *Identity and Violence. The Illusion of Destiny*, xii-xiii.

second question are widely divergent. At one end are the cosmopolitans, who think that all human beings, regardless of their local affiliations, belong to a single moral community with reference to which all moral obligations are fundamentally defined. At the opposite end are the egoists, who see the pursuit of one's personal interest as the only morally relevant goal. In between, there is a huge variety of positions in which different local attachments are seen as morally fundamental.

We now live in a world in which all human beings are globally interdependent on each other: innumerable economic, political and cultural ties connect all of us to a world-wide network no part of which can be regarded as truly independent. Global interdependence also has implications concerning discussions of ethics and justice. No serious pursuit of moral and political philosophy can any longer ignore the challenge of global justice and other world-wide considerations. The question, however, remains as to which kind of philosophical position is most appropriate for establishing a balance between the various global and local affiliations and obligations human beings have.

In the following, I shall approach the issue from the viewpoint of philosophical cosmopolitanism. I shall start by turning to ancient philosophy in order to show that many of the issues raised by the Stoics, along with other ancient discussions, are still relevant to our modern concerns. Having considered the significant influence of the Stoic doctrines on the development of Western political thought, I will then reflect on the division between cosmopolitanism and patriotism. I will acknowledge that the intrinsic value of local attachments has to be recognized in order to establish a political culture in which our moral sentiments are cultivated in an appropriate way. Yet I will nevertheless argue that local identities or affiliations will continue to give rise to a number of different problems or tensions, the resolution of which will not be easy.

Stoic cosmopolitanism: strict and moderate

In classical Greece, political philosophy was not cosmopolitan. Although Plato and Aristotle presented a theory of universal human nature, they also identified the human being as a citizen of a particular small-scale city-state who had no sense of moral obligation towards outsiders.[2] Cosmopolitanism emerged in the Hellenistic age in Stoic philosophy. The moral core of the

---

[2] On Plato's and Aristotle's political philosophy, see Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*.

Stoics' worldview was that each human being belongs to two communities, the local community of birth and the universal community of argument and aspiration. The Stoics also thought that all human beings have an equal share of the latter community on the basis of their rational and moral capacities, regardless of either their origins or achieved social status. They regarded this rational community of human beings as the ultimate basis of all moral obligations.[3]

The Stoics held that global moral obligations follow from membership of the cosmopolitan community. One ought to treat each and every human being as an equal partner and a moral person, whether one is rich or poor, master or slave, co-national or foreigner, or man or woman. This sounds revolutionary. The radicalism of Stoic cosmopolitanism, however, withers away, if we look at the implications of the doctrine for legislation and the politics of everyday life. It is true that the Roman Stoics made some important political suggestions concerning for example, gender-blind education and a humane treatment of slaves and prisoners of war. In general, however, the Stoics were ready to accept the existing political and social institutions more or less unchanged. As Seneca remarked, what is the matter with slavery, if one's soul is free?[4]

The political conformism of Stoic cosmopolitanism was to a large extent based on their peculiar moral psychology, which proposed a very strict distinction between universal virtue and reason, on the one hand, and external attachments, on the other. Virtue, according to the Stoics, required an unconditional commitment to the promotion of abstract reason in both oneself and in the universe, with no option for a trade-off with one's particular attachments to externals. For the Stoics, happiness is only based on the internal virtues of the human soul. In other words, as well as proposing that reason alone could conceive the rational order of the universe, they determined that the duty of the soul was to promote this order as far possible. The Stoics condemned all emotions as mistaken judgments that could be attributed to the influence of external factors. The wise and virtuous person is thus completely free of all emotion.[5]

---

[3] Letter 47.17. On the emergence of cosmopolitanism in Hellenistic thought, see Brown, "Hellenistic Cosmopolitanism", 549-558. See also Nussbaum, "The Worth of Human Dignity. Two Tensions in Stoic Cosmopolitanism", 31-49.
[4] For a comprehensive discussion on Seneca's political thought, see Griffin, *Seneca. A Philosopher in Politics*.
[5] The Stoic theory of emotions has recently been extensively discussed by both historians of philosophy and more systematically oriented philosophers. See especially Sihvola and Engberg-Pedersen, *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*; Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*.

The Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, however, had serious and sinister political implications. Since all external attachments were considered to be unimportant, since a virtuous soul needs to look no further than itself for a flourishing life, respect for human dignity did not require drastic changes to existing institutions or social practices. Even if these institutions or practices licensed repression and discrimination, the matter was of little interest to the Stoics since it belonged to the sphere of externals. As discussed, the Stoics held that orientation away from external attachments was the best way to reach happiness.

The problematic implication of Stoic psychology for politics was a deep-rooted suspicion of all emotional commitments to local and particular communities. Stoic cosmopolitanism does not in principle deny the possibility of paying particular attention to one's local communities, though such an interest could only be justified in terms of its capacity to enhance the universal good. So it seems to be acceptable that we love our own children and our own countries in a special way, because it is good for everybody that we all take care of our own. However, if a particular love is intense enough, it is likely to threaten one's commitment to the demands of universal reason, which is precisely what is forbidden in the austere ideal of the Stoic sage.

Stoic cosmopolitanism is very strict: universal aims should always take precedence over particular commitments. Such a view of cosmopolitan order is grounded in reason and abstract ideals, and would require humans to forego any strong emotions associated with or directed toward anything in the external world. In Stoic terms then, there are only two options: a strict but passionless cosmopolitanism or a moderation of the cosmopolitan position by allowing particular attachments. However, the latter scenario admits the possibility of competition, jealousy, and violent conflicts, through which the cosmopolitan order will be brought into ruin. On the basis of Stoic moral psychology, the prospect of promoting any form of global justice, not to speak of stronger forms of cosmopolitanism that place intrinsic value on providing for the material needs of others, begins to look rather gloomy.

Within Stoicism, a considerable tension emerges in the different ways that philosophers have tried to understand the relation between one's global concerns and one's sense of responsibility towards local attachments. Cicero, whose ethical views were heavily influenced by Stoicism, proposed that moral obligations are divided into duties of justice and

duties of material aid.[6] Duties of justice include the obligation to speak the truth, fulfill one's promises, respect private property, and withhold from unnecessary violence. Cicero regarded these duties as universal. They establish a moral obligation between ourselves and all other human beings, regardless of our own or another person's origins or status. The duties of material aid only concern one's attachment to kin and country. One can only consider the needs or welfare of others after these primary duties have been fulfilled.[7]

Cicero diverged from the orthodox Stoic view that maintained that all acts of material aid were irrelevant to the virtuous life. He insisted that a good person was passionately committed to supplying material aid for his family and relatives and especially his country, at the same time recognising that passionate attachments by necessity imply conflict and can result in violence and war. For this very reason, Cicero argued that passionate patriotism was essential: the virtuous person had to be ready to die for his country.[8]

A more orthodox version of Stoic cosmopolitanism can be found in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, written during the Emperor's military campaigns.[9] Marcus Aurelius held that all moral obligations are universal. Though he believed that all humans should be treated with equal respect, he considers external responsibilities to be unrelated to the pursuit of virtue and happiness. Marcus Aurelius suggested that the wise person should be willing to provide a decent level of material aid to all human beings. However, he also asserts that the wise person should also remind foolish people of the vanity and childishness of their wishes and desires: in the end, it is quite unimportant whether or not their wishes are fulfilled. A true Stoic must understand that human life is a kind of death, structured or punctuated by a procession of meaningless occurrences. A happy society without violent conflicts is only possible if all passions are rejected and the fundamental vanity of human strivings is recognized. As Marcus Aurelius famously puts it in *Meditations*:

---

[6] Cicero did not consider himself as a proper Stoic but often characterized himself as a follower of the skeptical approach applied in the Platonic Academy of his age. In ethical issues, Cicero came very close to the Stoics. On Cicero's philosophy, see Powell, *Cicero the Philosopher. Twelve Papers*.

[7] On Cicero's political philosophy and its problems, see Nussbaum, Martha C, "Duties of Justice, Duties of Material Aid. Cicero's Problematic Legacy".

[8] See especially Cicero, *De officiis* I, 57-58.

[9] On Marcus Aurelius, see Hadot, *The Inner Citadel. The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*.

> How important it is to represent, when it comes to fancy dishes and other such foods, "This is the corpse of a fish, this other thing the corpse of a bird or a pig." Similarly, "This Falernian wine is just some grape juice," and "This purple vestment is some sheep's hair moistened in the blood of some shellfish." When it comes to sexual intercourse, we must say, "This is the rubbing together of membranes, accompanied by the spasmodic ejaculation of a sticky liquid." How important are these representations, which reach the thing itself and penetrate right through it, so that one can see what it is in reality.[10]

The difference between Cicero and Marcus makes it possible for us to recognize a crucial problem in global ethics: if we hold that all our moral obligations are global, how do we ever find sufficient resources for fulfilling them? If we follow Marcus Aurelius and orthodox Stoicism in thinking that moral duties should be understood in a very abstract way, we will be required to recognize the dignity that all human beings have as rational creatures, although we would not be obliged to fulfill or even conceive of any duties of material aid. In the writings of Aristotle, written before the advent of Stoicism, such logic had already been found to be flawed. Aristotle argued that the concept of love is diminished or even invalidated if one tries to love all people in the same way: widened to the point of exhaustion, the concept collapses and all claims to love are called into question.[11] The idea of rational love that does not insist on the provision of material aid cannot be considered an example of true love.

As we saw above, Cicero provided a much more moderate version of cosmopolitanism by admitting that human beings have obligations at various levels, hence the need to divide our duties into global and local obligations. His solution, however, is not in the end much more attractive than the moral philosophy of the Stoics. If local duties involve passionate attachments, a danger will always remain that such passions arouse violent conflicts. If global justice is limited to an abstract respect for humanity, how can we prevent competition for limited material resources transforming into violence?

The core problem of global ethics can be formulated in the following way. In order for us to fulfill our moral duties it is not sufficient that we simply name or define these duties. We also need moral sentiments that support our moral pursuits. These sentiments are typically restricted to include only those who could be considered to be our nearest and dearest. Most often, human beings are only motivated by and committed to enhancing the lives of family members or at most co-nationals. Given that

---

[10] Aurelius, Marcus, *Meditations* VI 13.
[11] Aristotle, *Politics* II 4, 1262b, 13-23.

this is the case, selective or partial moral sentiments can easily descend into conflict and violence when competition emerges with respect to scarce resources. If the emotions of love are restricted only to our nearest and dearest, is it possible to cultivate and direct these bonds so that the dignity of all human beings can be respected?

The Stoic influence on Western thought

Stoic cosmopolitanism has strongly influenced modern political philosophy, including such thinkers as Samuel Pufendorf, Hugo Grotius, Adam Smith, and Immanuel Kant. Through their writings, the ideas of Stoicism were transmitted to a large number of contemporary figures.[12] Today, there are even those who think that a version of Stoicism can provide a viable philosophical starting-point for our contemporary concerns.[13] Nevertheless, very few people accept the most austere forms of Stoic moral psychology. Most of us think that emotional attachments to external and particular attachments are intrinsically valuable parts of human flourishing. Political philosophy and theories of justice cannot any longer be abstracted from the material and social needs of human beings, and the Stoics are incorrect to assume that human dignity can be respected if one's attention is limited to the internal virtues of pure reason, abstracted from our material needs. However, the ethical dilemmas raised by Stoicism continue to have relevance for contemporary society. It is still important to consider whether the stricter forms of cosmopolitanism, in which all of responsibilities are derived from our membership of a world-wide community, are humanly viable. Likewise, it is also crucial to consider how, and indeed whether, local or particular commitments can be allowed and violent conflict avoided.[14]

We live in an age when global interdependence between human beings is stronger than ever. At the same time, violent conflict and exploitation remain key features of our current global political situation. On the one hand, there are those such as the political scientist Samuel Huntington who

---

[12] On the Stoic influence on Western political thought see,, Kleingeld, "Kant's Cosmopolitan Law. World Citizenship for a Global Order"; Nussbaum, "Kant and Cosmopolitanism"; Heater, *World Citizenship and Government. Cosmopolitan Ideals in the History of Western Political Thought*.

[13] See Becker, *A New Stoicism*.

[14] On this, see especially Nussbaum, "The Worth of Human Dignity. Two Tensions in Stoic Cosmopolitanism" ; Nussbaum, "Duties of Justice, Duties of Material Aid. Cicero's Problematic Legacy"; Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*.

think that the conflicts between various local interests are irreconcilable and the clash between civilizations is irresolvable.[15] On the other hand, more hopeful visions of the future have been expressed in various programs of global ethics. The Swiss theologian Hans Küng suggested that a viable world ethics could be built on the basis of ethical principles that are shared by all major world religions.[16] More secular suggestions have been made by, for example, Amartya Sen[17] and the Ghanaian-born political philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah.[18] According to Sen, we should avoid seeing ethnic, religious, cultural and social identities as the ultimate basis on which human beings define their relations to each other, as these affiliations or categorizations can so easily lead to repression and discrimination. Sen argues that no cultural property is sufficient to define the complexity of an individual human. Appiah accepts the fact that many human beings hold, for example, their religious, sexual and political attachments as essential constituents of their identities. Despite this, however, he also thinks that it is possible for human beings to peacefully co-exist if they learn to respect and tolerate each other, promote dialogical interaction and consider things from an impartial moral viewpoint that sometimes requires us to re-evaluate our loyalties and obligations toward our near and dear.

From cosmopolitanism to purified patriotism

The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum is one of the most prominent figures in current discussions on global ethics and cosmopolitanism. She has worked with Amartya Sen to introduce the so-called capabilities approach in political philosophy.[19] This approach is grounded in the idea that regardless of peoples' diverse backgrounds and convictions, human beings are able to reach a consensus on the basic constituents of human functioning. Issues of justice both at the local and the global level should be decided on what people are able to do and be with the help of resources that the political institutions grant them. Justice in society requires that each and every citizen has a genuine possibility to actualize his or her capabilities and live a flourishing life. Global justice obviously requires

---

[15] See Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*.

[16] See Küng and Kuschel, *A Global Ethic. The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*.

[17] See Sen, *Identity and Violence. The Illusion of Destiny*.

[18] See especially Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers*.

[19] See especially Sen and Nussbaum, *The Quality of Life*.

that all the relevant parties in world politics are committed to secure a decent minimum of capabilities for everybody all over the world.[20]

Nussbaum follows the ancient Stoics' view that neither global justice nor cosmopolitanism require the abolition of local and national political institutions and the creation of a world state. On the contrary, she suggests that such projects should be rejected on the grounds that access and accountability in political culture can only be secured in the context of the nation-state. She has also argued that cosmopolitanism does not require one to give up any local identifications, the formation of which she recognizes can be a source of great richness in our lives. While Nussbaum holds that it is perfectly acceptable for a cosmopolitan to give special attention and care to one's nearest and dearest, in her earlier writings on cosmopolitanism she stressed that all local attachments and particular obligations should be justifiable in universalist terms and that they derive from our global obligations. For Nussbaum, it is commendable to love one's own children and one's own country in a special way, not because the local is better as such, but because this is the most reasonable way to order our world.

In her more recent work, Nussbaum has rejected cosmopolitanism both as a political basis for global justice and as a comprehensive ethical doctrine that she would be willing to endorse.[21] Her reason for rejecting cosmopolitanism as a political principle stems from her commitment to political liberalism in the sense specified by John Rawls. In Rawlsian political liberalism the principles of political justice are based on an overlapping consensus between reasonable citizens, regardless of their various so-called comprehensive (religious, ethical and metaphysical) doctrines.[22] Viewed from this perspective, it is unlikely that a form of cosmopolitanism that only recognises particular attachments that further the good of the whole of humanity, will be unanimously accepted by all reasonable citizens in a liberal democracy. At best, it can be regarded as one comprehensive doctrine amongst many.

However, Nussbaum does not see the rejection of stronger forms of cosmopolitanism as a fatal blow to the projects of global justice. Political principles based on respect for human dignity in accordance with capabilities approach so that a basic minimum level of capabilities is

---

[20] In her more recent publications, Nussbaum has applied the capabilities approach to diverse topics. See especially Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*.

[21] See especially Nussbaum, *For Love of Country. Debating the Limits of Patriotism* and Nussbaum, "Radical Evil in the Lockean State: The Neglect Political Emotions".

[22] See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*.

secured for all human beings in the world are in her view sufficient for this purpose. Derivation of all obligations from universal concerns is not needed, but there is a lot of space for independent sources of moral motivation with respect to more local attachments.

Nussbaum regards cosmopolitanism as a reasonable comprehensive doctrine but does not endorse it herself. On the basis of human psychology and social history, there is a danger that for most people, denying the intrinsic value of particular attachments leaves life devoid of meaning. Following the footsteps of Marcus Aurelius is dangerous: the uprooting of all particular attachments that cannot be aligned with or put into the service of universal concerns may lead to the destruction of individual personalities, although this outcome may also be appealing to some people.[23]

It may be asked whether Nussbaum's new position is really strong enough to supply a stable foundation for global justice. Let us first agree on the view that global justice requires us to recognize the universal duty of promoting and ensuring minimum capabilities for everyone in the world. This minimum can be seen to define and provide a basis for human rights - the inviolability of which should be accepted by all political agents and institutions. Nussbaum, however, does not only say this. She also says that understanding global justice in terms of Rawlsian political liberalism requires us not to derive our local duties from global imperatives, emphasising that our duties to humanity as a whole should not automatically be prioritized over our other, more particular duties.

Even if one accepts the idea that local attachments should not be derived from global duties, it is not obvious that global justice is protected strongly enough, since without any ranking system it remains ambiguous as to which duties should take precedence. Nussbaum does not seem to be fully consistent on this issue. On the one hand, she argues that our duties to humanity provide constraints within which our particular loves, devotions and attachments must be negotiated. On the other hand, she is reluctant to rank or prioritise these duties. However, if universal duties can be said to constrain local ones, does this not constitute a kind of ranking? In the end, for Nussbaum, the universal duties seem to be regarded as more fundamental. In order for Nussbaum to make the case that universal duties act as a constraint upon local attachments, it must follow that were a conflict to emerge between our duty to humanity and our attachments to our own, particular or localised loves, then our universal duties would normally win out. There has to be a fundamental principle within the

---

[23] See Nussbaum, "Can There Be a "Purified Patriotism"? An Argument from Global Justice".

political consensus that says that there are no local duties that will not be subjected to a form of limitation dictated by a universal moral code (human rights etc.).[24] So Nussbaum's position implicitly suggests a kind of ranking between the duties, although she does not accept this formulation but prefers instead to speak of "an uneven dialectical oscillation within ourselves.[25] This position certainly allows room for local attachments, including patriotism or even nationalism, though the strong emphasis on global justice and the need to purify patriotism brings the Nussbaumian version of political liberalism into rather close company with more moderate versions of cosmopolitanism.

Cultivating moral sentiments

Let us, however, tentatively accept Nussbaum's position and look again at how she argues for the importance of nation-states with strong but purified patriotic cultures that are committed to both the promotion of a decent global society and the cultivation of moral sentiments in their citizens. The following argument provides an interesting way to understand the dialectical oscillation between various global and local devotions within ourselves.

We have a fundamental duty toward humanity to promote a decent global society that ensures basic capabilities for all. The only possible way to fulfill this duty is through sovereign nation-states since they are currently the only realistically available units that are able to guarantee democratic access and accountability for all. Moral sentiments attached to the nation-state, its institutions and political culture, not just to smaller units included in the state, are needed if the nation-state is to remain stable and, especially, if it is to pursue its moral duties towards both its own citizens and the citizens of the world.

Nation-states, therefore, ought to have a strong motivation to cultivate nation-directed moral sentiments in their citizens. If the nation-state wishes to fulfill its moral duties to both insiders and outsiders, the moral sentiments that ought to be cultivated include those pertaining to

---

[24] On this, see Buchanan, "On the National Interest". Buchanan finds the argument unacceptable as at always permits a policy that maximizes national interest, even if it does not make the pursuit of national interest an obligation. The commitment to any conception of universal human rights requires us to accept a position which holds that there are at least some cases in which morality requires the state to do something other than pursue its national interest.

[25] Nussbaum, "Can There Be a "Purified Patriotism"? An Argument from Global Justice".

democratic procedures, political equality of its citizens, the protection of basic capabilities both at home and abroad, free exercise of reasonable comprehensive doctrines (religious, ethical, metaphysical), and neutrality between the various comprehensive doctrines that are endorsed by its citizens.

Global justice requires a lot of nation-states to be more or less committed to the same political principles. However, although the function of political principles is to promote the fulfillment of universal moral principles, they cannot work in an abstracted form. Depending on the local conditions, on the common experiences, memories and sufferings of the citizens in each particular nation-state, political institutions and culture are formed and conducted in uniquely particular ways. As stated above, sources of patriotic attachment that are independent from universal commitments to the good of humanity can be recognized in a national political culture. The universal duties to humanity, however, place constraints upon local colorations of political principles.

One of the most important points made by Nussbaum in her defense of a special, purified type of patriotism committed to global justice is the idea that our attachment to global concerns is not so much prevented by intellectual mistakes and misguided beliefs as by emotional weakness and aggressive impulses. All human beings do indeed suffer from an internal clash. We have potentials for both good and bad, for mutual recognition, reciprocity and equal respect for all human beings but also for hierarchies and control, violent group animosities, and humiliation and stigmatization. Psychological literature clearly demonstrates that an average human being is prone to engage in immoral behavior in certain types of situation. Analogously, in certain conditions, forces of repression and destruction may take over in all modern societies.[26]

What is then needed to cultivate the moral sentiments necessary for equal respect, especially if it is expected to be extended to global concerns? It is obviously important to develop forms of moral education based on liberal values such as critical thinking, the recognition of our common humanity, which emerges despite or in spite of our different circumstances, as well as narrative imagination, which emerges from the cultivation of sympathy towards human vulnerability.[27] This education should not only be intellectual and rationalist. The development of moral

---

[26] For a detailed discussion of this, see especially Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity. Shame, Disgust and the Law*.

[27] On the three aspects of moral education, see especially Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*.

motivation also needs indirect appeals to emotions through ceremonies, symbols, memories, poetry and various forms of representative arts.

Problems in local identities

I wonder whether Nussbaum might be slightly too optimistic about the prospects of purified patriotism and the cultivation of sentiments supporting global justice. Let me just mention one important problem. It is not easy to build national cultures that are inclusive enough to support equal respect for all human beings. Many nations are rather particularistic in various and often rather strong ways.

The Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit distinguishes four psychological needs or forces that give rise to nationalist aspirations.[28] First, nations are schools, styles and learned patterns or modes of human expression and communication, providing the backdrop against which its citizens must define and understand their individual choices. Second, nations are often understood as a community that does not include or exclude its members on the basis of their achievements: in other words, we are accepted by others just are we are, not as a result of our deeds or misdeeds. National belonging, like belonging to a family, is typically a form of belonging that is not based on achievement. It is manifested in a feeling of being at home, in the sense that we feel that we can act naturally and without constraint. A third dimension to national belonging arises from the possibility of feeling a sense of collective pride and glory based on the achievements of gifted members of one's nation. The final psychological need to which national belonging may respond is the need to feel superior to others and create distinctions between 'us' and 'them' in such a way that other people are understood to be essentially inferior or even enemies.[29]

---

[28] Margalit, "The Moral Psychology of Nationalism".

[29] One of the most unfortunate developments of contemporary political theory and political philosophy may well be the growing interest in the ideas of the German political and legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) who proposes that the relation between friend and enemy is the most basic political relation human beings enter into with each other. Schmitt was an active member of the National Socialist party from 1933 and had a prominent position in the Nazi Party (for which he has never expressed any regret). In Schmitt's thought there is nothing wrong with affirming a need to feel a sense of superiority and enmity towards others. He regarded such feelings as intrinsic to the human condition. See Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty.*

Margalit does not claim that any of these needs is natural or necessary for a human being. The need to feel a sense of superiority or even enmity towards others is obviously harmful in many ways, and programs of moral and civic education can be used to eradicate it as far as possible. Neither is the need to belong to a national style of expression necessary for human beings, since there are cosmopolitans who do not need cultural paradigms and matrixes to give significance to their aspirations and activities, just as there are artists who just paint without subscribing to a particular style or school of painting. The same may be true about the need to feel pride of achievements by others belonging to the same group, since there are a good number of people who detest fan club mentalities.

The second need mentioned by Margalit, the need to feel at home somewhere and be accepted as you are with respect to certain characteristics such as religion or sexuality, may well be the most central driver for nationalist aspirations. It may be argued that if a certain group of people is excluded and discriminated on the basis of some feature or characteristic of their identity so that they feel that they are not equally respected as human beings, a justified case emerges for them to constitute a nationalist identity and even establish a nation-state for themselves. This principle can be defended, whatever the grounds for exclusion and discrimination. Put differently, it does not matter whether one's feeling of being at home is threatened ethnically, religiously, on the basis of language, or otherwise. If one's sense of belonging is threatened, it is justified to strive for a form of nationhood in which this particular feature is taken into account and is not a basis for exclusion.

The importance assigned to the need to feel at home varies significantly from case to case. Some people like to be somewhere where they can live with others who are demonstrably similar to them. Other people feel the complete opposite: in their view, such similarities cause them to feel anxious and depressed. These people wish to live amongst those that are significantly different from themselves. Under normal circumstances, it should be possible to reconcile the need to feel at home and be recognized as belonging to a community within a pluralist and multicultural society that asserts a view of nationhood that is not geared toward providing a home solely for the provision of a certain group of people. However, it can be argued that if a group of people experience systematic exclusion and discrimination on the basis of some important feature in their identity (be that ethnic, religious, language-based or otherwise), with the result that they do not feel that they are recognized as full members of that community, this may constitute a powerful basis for