

1 Historical origins of global citizenship

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The concept of global citizenship seems particularly appropriate to the twenty-first century – a world that experiences globalization through technologies of travel and new methods of communication, and that faces common dangers of environmental damage and disastrous climate change. Belief in universal values and moral obligations can, however, be traced back thousands of years in a variety of both Eastern and Western religious traditions as well as in the evolution of legal and political thought deriving from classical Greece and Rome. This chapter discusses briefly different ways in which global citizenship can be understood and then examines the religious origins and the later (mainly) secular evolution of important strands in the total concept.

Defining global citizenship

Global citizenship as an ideal has a number of characteristic features. Here I identify four:

- 1 The first is an ethical commitment to respect and treat fairly and humanely all other individuals irrespective of their race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or social status. This sense of ethical obligation today requires a belief in social and political equality, but this was not generally the case in earlier historical contexts.
- 2 The second aspect relates to identity: an individual choice to see oneself as a member of a universal human society. Identifying with all human beings suggests recognition of an essential commonality by virtue of being human; but given the major cultural, ethnic, and other diversities that characterize people, it also logically implies a valuing of these diversities. Respect for differences manifested in social life is therefore a necessary value underlying global citizenship.
- 3 The third strand of global citizenship is linked to a concept of universal moral law, which grants individuals basic rights by virtue of their humanity, and therefore imposes obligations on others to respect those rights. A specific global legal framework of “cosmopolitan law”,

embodied in conventions upholding individual human rights and holding individuals responsible for “crimes against humanity” – as opposed to international law constraining states – has mostly evolved since the Second World War. But the concept of a “natural law” applying to all humanity goes back over 2,000 years and has had formal status in Roman law. It was elaborated in the Middle Ages and found a place in the developing theories of international law from about 1600 CE.

- 4 The fourth strand in the ideal of global citizenship is more specifically political and implied by the word “citizen”: a belief in the goal of a world political community and a willingness to support policies or take individual action consistent with this goal. Despite the metaphorical concept of the “cosmopolites” coined by the Stoics around 300 BCE, this political version of world citizenship can be seen as essentially modern: linked to proposals for international confederation and world peace from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, and very imperfectly realized in the League of Nations and, after 1945, the United Nations. There is also a more radical version of acting as a world citizen, embraced by movements against slavery and war, and in recent decades by green activists seeking to preserve our common environment. Both the proposals for world political institutions and political activism linked to global citizenship are closely linked to attempts to end violent conflict and create bases for cooperation and greater social and economic well-being around the world.

Religious roots of universal ethical commitment and identification

Religious beliefs and doctrines provide the earliest sources for universal values suggesting an ethical commitment to respect all human beings and also indicate that these values have roots in a great variety of world cultures. However, since religious traditions tend to be very complex, with varying interpretations and allegiances over time and in different geographical and cultural settings, and there are major differences in the degree of sophistication and scholarship between believers, generalization is dangerous. Moreover, religious faith can foster exclusive forms of religious belief and identity. But it is possible to find within many religions an emphasis on compassion towards all human beings (or all living creatures) and a sense of belonging to a wider human society, two facets of a sense of global citizenship. Ways in which this frame of mind can be expressed in the social sphere include acceptance of religious and cultural diversity (within a framework of overarching values) and avoiding violence against others at a personal, and as far as possible, at a social and political level.

Hinduism, the oldest major religion, comprises many strands, and has been tolerant both of divergent spiritual paths within its tradition and (historically) of other religions. This spirit of tolerance was reflected in new forms of religion that arose in India (Buddhism and Jainism) and led to India offering a

home over very many centuries to “Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsees, Sikhs, Bahai and others” (Sen 2006, 16–17). Its philosophy also stresses universal and eternal values.

The ideal of nonviolence can be traced back to ancient Hindu texts, the *Vedas*. “Ahimsa”, strictly “nonharm” but often interpreted now as “non-violence”, was emphasized in an offshoot from Hinduism, Jainism, which became a clearly articulated set of beliefs by the fifth century BCE. Nonviolence is central as well to Buddhism, which was also developed within a Hindu context by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha (ca. 563–483), whose transmitted teachings stressed an end to personal suffering through enlightenment and promoted a correct frame of mind and behaviour, which avoids causing suffering to others. Peter Harvey suggests that core values of Buddhism are “loving-kindness” (or benevolence) and compassion related to a spirit of generosity (2000, 103–104). Like most important religions, over time Buddhism evolved into a number of different schools, which gave emphasis to different values. Zen Buddhist techniques were even used by the Japanese military elite as part of their discipline.

Ancient Chinese culture fostered a number of schools promoting theories of the universe and advocating appropriate attitudes and modes of behaviour, associated with sayings of legendary founders. Kongzi (Confucius) is the most widely known, and with the establishment of a unified empire in 221 BCE Confucianism became the dominant religious and political orthodoxy, stressing an ideal of social harmony under a good ruler. Two other early religious traditions can be seen as more radical and more directly relevant to a universalist ethical commitment. Daoism, which looks back to Laozi, reputed to have been a contemporary of Confucius, did not have any written sources until (probably) the fourth century BCE, and only acquired a religious following around 100–200 CE. It is cited as an early inspiration for ideals of peace and harmony and possible advocacy of nonviolence, though the transmitted texts are open to conflicting interpretation (Mayer 1966, 31–35). The school of Mozi, who lived in the latter part of the fifth century BCE, a period of increasing warfare between states within Chinese territory, believed in “universal love” and mutual responsibility; but later followers accepted the necessity of war and a few became noted military experts (Gittings 2012, 66–67). Both Daoism and the school of Mozi, therefore, suggested an original aspiration to peaceful relations between states and an embryonic sense of a universal society.

The core values that can be found in many religions, especially in their early teachings, often contrast with social and political practices which claim validation from that religion. This contrast is strikingly illustrated by the history of Christianity. The teachings of Jesus reached out to people in very varied social and economic circumstances and from diverse cultures, as the early spread of Christianity indicated. A key text from the Gospel of Saint Luke (10: 29–37) is the parable of the Good Samaritan, who stopped to help a man by the roadside who had been robbed and beaten by thieves. Jesus told the parable in response to the question “who is my

neighbour?" His answer stressed both that strangers in need should be treated like neighbours, and impressed on his Jewish audience that while two "good" Jews had passed by on the other side, a member of a despised "heretical" group, the Samaritans, had not. (Martin Luther King cited this parable in his very last speech, "I've been to the mountain top", 3 April 1968, and used it to illustrate how compassion crosses racial divides.) Christian teaching has also been influenced by the concept expressed in Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians that all people are "children of God", and that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free ... male nor female" among those who have faith (3: 26–28). Although Saint Paul links this intrinsic equality to Christian belief, this sentiment is now often extended to non-Christians as well. Christianity was also at first strongly associated with belief in nonviolence and early Christians refused to join the army or fight in wars. Nevertheless, Christianity is associated in many periods with persecution of Jews, and Christian rulers engaged in many wars with Islam, initially over Jerusalem in the crusades, as well as wars between Catholics and Protestants after the Reformation.

In practice, religions have often served to promote political authority resting on repression. In some cases where empires adopt an "other-worldly" religion this may (at least initially) have beneficial effects – as in the adoption of Buddhism by the Emperor Ashoka in India in the third century BCE. Christianity also underwent a major political transformation when the Roman Emperor Constantine made it the imperial religion in the third century CE. In both cases imperial authority helped turn Buddhism and Christianity into major religions with adherents in many parts of the world, but necessarily tended to challenge core original values, such as rejection of violence. But in both there is potential tension between religious precepts and temporal authority, which creates a basis for a sense of universal obligation beyond political boundaries.

Those religious beliefs that transcend political borders and (at least potentially) qualify obligation to political rulers can also provide a sense of self-identification with a moral and social universe that is not limited by the status quo. To count as a sense of "world citizenship" this understanding of identity needs to transcend not only political but exclusive religious affiliation. This is easier in generally tolerant religions like Hinduism and Buddhism that recognize in principle the potential validity of other beliefs than it is in Christianity and Islam. Although Islamic rulers have in the past often shown tolerance for subjects of other faiths (much more so than some of their Christian counterparts), and from the eighth century to the thirteenth centuries often embraced the learning and arts of varied civilizations, Islam can also foster a strong and exclusive political and religious identity, long manifested by the internal division between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Some of the groupings that arose within Islam did, however, absorb very varied religious and intellectual influences (see below).

In the Christian tradition there is an important universalist emphasis in Catholic theology (see below), but it is those Protestant sects which do not

demand adherence to a complex theology that tend to reflect most clearly a sense of global citizenship. Unitarianism for example, which evolved out of the Reformation, suggests that no religion holds exclusive truth and stresses the role of rationalism; while the Quakers – founded in the early seventeenth century – look for “that of good in every man”. Emphasis on the unity of humanity, core spiritual truths that underlie all religions, and an ideal of peace, distinguish the Baha’i faith, which accepts the revelations of its founders as part of a history of progressive religious revelation. The Baha’i faith arose in Muslim Persia in the nineteenth century, but now has adherents around the world.

Universal moral rules and philosophical debate

Reflection on the moral (and potentially legal) rules that should guide relations not just between individuals, but between social communities and political entities, originally drew on religious sources, but also encourages philosophical debate. The distinction between religion and philosophy is contestable in relation to some traditions, for example in China. But from a contemporary viewpoint it is possible to note the role of intellectual debate within traditional frameworks and to trace various forms of philosophy to religious sages or theoreticians. The ancient Sanskrit Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, are a collection of stories, but also in Amartya Sen’s words are “engagingly full of dialogues, dilemmas and alternative perspectives” (2006, 3). Sen also suggests that the often cited *Bhagavad Gita* (within the *Mahabharata*) contains a still highly relevant moral debate between the god Krishna and the hero Arjuna on the ethic of duty and the ethic of responsibility for consequences of one’s actions (ibid., 3–6). Buddhism actively fostered intellectual argument, including organized public debates through “Buddhist councils” that drew together representatives of opposing interests and beliefs to resolve conflicts through reasoned discussion (ibid., 15).

The scholarship within specific religious schools of thought can be illuminated by a policy of tolerance towards varied religions. The successful military advance of Arab Muslim rulers to control the Middle East, North Africa, and Spain created a base for the evolution from the eighth century of an Islamic culture that drew on the existing centres of learning in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Egypt, as well as on Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian scholars and on the heritage of classical and Hellenistic Greek learning. Islamic scholars who embraced, adapted, and developed these traditions often were associated with mystical ideas and practices within Islam (Hourani 2002, 59–79). This Islamic scholarship later reached its peak in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Andalus (Spain), where Muslim, Jewish, and Christian thinkers developed philosophy, science, jurisprudence, and other branches of learning, drawing on the legacy of classical Greece.

The attempts to reconcile a rationalist philosophy with divine revelation by figures such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) had an influence

on Christian theologians and philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, who were wrestling with the same problem. Aquinas drew on the classical heritage to elaborate on a universal natural law, derived from God but accessible not through faith but reason, that embraced all human beings and provided a basis for right conduct towards everyone (D'Entreves [1951] 1967, 38–42). Natural law, as noted earlier, was a critical concept in the evolution of international and cosmopolitan law. Aquinas's formulation of natural law was revived by later Catholic theorists, in particular Francisco Suarez, whose 1619 work *De Legibus ac Deo Legislatore* argued that individual sovereign states were also part of a universal society derived from the moral unity of humanity. He can be claimed as a forerunner of today's humanitarian law. The Protestant Gentili (a professor of civil law) also argued that the common interests of humanity could override state sovereignty, and that subjects were entitled to protection against sovereigns who broke the laws of nature and inflicted inhuman cruelty.

Renaissance humanism: natural law and cosmopolitanism

The Renaissance, which revived the influence of classical Greece and Rome in many spheres, encouraged greater emphasis on the role of human reason. It also revived the cosmopolitan ideas of the Stoics, the school of philosophy that spanned the period 300 BCE to 200 CE, was developed by Zeno and Chrysippus, and had distinguished exponents in the Roman world, notably Cicero and Seneca. Stoicism created the metaphorical concept of the “cosmopolis” but was also, arguably more importantly, a conduit for the idea of natural law (Schofield 1991, 103). As formulated by Cicero, natural law influenced Roman law and later Christian canon law. Stoicism also stood for sympathy with fellow human beings and opposition to cruelty and tyranny, and therefore in the Renaissance (which was also the period of the Reformation and brutal conflicts between Catholics and Protestants) encouraged humanist attitudes of religious tolerance and a desire to end or prevent bitter wars between Catholics and Protestants. These neo-Stoic attitudes were embraced by thinkers like Montaigne in France and Lipsius in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century (Tuck 1991). The theories of Lipsius had a direct influence on the education of Grotius (1583–1645). Grotius is conventionally regarded as the key thinker in the development of modern international law, but he was also a humanist scholar of the classics and advocate of tolerance between conflicting religious beliefs (Catholic and Protestant), looking for a common underlying Christian ethic.

Commitment to tolerant and cosmopolitan views clearly suggested arguing against cruel and divisive wars. Grotius did not think pacifism realistic. Instead he applied himself to defining just war, and the rules that should constrain combatants, in his major 1625 book, *Law of War and Peace*, published during the Thirty Years War. In this context he drew on (his mature formulation of) the concept of natural law, that has universal validity and

could be deduced by reasoning. He distinguished it from "the law of nations" which had evolved historically through "common consent" (*Prolegomena*, 25–26). Although Grotius clearly started from his Christian context, he also gave considerable weight to the classical Greek and Roman legacy of ideas and interestingly drew on examples of practices in the Islamic world and South American cultures to elaborate his argument. He developed the concept of "international society" and his outlook is more cosmopolitan than that of later theorists of international law, who focused on relations between sovereign nation states (Bull *et al.*, 1990). During the twentieth century he became one inspiration for the developing body of humanitarian law, enshrined for example in the Hague and Geneva Conventions, setting moral limits on the conduct of war and protecting the wounded, prisoners, and civilians. Grotius is regularly cited in relation to the development of international courts, both those adjudicating between nation states, such as the International Court of Justice at The Hague, and the recent international tribunals and courts set up to judge individuals accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The tenth anniversary of the establishment of the International Criminal Court was celebrated at Grotius's tomb in Delft, the Netherlands, on 4 July 2012.

Political universalism found active expression in the Renaissance and the associated humanist intellectualism. A blending of religious commitment and strong belief in reason as a basis for cooperation and peace between diverse peoples characterized humanist thinkers such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1467–1536). He was noted for his scholarship, emphasis on the barbarity of war, and role in advising princes, and is now honoured by the European Union as a quintessential European. He also used the phrase "citizen of the world", though his precise meaning has been debated (Augustijn 1991, 183). Erasmus was a Catholic (he trained as a priest) who used Christ's original teachings to criticize Christian rulers, and he was particularly critical of plans to extend Christendom through war against the Ottoman Empire. He was therefore wary of some of the plans for European confederation designed to strengthen Christian states against the Turks, and of aspirations to "world empire".

Other humanist thinkers who stressed the bonds of sympathy between all people and the underlying common interests of humanity did, however, look to forms of political confederation. The most universalist of these early federalist proposals was "The New Cyneas", written by the French monk Emeric de Cruce in 1623, who went beyond suggesting a federation of European Christian states to advocate including the Islamic Turks, and also envisaged extending it to Persia, China, Japan, and monarchs in India and Africa (Heater 1996, 65–70). Cruce also stressed religious tolerance and themes that would be taken up in the Enlightenment: free travel and free trade. The Quaker William Penn in his 1693 "Essay Towards the Present and Future Peace of Europe" focused primarily on possible federation of Catholic and Protestant states, though he did envisage the possibility of extending membership to the Turks, and to Orthodox Russia (Penn 1993, 12).

The Enlightenment and cosmopolitanism

The Enlightenment, which drew on and resuscitated the legacy of cosmopolitanism in Greek and Roman thought, is still a key reference point for the idea of global citizenship. It advocated respect for all members of a universal humanity, reviving the Stoic concept of the “cosmopolite” (citizen of the world), who, in the words attributed to Zeno, “should regard all men as our fellow countrymen” (Baldry 1965, 159). Some of the early Stoics, however, interpreted cosmopolitanism primarily as a mode of individual belief and conduct and it could imply a rejection of the political sphere; while some of the later Roman Stoics, for example Seneca or Marcus Aurelius, adapted it to the realities of imperial rule (Griffin 1992). The Enlightenment philosophers gave the Stoic cosmopolitan perspective a stronger social content and promoted the idea of global citizenship as an ideal.

Enlightenment cosmopolitanism was based on rationalism. Although some of its philosophers, notably Voltaire, were extremely aware of the cruelty and intolerance which had often been fostered by organized religion, they did not all repudiate any form of religious belief – this was an age in which a generalized deism appealed to some intellectuals. The philosophers of the Enlightenment stressed the importance of religious tolerance and acceptance of diversity, while condemning “religious bigotry”. The “philosophes” were by no means united in all their beliefs and from a contemporary perspective were not always consistent in their own individual arguments. But the general tenor of Enlightenment thought could be seen as an attempt at a genuine universalism, opposing slavery, colonialism, and suppression of indigenous peoples and curiosity about and respect for diverse cultures. While there was an implicit (and sometimes explicit) tendency to assume Western superiority, eighteenth-century ideals were in opposition to nineteenth and early twentieth-century imperialist attitudes towards “inferior” peoples (Said 1994, 290).

As with the cosmopolitanism of the Islamic intellectuals in the Abbasid Empire, the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism – linked as it was to philosophy and scientific learning – had an elitist tendency. Diderot’s famous *Encyclopédie*, launched in 1750, which embodied the ideal of unifying world knowledge, cross-referenced “cosmopolite” with “philosophe”. World citizenship was expressed through correspondence between intellectuals across frontiers: through travel, interchange of books and pamphlets, international societies, and journals. It is relatively easy for intellectuals and scholars to find common ground that transcends political divisions, as the proliferation in the later nineteenth century of international societies and conferences drawing on a range of scientific disciplines indicated. But many Enlightenment philosophers were also convinced of the growing reality of common interests between all human beings as a basis for a commitment to a common humanity.

The philosophers consciously adopted the identity of citizens of the world. One of the early Enlightenment theorists, Montesquieu, claimed he should put the interests of humanity above those of his country, and Diderot wrote to

Hume: "You belong to all nations ... I flatter myself that I am, like you, a citizen of the great city of the world" (Gay 1967, 13). Paine, one of the later Enlightenment thinkers and pamphleteers, and the most revolutionary, claimed: "my city is the world and my religion is to do good" (Paine [1791] 1969, 250). The philosophes tended to argue that there was no *necessary* conflict between being a good citizen of one's own country and being a citizen of the world. Indeed, the two commitments tended to coincide, because opposing xenophobic forms of patriotism or aggressive national policies was to promote the true interests of one's country. But as Montesquieu's formulation indicated, there could in practice be a conflict of loyalties, and true world citizenship meant putting cosmopolitan principles first.

Apart from advocating religious tolerance and freedom of thought, and opposing slavery and other forms of systematic cruelty, the philosophes generally looked to free travel and free trade between different parts of the world as a means of fostering common bonds and combating a militaristic culture. Merchants were seen as members of a multinational and cosmopolitan society transcending frontiers (Schlereth 1977, 101). In the eighteenth century a Western policy of the right to travel and free trade could, however, often be associated with imperialist ambitions. Most philosophes opposed overt colonial rule, but Kant was especially aware of potential dangers from travel and trade. He discussed the rights of aboriginal peoples to retain their land and argued that European settlement was only justified by contractual consent. In his *Perpetual Peace* he condemns Western commercial nations that "visit" other parts of the world in order to conquer them, and (as in "East India") bring in foreign troops "under the pretext of merely setting up trading posts" (Reiss 1991, 106). Kant is also well known for developing the most sophisticated (and somewhat ambiguous) proposal for an extending political confederation of states as a means of promoting peace. Although he is sometimes seen as a forerunner of the United Nations, the ideal of the European Union promoting peace within Europe is perhaps closer to embodying his ideas.

Cosmopolitan movements: the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

Whereas earlier expressions of cosmopolitanism tended to be associated with a small elite, in the more democratic age that developed by the end of the eighteenth century, sections of the common people became actively involved in social movements for cosmopolitan goals. The earliest of these movements was the opposition to the slave trade, and to the whole institution of slavery. This took a "transnational" form (individuals and groups cooperating across borders) and mobilized a wide cross-section of society in Britain (a major slave-trading nation) and the United States, where slavery was central to the cotton industry of the South.

The other cosmopolitan movement that took off from the end of the Napoleonic Wars was the peace movement. Initially fostered in North America and Britain, it soon embraced many countries in Europe. Although

peace campaigns have since taken many forms, been divided by debates about just war and wars of national liberation, and had much wider support in some periods than others, genuinely autonomous international peace organizations do uphold cosmopolitan ideals. They have often tried to prevent and end wars and have campaigned for various treaties and conventions to prohibit use of particularly destructive weapons. Individuals and groups now seen as part of a broad peace history have also at various times promoted humanitarian bodies like the Red Cross and humanitarian law, and lobbied during wars for the post-war creation of international organizations, notably for the League of Nations (Carter 2001, 52–56, 61–64).

Other movements, such as the early socialist and feminist movements, have, despite their primary emphasis on promoting the rights and welfare of particular sections of society, been transnational in scope and have often included wider goals of changing conditions for all humanity for the better. Both have also at various points stressed anti-war positions. Although the aspirations of the Second Socialist International to unite workers everywhere to prevent war were shattered by the First World War, and the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution soon divided socialists, the experience of the war prompted new attempts to end the war and promote a more peaceful world.

The sources of the universalist ethical stance adopted by the movements noted above were varied. Christian Protestant groups were very active in the movements against the slave trade and in the early nineteenth-century peace movement. The later peace movement comprised groups within it still strongly motivated by varied Christian beliefs and values, but also extended to embrace a range of explicitly secular and rationalist political ideologies. Other religious traditions have also strongly influenced social movements. A key figure in promoting a worldwide ideal of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), drew on Hindu and Jainist teachings of selflessness and detachment as a basis for conducting social struggle, and interpreted the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna exhorts Arjuna before battle, as signifying an allegorical “struggle between truth and untruth taking place in the heart of man” (Bondurant 1958, 116). Gandhi was also influenced by Christianity and read widely in other religions, including Islam, believing that all religious faiths were striving towards the same truth.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to sketch in the diversity of religious and philosophical sources underlying belief in and active commitment to a cosmopolitan ethic, identification with an overarching humanity, and acceptance of universal obligations. While tolerance of competing ideas and beliefs, and an emphasis on reasoned debate, appear to be centrally important to a cosmopolitan outlook, it is overly simple to see increasing secularization as necessarily conducive to achieving an ideal of global citizenship. Adherents of secular

political ideology can display as much irrational conviction and intolerance as religious extremists.

The Enlightenment belief in rationally derived universal rules has also been persuasively challenged as a form of Western cultural imperialism, imposing, for example, Western concepts of individual rights upon cultures with differing traditions and priorities. Nevertheless, as Kant argued over two centuries ago, the growing interconnectedness between the peoples of the world does point to the urgent need for common policies based on a sense of a common interest. Appeals to human rights are now also frequently voiced in all parts of the world where groups and individuals suffer repression. Moreover, some recent developments in international law and politics suggest greater readiness to implement ideas associated with global citizenship.

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