

4. FEMINISM AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of global citizenship can be characterised generally as involving the notion that the rights and duties of the individual either do or should extend beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. This is an idea which is shared by a variety of international and transnational social movements in the fields of ecology, peace and human rights. This chapter explores the resources of one particular political movement, that of feminism, for the theory and practice of global citizenship. This is not a straightforward matter, since feminism is not a monolithic ethical and political programme in either theory or practice. Although feminist movements, to the extent that they identify their goal as the liberation of women, are transnational in principle, different feminists have different understandings of the goal to which they are committed and this frequently reflects the very different nation-state contexts within and across which feminist political struggles take place. For this reason it might seem initially that the whole notion of a feminist global citizen is misconceived, since the language of global citizenship tends to be highly universalistic and to operate with a generic conception of the human individual – one indifferent either to sex or to political ideology. This chapter seeks to demonstrate that in fact feminism is compatible with ideals of global citizenship. Falk defines global citizenship in terms of the figure of the ‘citizen pilgrim’, who is someone committed to ‘an imagined human community of the future’ (Falk 1995: 95). In this sense, feminists are a good example of Falk’s notion of the ‘citizen pilgrim’ because they are committed to a future in which the situation of women as such is transformed (regardless of nationality or ideology). However, as we shall see, the nature of the ‘imagined future’ in

question, and the problem of how it is to be arrived at, continue to be matters of considerable debate within feminism itself.

FEMINIST POLITICS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Over the past quarter of a century international forums for the articulation and advancement of women's interests/rights have been set up and phenomena such as the UN Decade for the Advancement of Women (1975–85) and the United Nations Conference for Women at Beijing in 1995 have given a higher profile to women's position and concerns within the international community. This, along with the flourishing of feminist work within the academy, has publicised the cause of feminism internationally and also prompted much consideration within the feminist movement of what it might mean to be an international or global feminist citizen.

One example of such a feminist contribution can be found in the arguments which have gone on within the international women's movement over the value and significance of the idea of international human rights for women. Ashworth notes how the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and the covenants on civil and political, social and economic rights respectively have been ineffective even in recognising the violation (or vulnerability to violation) of women's rights (Ashworth 1999; Peterson 1990). For instance, although the UDHR specifies rights to bodily integrity and freedom from torture this provision was never explicitly associated with practices such as female circumcision or domestic violence. Until feminist groups began to campaign for more explicit recognition of the differential position of women as rights-bearers, there was no accepted understanding that human rights might need to be specified as women's rights. Over the past twenty-five years international organisations have been increasingly subject to pressure from feminist campaigners to make sure that women are explicitly included in the category 'human'. One example of this is the way in which the recent experience of the systematic rape of women which featured in the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia in the mid 1990s pushed feminist groups into a successful campaign for the international recognition of rape as a war crime. The campaign centred around feminist claims as to the 'gender blindness' of accepted cosmopolitan moral and legal discourses and practices, and the need always to look carefully at how women suffered or benefited from specific supposedly universal human rights provisions (Allen 1996).

The discussion of the category of human rights is only one aspect of both generic and feminist global citizenship discourse. Global citizenship is concerned with the specification of duties as well as rights and more broadly with issues to do with sustainable development, the environment, war and peace and global distributive justice. Feminist activists and feminist theorists have been involved in all of these arenas of political struggle and debate across the

globe, from women's groups campaigning against deforestation in the Third World, to women's peace activism in Europe to the activities of feminist groups in INGOs working on issues of health and poverty (Basu 1995; Pettman 1996; Steans 1998). In all of these instances ways both of conceiving and of enacting global citizenship as and for women are being implicitly or explicitly evolved. This is not to say, however, that a single picture of what it means to be a feminist global citizen emerges from all these threads of thought and activity. For some women's groups and movements, the very concept of 'feminism' is suspect, associated as it is with the priorities of affluent, First World women. Even where the label 'feminism' is accepted, there are significant differences between different feminist movements. For some feminists (often labelled 'liberal') the idea of sex-specific rights and duties in thinking about global citizenship is only a stage on the way to achieving a truly generic model. The point of global citizenship for such feminists is the abolition of the idea of any moral and political significance being carried by sexual difference. In contrast, for so-called 'radical' feminists there are significant and enduring features of being a woman in the world (not necessarily biologically given), and these features entail that women's needs and interests are distinct from those of men and this therefore needs to be reflected in a sex-differentiated understanding of global citizenship. In contrast to either of these approaches are 'difference' feminism arguments which point to the ways in which there are often relevant differences between women as well as between men and women and that there follows a need to devise a more pluralistic and context-sensitive way of articulating the rights and duties of any particular woman considered as a global citizen.

In the light of this complexity of different feminist positions, it is obvious that there is no one account of the ways in which feminism might contribute to the theory and practice of global citizenship. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, in order to demonstrate the richness of feminist theory and practice as a resource for global citizenship I will concentrate on one feminist model of what it means to be a global citizen. This model, commonly referred to as the 'ethic of care', can be seen as exemplified in practice by feminist peace campaigners in the 1980s and in theory in the work of Sarah Ruddick and her notion of 'maternal thinking'.

WOMEN, WAR AND PEACE

One of the key traditional components of the theory and practice of citizenship within states has been the obligation of citizens to bear arms in defence of their state. This understanding of the meaning of citizenship goes back to the Greek polis and is at the heart of republican conceptions of citizenship. One of the main reasons cited for the refusal to grant full citizenship rights to women within modern states was that they could not be called upon to fulfil this ultimate citizenly duty. As Elshtain argues, in dominant thinking about war,

women have been placed in the position of the naturally peaceful sex whose role is to provide comfort and care for the 'just war hero' and who is invoked (along with the children) as the party on behalf of whom resort to political violence has been necessary (Elshtain 1987). This traditional picture places women in the private sphere away from war zones, 'keeping the home fires burning'. However, the experiences of women as protagonists and victims in modern warfare over the last quarter of a century is very different to that suggested by the traditional picture. Research has shown that at the same time as women are gaining entry into the military and engaging in combat in increasing numbers, women also make up the vast majority of those dispossessed by war (whether as refugees or as the mediators between international sanctions and the needs of their families), as well as bearing the burden of responsibility for re-building lives in the aftermath of war (Enloe 1983; Vickers 1993; Pettman 1996: 126–53; Steans 1998: 81–103). Moreover, in contemporary warfare the deaths of civilians now vastly outnumber those of soldiers – rendering the assumption of a neat distinction between war zone and home front redundant. Feminist reactions to the changing nature of war have been various but have continued to draw on elements of the traditional picture. On the one hand, feminists have seen the right to bear arms as the mark of citizenship and have sought entry into the military on the same terms and with the same duties as men. On the other hand, feminists have drawn on the idea of women as the peaceful sex to challenge the link between fighting and citizenship and between state and citizenship. The latter phenomenon provides a practical example of how some feminists see themselves as global citizens.

The early 1980s was marked by the emergence of a distinctively feminist anti-nuclear peace politics in several Western European countries as well as the USA and Australia. Although clearly sharing much ground with other anti-war and pacifist movements, this feminist peace politics was premised on the idea of a special link between women and peace (Harris and King 1989; Warren and Cady 1994). Essentially, these feminist peace activists reversed the dominant hierarchy of evaluation of masculine civic virtue and feminine private virtue in which the former takes priority over the latter and the latter is essentially supposed to sustain the former. In the feminist peace activism of the 1980s, feminine private virtue was taken into the public realm and held up as the (subversive) yardstick of ethical conduct within that realm. A key part of the tactics of these campaigners was, quite literally, to make themselves visible to a world which recognised states as friends or enemies and humans as elements to be aggregated in statistics of putative death tolls, but not women as women. These tactics ranged from mothers taking babies and children with them on demonstrations (thereby quite literally putting the realm of private virtue in the public domain) to counter-posing traditional symbols of women's work and femininity to the machinery of militarism held within the bases where nuclear weapons were kept.

Flowers, ribbons and wool were woven into the fences surrounding military bases. Women broke into bases and danced on or decorated missile silos. Camps were set up at the gates of bases as a constant reminder of a world which included women and families, not simply states and individuals. These tactics were designed to demonstrate the absurdity of the two most common ways of thinking and making judgements about war which had survived into the nuclear age: strategic thinking and just-war theory. The first of these reflects a 'realist' attitude to war, in which war is seen as purely a matter of power politics, wherein the only important question is a cost/benefit analysis of the justification for going to war. The latter mode of thinking is a normative one in which there are established principles which can be invoked to justify going to war and to limit what goes on within warfare. Both strategic and just-war thinking argue that in certain circumstances war is a rational option for states.

Implicit in the activities of the feminist anti-nuclear campaigners are ways of conceiving of and practising global citizenship. The campaigners at peace camps such as Greenham Common in England were not simply declaring their presence on the international stage but were also arguing that that international stage should learn from them. The tactics employed at Greenham Common were imbued by the idea of the ethical superiority of the notions of care, connection and responsibility embedded in women's work within the family over the strategic and just-war thinking which could even contemplate the destruction of large swathes of the human race in the pursuit of some greater goal. In addition, these campaigners were practising global citizenship through direct action in a way which has become familiar in the work of other social movements, particularly in relation to environmental issues. According to this understanding of global citizenship, considering oneself as a global citizen does not depend on anything other than identification of oneself as a member of the human race with an interest in its survival. Like Falk's 'citizen pilgrims', these peace activists acted as if national boundaries were irrelevant, as if they (the activists) were always already citizens of a global society. Moreover the forum for political action could be anywhere considered appropriate – it did not have to be either the political institutions of the state or international organisations – and it also was not dependent on any transnational framework of law or law enforcement. As with the actions of groups like Greenpeace, these women peace campaigners were constructing an international public sphere purely through their own actions. According to these women, global citizenship was not an aspiration but a reality brought about by the potential for the destruction of the entire world carried by nuclear weapons and the concomitant responsibility to resist this possibility. In order to examine this feminist model of global citizenship more closely I will now go on to examine its theoretical articulation in the idea of an ethic of care.

AN ETHIC OF CARE

The idea of an ethic of care was pioneered in the work of Carol Gilligan and has become one of the most influential ideas in feminist moral and political theory (Gilligan 1982; Bubeck 1998). The key feature of an ethic of care is that it is embedded in the practicalities of relationships of responsibility for others. Crucial to ethical judgement from the perspective of care is the importance of particularity (knowing who and what you are making a moral judgement about); connectedness (recognising your actual relationship to others in the process of judgement); and context (paying attention to the broad and narrow context of ethical judgement). In her book, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, Ruddick draws on the idea of an ethic of care as a central part of her argument for a feminist moral orientation in the context of international politics, and in doing so suggests what a feminist global citizen might be like (Ruddick 1990).

When maternal thinking takes upon itself the critical perspective of a feminist standpoint, it reveals a contradiction between mothering and war. Mothering begins in birth and promises life; military thinking justifies organised, deliberate deaths. A mother preserves the bodies, nurtures the psychic growth, and disciplines the conscience of children; although the military trains its soldiers to survive the situation it puts them in, it also deliberately endangers their bodies, minds and consciences in the name of victory and abstract causes. (Ruddick 1990: 135)

For Ruddick, both the strategic thinking inherent in militarism and just-war theory share a commitment to the expendability of concrete lives in abstract causes to which maternal thinking is inherently opposed. In this sense she clearly echoes the points which feminist anti-nuclear campaigners sought to demonstrate which were described above. Ruddick claims that this means that the implication of maternal thinking is not just the rejection of war but the active embracing of peace politics, a fight against war which draws on the acknowledgement of responsibility and relationship and the specificity of need and obligations which are inherent in a proper understanding of what it means to care for others (Ruddick 1990: 141–59). In Ruddick's theory the logic of domestic relations in the restricted sense of the domestic or private sphere of family and personal relations is set against the logic of the public sphere of both state and inter-state relations. The former involves relating to individuals as specific, real human beings with particular needs, who cannot be traded in any kind of cost/benefit calculation, whereas the latter is characterised by a willingness to trade in some people's lives for others, in the pursuit of state interest or of principles such as national self-determination. For Ruddick, then, the realm of international politics and of global citizenship is primarily a realm of human relations, not of human, nation or state rights or an international state

system. Ruddick assumes that ethical perspectives are the outcome of concrete practices and can never be neutral, but at the same time clearly suggests that some kinds of practice are inherently better than others. This distinction draws attention to the fact that although Ruddick presents an understanding of the international realm very different from mainstream ethical theories, she nevertheless argues for the notion of a standpoint from which critical judgements of international politics can be made.

As well as suggesting new ways of conceptualising the basis of judgement as a global citizen, Ruddick's maternalist ethic of care has specific implications for practical ways of addressing classic problems of violence and oppression in the international context. At the broadest level, maternal thinking involves commitment to peace politics. In other words, violence is outlawed as a political tool, even for the righting of injustices. One of Ruddick's key preoccupations is that of working out non-violent strategies to combat violence and oppression. She is clear that such strategies are as risky as the use of violence in the contemporary world and require levels of organisation and commitment just as great as those used to support any military machine. But she also emphasises the resources already present in women's lives which can be turned from sustaining political violence to resisting it. In Ruddick's work the example of the Argentinian mothers of the disappeared, whose movement gradually grew to embrace concerns with children across the world, is taken as exemplary. Through non-violent protest, drawing on the generally recognised private feminine virtues of motherhood, these mothers operated effectively to help to bring about political change (Ruddick 1990: 225–34). This example confirms for Ruddick both the connection between maternal virtues and peace politics and the potential effectiveness of peace politics. There is no doubt also that the kinds of activities of the feminist anti-nuclear campaigners mentioned above would serve as exemplary practices of global citizenship for Ruddick. More generally Ruddick's peace politics has elective affinities with a variety of examples of new ways of doing politics pioneered by peace movements, human rights movements and green movements which emphasise the idea of local non-violent resistance to the powers of states, international organisations and corporations. Such politics frequently makes use of the technique of subverting or overturning the dominant value hierarchy by asserting the value of that which has been marginalised or excluded, whether it is women's work, traditional economic practices or particular cultural identities (Walker 1988). Ruddick argues that the idea of maternal thinking has its origin in maternal practice, features of which, she argues, are present in the work of mothering in radically different cultures. She therefore claims that her account of maternal thinking is likely to be generalisable across contexts, providing 'at hand' an accessible basis for criticising and resisting political violence of all kinds, as well as suggesting limitations to the kinds of strategies it is permissible to employ in critique and resistance.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Ruddick's work provides one particularly influential example of feminist thinking about war and typifies an argument common in feminist literature in the 1980s, that women and/or feminists, as global citizens, have a particular role in the moral assessment of war and in peace politics (Harris and King 1989; Warren and Cady 1994). Feminist theorists seeking to build on the concept of care in the context of international ethics have stressed the value of the relational account of human individuals, the concrete location of the ethic of care perspective in actual responsibilities and attachments and the way it puts realist assumptions into question without drawing on the abstract universalism characteristic of much cosmopolitan moral and legal discourse (Hutchings 1994; Robinson 1999). Nevertheless, from the beginning, the work of feminist theorists such as Gilligan and Ruddick who privilege the ethic of care or the labour of care as a starting point for ethical judgement and political practice has also come under strong criticism from other feminist theorists. Generally speaking, critical responses to the ethic of care associate it with the radical feminist position in which an essential connection is claimed between being a woman and certain kinds of virtues. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there are two main theoretical positions from which the ethic of care and its implications for global citizenship tend to be criticised: the liberal feminist position and that of difference feminisms (see the subsection 'Feminist Politics in A Global Context' above).

For liberal feminists the problems with the ethic of care boil down to the charge that reliance on embedded relations with and responsibilities towards others as the basis for ethical judgement and political practice renders them both parochial and relativistic, and therefore inadequate as a basis for global citizenship (Benhabib 1992). The ethic of care is argued to be parochial because it cannot account for how you bridge the gap between the particular context and experience of certain specific people to whom you are related and the needs and rights of strangers. This is in contrast to universalist doctrines, which are based on the presumption of the equal moral significance of every individual regardless of context. Similarly, it is argued to be relativistic because it rejects the idea that there can be universal principles which are known to be right in advance of their application to a specific situation. For thinkers like Ruddick, what is right depends on context and cannot be established independently from context. For liberal feminists this is a worrying position, since it implies, for instance, that what is deemed to be ethically permissible may vary from culture to culture. Given the fact that women are more oppressed in some cultures than in others, this might be seen as opening the way to toleration of oppressive practices such as female circumcision or exclusion of women from the public sphere.

The criticism of care ethics offered by difference feminisms such as post-modernist and Third World feminisms is concerned not so much with care's

lack of universality as with the way in which it depends on a particular account of women's virtues. It is argued that this account is based primarily on the experience of middle-class, white, Western women which is then taken to stand for the experience of 'women in general'. Over the past twenty years feminists, both within multicultural states and internationally, have been arguing that the predominant political campaigns and accounts of women's oppression within the feminist movement have reflected the position (and served the interests) of white, middle-class, Western women rather than those of the majority of women. What has emerged from this debate has been a growing dissatisfaction with any feminist account which relies on a generalisable notion of a feminist perspective. It is argued that the inclusive ambition of such theories is in practice exclusive, since no single understanding of the feminist standpoint can possibly reflect the multiple and often contradictory positions in which different women and different feminists stand. In other words, rather than being parochial, Ruddick's approach is accused of being culturally imperialistic (Nicholson 1990; Mohanty, Russo and Torres 1991; Marchand and Parpart 1995).

The criticisms of liberal and difference feminists suggest that the model of global citizenship put forward in the work of people like Ruddick (and exemplified in practice in the actions of the Greenham Common women and the Argentinian mothers) is either too specific or too general. It is too specific in that it relies on particular aspects of who a person is and how a person is related to others as the starting point for criticism and political action; it is too general in that it generalises features of the caring practices and virtues associated with mothering in a specific cultural context and makes them into the basis of a feminist global citizenship with which all women are claimed to be identified. Central to both of these arguments is the question of how feminists can move from the local to the global in their moral and political identity, judgement and practice. Here I think it is instructive to return to Ruddick's claim that maternal thinking is generalisable across contexts and the examples of the peace campaigners and Argentinian mothers which can be used to illustrate this claim. As noted above, Ruddick claims that maternal thinking provides a critical standpoint from which to make moral and political judgements and she also claims that there is sufficient cross-cultural commonality in practices of care to prevent maternal thinking from being seen as parochial or imperialistic. I stated at the beginning of this chapter how the universalistic language of global citizenship appears to be in tension with feminist political ideology, since the latter clearly gives priority to the interests of women rather than 'humanity' as such. However, Ruddick's argument and the concrete examples of feminist political campaigning which cross national boundaries and link together radically different women in different places suggest that this is a tension which is apparent rather than real. Her point is that in practice people's actions as global citizens are rooted in the particularities of their identity and experience. It is through those

particularities, she argues, that it becomes possible to recognise commonalities and to identify with the plight and interests of strangers.

CONCLUSION

I have suggested in this chapter that the feminist movement provides interesting examples of the theory and practice of global citizenship. At the same time, however, the experience of the feminist movement has drawn attention to the problem of basing ideas of global citizenship on a model of generic humanity which takes insufficient notice of the many ways in which people differ from each other, including sex and gender. The viewpoint of the ethic of care is an example of a way of thinking which attempts to draw resources for the practice of global citizenship from the actualities of women's lives as carers. In doing this it offers a way of connecting local and global concerns without requiring a pre-established set of universal principles or the assumption that all people are somehow ideally the same. The question we are left with is whether the account offered by people such as Ruddick is strong enough to outweigh the arguments of critics both within and beyond the feminist movement.¹

QUESTIONS

1. In what sense, if at all, is the action of threading flowers through the fence of a military base in which nuclear weapons are kept the action of a global citizen?
2. What makes it possible to define whole populations as 'killable enemies'?
3. Is Ruddick right to suggest that the practice of mothering can be the basis of a globally relevant ethic?
4. Can men be maternal thinkers?
5. Does the emancipation of women mean the same thing universally?
6. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of liberal, radical and difference feminist approaches to the idea of global citizenship.

NOTES

1. Parts of this chapter have previously appeared in 'Towards a Feminist International Ethics', *Review of International Studies*, Volume 26, Special Issue, December 2000, pp. 111–30.