



Derek Heater. *World Citizenship and Government: Cosmopolitan Ideas in the History of Western Political Thought*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. xiii + 259 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-12969-9.

Reviewed by Kenneth L. Wise (Creighton University)
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World Government and Citizenship: Variations in the Concepts

If the ideology of nationalism is “pernicious,” as the author says in his Preface, then discovering the deep roots and permanence of cosmopolitanism will be Earth’s political salvation. To this Heater has dedicated much of his life and this book in particular.[1] Through his special telling of the history of ideas he intends to show that, “For two and a half millennia numerous Western political thinkers have believed that a world state or world citizenship or both were desirable and possible” (p. ix). Today some political theorists argue that these phenomena are real, despite obvious contrasts among political entities around the globe.[2] Only in his introduction does Heater broaden his focus beyond the Atlantic Community to include cosmopolitan thinking in Asia and other regions.

Heater tries to treat his two major concepts as tied. However, world citizenship suffers in second place. This is not only because it has many potential meanings and contexts, but also because it raises the question of identity. One is a world citizen to the extent one has a sense of belonging to all humankind, especially in the Stoic consciousness. This concept at some periods in history has expressed a link between the individual and the level of global governance. This latter level Heater calls “world government” (pp. x, xi). In some eras the idea of world government has lacked any component of world citizenship; the “citizen” was only subject—or even object. He traces chronologically these twin ideas, their interaction, and their challengers through six chapters. In chapter seven he summarizes the variety of meanings that eras have assigned to his concepts and the major arguments

against them.

To this reviewer Heater seems rather too little confident in his concepts’ political relevance and millennial consistency of purpose. Perhaps he hopes to increase their impact by presenting them humbly. Overall he leaves to his reader to choose whether to carry a banner of cosmopolitanism. He gives only a modest nudge to those who would act on behalf of all humanity. Some readers will admire Heater’s soft voice. Others may wish to shout his stanzas at the repeated illustrations of narrowness of mind that fill our daily news.

Chapter one examines the polis character of the Greek city state in play against the people’s prejudices that hindered relations with the outside world. It follows how the Roman world tried to supercede these prejudices.

Cosmopolitanism appears when the Greek city state begins to fail. The polis quality of a Greek city state meant the political community, as Aristotle advocated, had a high degree of cohesion. Citizens voted by majority in tune with the common interest rather than as an arithmetic cumulating of self interested individual preferences. Yet the city state was also self-contained and self-reliant. This permitted citizens to exercise their prejudices against “Barbarians”—those who spoke a language other than Greek. To the citizen such persons obviously lived lower than the sophisticated political, social, and cultural zenith of the Greeks. Then their need for security against outsiders led the city states to ally. Further, economic opportunities and pursuit of empire began draw-

ing Greeks into the lands of the “Barbarians.” The city states lost their self respect.

In this climate grew ideas of human oneness, searching for an identity beyond the city state. Homer, Hesiod, Heraclitus, Sophocles, the Sophists, the Cynics, Stoics, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle spoke. Heater has Epictetus, teaching in the Roman era, make their shared meaning plain: “If what is said by the philosophers regarding the kinship of God and men be true, what other course remains for men but that which Socrates took when asked of what country he belonged, never to say ‘I am an Athenian,’ or ‘I am a Corinthian,’ but ‘I am a citizen of the universe’?” (p. 7). At the same time, however, thinkers often conceived such a status as closed to the unwise who, instead, took the lower rung previously reserved for the “Barbarians.” And the upper rung the wise shared with the gods. All this was more metaphorical than political. We can see roots of world citizenship in this era. However the world constitution and world government, which such citizenship would serve and which would protect the citizen, were absent.

Stoics of the Roman era contributed natural law, civic duty, and tolerance of all persons and peoples to the rationale for world citizenship. This served their concern for cohesion and solidarity within the empire—the world government of their time. Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius are Heater’s working exemplars. Cicero marks the road to world citizenship with these words: “The first principle is that which is found in the connection subsisting between all the members of the human race; and that bond of connection is reason and speech, which by the processes of teaching and learning, of communicating and discussing, and reasoning associate men together and unite them in a sort of natural fraternity” (p. 17). This fraternity can, as a “higher authority,” require of an individual allegiance beyond his state. As Heater puts it, “(M)an’s unique attribute of natural reason placed upon him moral obligations to have regard for the common good” (p. 21). Though the universal pretensions of the law of nature portend the idea of world government and the experience of the Roman imperium might have suggested it, we do not see in the ancient era a vision of global political institutions. Stoic thought, in sum, did provide “mankind with a consciousness that just and virtuous conduct cannot be merely defined by the laws and mores of the state” (p. 26).

Chapter two, “The Christian Renewal of the Roman Empire,” carries us well into the conceptual realm of a world state. Thinkers sought a rationale for and an au-

thority to use force for justice and order. Heater may try to tie together too much: “The Aristotelian idea of the superiority of unity over fragmentation; the Virgilian idea of the destiny of Rome; the Augustan idea of rule by Emperor—all these beliefs, as well as their Christian underpinnings, were gathered together by the Imperial publicists from Charlemagne to Charles V” (p. 58). However, this chapter spans from the fourth century to the eighteenth over the swirling waters of the middle ages and the early Renaissance. In outline the cosmopolitan ideas first flow toward the bank of coercive political order, away from Constantine’s faith in eventual universal domination to the attempts by Charlemagne and many of his successors to impose secular rule, often with the blessing of Rome. From that first bank the river moved over heavy rocks of political chaos and growing resentment of Rome’s attempts to interfere in increasingly national politics. Boniface VIII, Henry VII, Philip IV, and others reflected “a widespread yearning for restored authority. And it is against this background that we must understand the flowering of a literature urging effective creation of a universal empire” (p. 35).

Authors on the second shore lean toward (or sometimes sway between) pro-Papal or pro-Imperial views. But none satisfies political reality. Giles of Rome and James of Viterbo asserted that only the Pope had ultimate political authority, only Christian states are legitimate, and only loyal Christians should own property. These are conditions of human salvation (pp. 35, 36). Dante made the case for the superiority of the imperial authority (guided by Rome). His “*On Monarchy* is the first systematic and detailed analysis in the history of cosmopolitan political thought of the concept of world government,” Heater says (p. 37). Dante and many after him assert the wisdom of their age that the ultimate human goal is peace and happiness and that these will arrive when the world and its princes have given themselves to a supreme ruler. This monarch will be the source of all justice. Because he has no ambitions, lacks moral or intellectual failings, and belongs to all, he will have no enemies; he will “be strong, disinterested and charitable” (p. 42). Heater acknowledges Dante’s rehabilitation of the cosmopolitan ideal: “(J)ust as Aristotle presented the polis as a natural socio-political institution, so Dante presented a kind of cosmopolis as a natural socio-political institution” (p. 45). Yet Heater also asks cogent questions. “(H)ow can he ensure that all subordinate rulers will accept his jurisdiction? And how can he enforce his judgement, be it ever so wise, on a recalcitrant prince? It is not for the Monarch to impel concurrence by armed

power; he has no army; and in any case, his function is to provide global peace” (p. 45).

Among other authors Heater examines for this era are William of Ockham, Aeneas Sylvius, Guillaume Postel, and Tomasso Campanella. The last of these, Campanella, must be one of the most thoroughgoing utopians for the Renaissance. He prescribed specific actions for the creation and smooth operation of a single world government, from how to prevent hunger to intermarriage of ethnic groups to global education and dissemination of knowledge. All this and peace would result from the combining of spiritual and temporal authority in one dominion (pp. 55-57).

The Renaissance revived and combined Stoic philosophy’s ideal of unity with the Roman era’s image of authority. Erasmus campaigned against war and denounced the artificiality of territorial state sovereignty (p. 49); Justus Lipsius, against the “false piety of patriotism” attached to birthplace; Montaigne, against parochial education of children; Francis Bacon, for taking all persons into account in one’s actions (pp. 50, 51). These Neostoic writings hinted also of a return of the concept of world citizenship. This idea had shrunk along with the roles of individuals in their polities.

Chapter three moves into the seventeenth century where “modern political cosmopolitan ideas were emerging, secular in intellectual tone, (often) federal in institutional plan, and freed from the obsession with the Roman Empire” (p. 59). While in previous eras the global unity language of writers’ or leaders’ proposals may only have cloaked more selfish goals, in this century the well known plans have stronger bona fides. This is also the literature we know much more widely today—the standard fare of introductory courses in Peace Studies: Abbe Saint-Pierre, Sully, Comenius, Emeric Cruce, Constantin Volney, Cloots, Bentham, Kant, Leibniz, Erasmus, Grotius. His enlargement of our understanding of Comenius and Cruce are helpful to round out the typical portrayals of the period that stop with Sully, Bentham, and Kant.

Heater tries to overcome the muddle of his long list of thinkers here by emphasizing the contributions of Comenius, Cruce, Cloots, and Kant. Comenius argues the liberal cure for international ills: education. “Justice will emerge if men’s hearts are true. To this end men must be properly educated” (p. 62). This education program should include a new universal language to replace the dying Latin and “pansophy, teaching everything to everyone” (p. 63). Comenius’ global institutions would include three supreme bodies: “the College of Light for

education, the Consistory for religion, the Dicastery (of Peace) for government” (p. 64). “The world system of Comenius may be characterised as an intellectual theocracy tempered by a measure of participative democracy” (p. 64). Cruce recommends a world confederation with an agenda of human rights including “‘privilege to the citizen, hospitality to the foreigner, and (to) all without distinction freedom of travel and commerce’ ” (p. 66). His permanent universal assembly would rule “the city common to all” by majority votes of representatives of states. With remarkable foresight he stressed “the symbiotic relationship between internal and international peace” (p. 68). This translated into princes adhering strictly to the international legal principles of territorial sovereignty and non-interference. Heater uses Anacharsis Cloots to illustrate the Enlightenment’s faith in human rationality, popular sovereignty, and the transitory character of state institutions. “All national differences will fade into insignificance with the realisation that ‘we have the same objective: the preservation of natural rights’ ” (p. 81). Kant, on the other hand, for Heater stands for a more cautious outlook predicting a global evolution—almost a drift—toward republican governments with liberal constitutions. Kant, more explicitly than the other writers in this era, explored world citizenship but found it wanting.

“The Era of Worries and Ambitions,” chapter four, covers two steps, as its title suggests. First, Heater describes a dampening of the cosmopolitan spirit between the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War. Second, he notes that some impulse toward world government existed. This impulse touted the transferability of the U.S. experience with federalism, how technological changes both required and facilitated the successful growth of specialized and regional international organizations, and the potential of the new legal mechanism of dispute resolution: the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. But voices opposing global unity became clear and faith in the nation state was high. Francois Laurent, for example, assumed that any “world government would be ‘strongly organised,’ suppressing all freedom, ‘giv(ing) humanity the peace of the herd’ ” (p.114). With the exception of the Court, most thoughts of peace concentrated on the growing internal unity of the new nation-states in Europe—until the eve of “The Great War.”

Between 1914 and 1945 the cosmopolitan agenda found its (permanent?) place. Many noted thinkers and politicians, inspired by the Concert of Europe and the Court (and eventually the League of Nations) proposed a world organization (American Women’s Political Union), federal in structure (Clarence Streit), to pre-

vent war (Ely Culbertson and Mortimer J. Adler), to enable functional cooperation (David Mitrany), and to define and defend the individual as world citizen (Comte) (pp. 114-117). Sensibly, Heater critiques fallacies in this multitude of plans. First, the designs gave short shrift to the political reality of “Isolationist America, Imperialist Britain, France fearful of a resurgent Germany, and Stalinist Russia conscious of capitalist encirclement, scarcely in a mood to relinquish their heavy weaponry to a world federal authority” (p. 116). The designs’ calling for a strong executive, commanding an imposing military, did not square with what that would cost major states. Second, the parallels that advocates assumed between the U.S. federal experience and the world’s radical diversity were lamentable. As Heater says, “(E)ven after this relatively homogeneous nation (the United States) had had the cohering benefit of over two generations of federated co-habitation, the Union was rent by an implacable Civil War. Not an inspiring omen for a global facsimile” (p. 117).

One might have expected Heater to find more connections between the history of cosmopolitan ideas and the welling up of international concern leading to the holding of the peace conferences at the Hague. Though these efforts failed to derail the progress of national prides toward collision in 1914, their being precursors for the League’s Assembly experiment after the war was important.

A stridently different set of routes to similar ends gets the Heater treatment in chapter five. In its infancy and adolescence cosmopolitanism had had questionable defenders: Alexander, Barbarossa, and Napoleon. In the nineteenth and twentieth century world, unity’s champions have included Soviet Marxism and German Nazism—ideologies—and the technological imperative of H.G. Wells. Despite the probable hypocrisy of all but Wells, Heater values their propagandists’ keeping the sounds of cosmopolitanism alive. “The propaganda, even if not the true motives, then becomes a fit subject for the historian of political ideas” (p. 118). Such an historian can work with ideas of interracial concord, Church dominion, imperial unity, classless cosmopolis, national self determination, and (dare one add today?) market democracy. In sum, Heater says, “Communists and national Socialists hated each other; H.G. Wells hated both. Yet for all their mutual antagonisms, the classless world society, the Aryan imperium, and the Wellsian technocratic utopia had much in common. Like the Romano-medieval Imperial-Christian dream, they were erected on ideological convictions that the thrust of destiny, provi-

dence, history or evolution would inexorably lead to the realisation of their visions” (p. 135).

Wells’ edict, “Adapt or perish,” captures Heater’s two closing chapters covering the post-Second World War era. The challenges which nearly everyone recognizes and for which cosmopolitanism has a response include the standoff in and impending proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and degradation of the ecosphere—the risks of humanicide via “bang or a whimper.” Such challenges mock state boundaries and national governments.

The single best known construction of this era is, of course, the United Nations. And the best known proposal for moving from this era to the future is Grenville Clark and Louis Sohn’s *World Peace Through World Law*. Notoriety does not equate to wisdom in this case, however. Rather than dwell on prepackaged solutions of the Clark and Sohn variety Heater wisely turns, instead to assessing the U.N.’s records on peacekeeping and community development. He also analyzes the global level prospects for federalism, functionalism, the effective operation of the principle of subsidiarity, and world citizenship.

Heater’s description of world citizenship (pp. 170-180, 183-187) partially compensates for the vacant stare that most of the ideas he surveys in his history give the concept, despite its Stoic beginning. He summarizes: “It is possible to discern four main meanings: consciousness of being a member of the community of the human race; a sense of responsibility for the condition of the planet and its inhabitants and participation in organisations for protecting them; recognition and acceptance that the individual is subject to a moral law higher than that of his or her own municipal law; engagement in activities to promote a world government” (p. 170). He finds the U.N. human rights conventions keen statements of what world citizens might claim for themselves and accord to others. “Political theorists have been writing increasingly about the world as a human community of individuals; about the human rights which those individuals should be guaranteed; about the sense of responsibility which these individuals should feel towards the world they inhabit; and about the need to increase the opportunities of individuals to shape the activities of the United Nations, the only universal political institution we have” (p. 180).

One might quarrel a bit with Heater’s conclusion that “(i)n practical and constitutional senses neither world citizenship nor a world state has been achieved” (p. 187). That Heater is on the side of the majority of commentators does not deny that one can observe the behavior of

global political actors through the eye of a publicist of international law and conclude differently. In international law, practice over time becomes custom and custom of a “constitutive” kind becomes tantamount to provisions of a global constitution. Such a constitution defines the rights and duties of a world citizen. A thinker of such persuasion wonders whether peacekeeping and intervention by the United Nations Security Council in this decade will add authority to these constitutional provisions or, if the actions ultimately fail to bring order and justice, will degrade the global constitution—and world citizenship with it.[3]

Heater offers a research agenda on cosmopolitanism, a reinventing of both our past and our future “incorporating thinking about global institutions, their democratic oversight, the nature of world citizenship, environmental planetary consciousness, the practice and sense of world community and the moral principles upon which all this should be founded” (p. 209). Prudence and human curiosity require us to discover our global political constants of community, citizenship, and governance.

This monograph would be useful optional reading for courses in international relations, especially in peace studies, international regimes, and global political philosophy. An instructor who assigns literature surveys that include any of the authors mentioned in this review or assigns readings in federalism or functionalism should add this book to such lists. Were it to come out in paperback, it would be worth considering as required, complemen-

tary reading.

Notes

[1]. See other pertinent works by Heater: *Peace Through Education: The Contribution of the Council for Education in World Citizenship* (Lewes: Falmer Press, 1984); and *Citizenship: The Civic Ideal in World History, Politics and Education* (London: Longman, 1990).

[2]. See Yale H. Ferguson and Richard W. Mansbach, *Politics: Authority, Identities, and Change* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

[3]. Kenneth L. Wise, “The Constitutional Requirements of Citizenship in the Global Polity,” in the series “Science and Technique of Democracy,” Council of Europe, Venice Commission (1997). See also works of the “Yale School” of international law such as Myres S. McDougal and W. Michael Reisman, *International Law in Contemporary Perspective* (Mineola, New York: The Foundation Press, 1981). For a turgid but astute view of competing purposes and practical association in the global polity see Christian Reus-Smit, “The Constitutional Structure of International Society and the Nature of Fundamental Institutions,” *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Autumn 1997), 555-590.

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