1 A conceptual history of world community

THIS is a book about the idea of a *world community* and its history. In the history of international thought, the creation of a world community has been seen as a way of overcoming discord between political communities without having to impose sovereign authority from above. Yet the very same division of mankind into distinct communities that makes the idea of a world community morally compelling has also been the main obstacle to its successful realization, since differences between peoples have made such a community hard to attain in practice. Consequently, many of those who have defended the idea of world community have done so by arguing that the world of sovereign states first has to be transcended in order to make way for a coming community of all mankind. As Hedley Bull described what he thought was the Kantian view of international morality, 'The community of mankind … is not only the central reality in international politics, in the sense that the forces able to bring it into being are present; it is also the end or object of the highest moral endeavour.'[1]

But at this point we encounter a familiar paradox, since Bull was quick to add to this characterization that 'The rules that sustain coexistence and intercourse should be ignored if the imperatives of this higher morality require it.'[2] To him, such universalistic claims were nothing but barely concealed claims to imperial power, since precisely because of the pluralistic makeup of international society, every set of values can always be recast as an expression of some particular identity or interest.[3] As Anthony Pagden has recently formulated this dilemma,

[1] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 25.
[2] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 25.
[3] See, for example, Thomas McCarthy, 'On Reconciling Cosmopolitan Unity and National Diversity', *Public Culture*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1999,

[it] may serve to remind us that if we wish to assert any belief in the universal we have to begin by declaring our willingness to assume, and to defend, at least some of the values of a highly specific way of life. For the reluctance to accept that, for many uncomfortable fact [*sic*], must weaken the argument against those for whom the values proclaimed by the modern liberal tradition, let alone anything resembling a categorical imperative, are simply meaningless.[4]

Hence every effort to impose a given set of values on the existing plurality of communities in the name of a common humanity is likely to be met with resistance on the grounds of its own very particularity. From this point of view, a real and genuinely inclusive world community is a dream incapable of realization, since every attempt to transcend the existing plurality in the name of some set of universal values is likely to create conflict rather than harmony.[5] It follows that theories of world community are nothing but ideologies of empire, cunningly crafted to justify the global spread and dominance of Western values.[6] This is where we still seem to

pp. 175–208; Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 1–89.

[4] Anthony Pagden, 'Human Rights, Natural Rights, and Europe's Imperial Legacy', *Political Theory*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2003, pp. 171–99 at p. 173. See also Anthony Pagden, 'Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism', *Constellations*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2000, pp. 3–22.

[5] For different formulations of this problem, see Adda Bozeman, 'The International Order in a Multicultural World', in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, eds., *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 387–406; Jens Bartelson, 'The Trial of Judgment: A Note on Kant and the Paradoxes of Internationalism', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1995, pp. 255–72; Chris Brown, 'Cultural Diversity and International Political Theory: From the *Requirement* to "Mutual Respect"', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2000, pp. 199–213; Naeem Inayatullah and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Beate Jahn, 'Kant, Mill and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs', *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2005, pp. 177–207; Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants Without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[6] See R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside. International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Anthony

be stuck today, torn between what appear to be the conflicting demands of cosmopolitan and communitarian moral vocabularies.[7] As Seyla Benhabib has recently remarked, 'Our fate, as late-modern individuals, is to live caught in the permanent tug of war between the vision of the universal and the attachments of the particular.'[8] If true, this would imply that any successful attempt to defend the idea of world community must find a way to reconcile some set of universal values with the actual plurality of values currently embodied in international society.

I

But how did we get here? While many people today would like to find a way out of the above dilemma, most of them do not know where to look for inspiration. Therefore, in this book, I shall try to explain how and why we ended up with this way of formulating the problem of world community, and why we appear to be stuck with an inescapable tension between particularistic and universalistic accounts of human association. This amounts to undertaking a critical reconstruction of how world community has been constituted as a problem within international relations and political theory. This in turn forces us to engage what has been labelled the Kantian tradition within

D. Smith, 'Towards a Global Culture?' in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 171–91; Craig Calhoun, 'The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 101, no. 4, 2002, pp. 869–97; Timothy Brennan, *At Home in the World. Cosmopolitanism Now* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 1–118.

[7] See, for example, Molly Cochran, *Normative Theory in International Relations. A Pragmatic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 30–52. For a recent overview of this debate, see Robert Fine, 'Taking the "Ism" out of Cosmopolitanism. An Essay in Reconstruction', *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2003, pp. 451–70.

[8] Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others. Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 16; Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture. Equality and Diversity in a Global Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 24–48.

international thought.[9] Yet in contrast to most existing accounts, I will suggest that the works of Immanuel Kant mark in important ways the end rather than the beginning of that tradition. After him, the basic ontological commitments underpinning the concept of world community became increasingly hard to sustain, and it became equally difficult to make coherent sense of that concept in a world of sovereign and secular nation-states. Hence, as I shall argue, our present inability to make coherent sense of the idea of world community is the outcome of a successful *nationalization* of the concept of community itself, a process through which the nation became the paradigmatic form of human association in theory and practice alike.[10] As I would like to suggest, this tragic outcome has been reinforced by a distinct logic of identity which is based on the notion that all sameness presupposes prior difference. This peculiar logic implies that the identity of a given political community derives from its differences from other communities. Famously associated with theorists like

[9] The Kantian tradition and the corresponding idea of world community have frequently been constructed as objects of suspicion within international relations theory. See, for example, Hedley Bull, 'Society and Anarchy in International Relations', in Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), pp. 35–50; Martin Wight, *International Theory. The Three Traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 30–50. For more recent discussions on the concepts of world society and world community within international relations theory, see Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Structure of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 27–45; Andrew Linklater and Hidemi Suganami, *The English School of International Relations: A Contemporary Reassessment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 117–54. For a discussion of the relationship between international society and the traditions thought to constitute it, see Jens Bartelson, 'Short Circuits: Society and Tradition in International Relations Theory', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1996, pp. 239–60.

[10] For a discussion, see Jonathan Ree, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Experience of Nationality', in Pheng Chea and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics. Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 77–90. Interestingly, a similar point was made a century ago by Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* [1907] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 1–22.

Hegel and Carl Schmitt, the logic of Same and Other makes it hard to conceive of any identity – individual or collective – without inscribing this identity within a series of constitutive differences. Consequently, since all forms of human association are necessarily particularistic in character, a universal community of all mankind is impossible to attain unless a credible threat to all human existence can be constructed. Yet to the extent that such a threat would be posed by beings that would be other than human, this would automatically also call into question the anthropomorphic foundations of human community.[11] One remaining way to handle this predicament is through *mutual recognition* between communities. Not only are the mechanisms of mutual recognition believed to be responsible for the historical constitution of international society, but they are sometimes also regarded as a way of escaping the more undesirable consequences of international anarchy in the present.[12] But, as I would like to argue in this book, this logic of Same and Other is what makes the tension between particularistic and universalistic conceptions of human community look inescapable. Therefore, what is needed in order to overcome this tension is a theory of political identity that permits us to account for the sameness of political communities without appealing to their differences. As I would like to suggest in the historical parts of this book, not only is such an alternative account of political identity readily available when we know where to look, but also that such an account helps us to make new (or old) sense of the world of sovereign states by emphasizing that this world is fundamentally embedded within a larger social whole.

That the process of nationalization has been successful should be evident from the enduring nature and salience of nationalist assumptions in modern political thought. Modern nationalism is kept alive by the belief that national communities provide people with a sense of belonging that cannot be obtained elsewhere, and that such belonging

[11] See Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, 'Sovereignty and the UFO', *Political Theory*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2008, pp. 607–33; Majid Yar, 'From Nature to History, and Back Again: Blumenberg, Strauss and the Hobbesian Community', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2002, pp. 53–73.

[12] See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 313–69.

is necessary to human fulfilment: these assumptions elevate the secular community into 'a sacred communion of the people'.[13] When such notions of human association emerged within modern social theory, they invoked a past characterized by a real sense of belonging, and contrasted it with the contractual modes of intercourse thought to be characteristic of political modernity. As Tönnies famously argued, 'there is a contrast between a social order which – being based upon consensus of wills – rests on harmony and is developed and ennobled by folkways, mores, and religion, and an order which – being based upon a union of rational wills – rests on convention and agreement, is safeguarded by political legislation, and finds its ideological justification in public opinion'.[14] In the context of modern social theory, the concept of community takes on meaning only by virtue of being distinct from that of society, and is distinct from the concept of society by its reference to a common identity rather than to the notion of a common interest.[15] At the core of these conceptions of community we find the idea that a community is an integrated whole, ultimately something more than the sum of its individual parts. Not only are such communities distinct from each other, but they are also categorically distinct from the international realm, precisely because the latter lacks the characteristics of communal life.[16]

[13] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples. Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 13–32. Compare Bernard Yack, 'Popular Sovereignty and Nationalism', *Political Theory*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2001, pp. 517–36.

[14] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society: Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Minneapolis: Michigan State University Press, 1957), p. 223. For a justification of this assumption, see Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals* [1939] (New York: Continuum, 1991), pp. 1–67. For the spatial requirements of belonging, see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [1958] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).

[15] For the distinction between identity and interest as the basis for different theories of social order, see Alessandro Pizzorno, 'On the Individualistic Theory of Social Order', in Pierre Bourdieu and James S. Coleman, eds., *Social Theory for a Changing Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), pp. 209–31. For their congruence in modern notions of the nation, see Bernard Yack, 'The Myth of the Civic Nation', in Ron Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 103–18.

[16] See Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (London: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 405–6; Andrew Vincent, *Nationalism and*

More surprisingly, similar beliefs concerning the necessity and desirability of bounded communities are shared even by those who are suspicious of modern nationalism in its cruder forms. As Charles Taylor has argued, 'The rather different understandings of the good we see in different cultures are the correlative of the different languages which have evolved in those cultures.'[17] To Rogers Smith, while 'the organization of humanity into particular political peoples' is certainly based on the crafting of narratives and therefore not set in stone, 'this crafting may be unavoidable if we are to sustain vital and deeply cherished political, historical, and cultural traditions and to organize human beings for the productive pursuit of their happiness and welfare'.[18] Even advocates of multiculturalism remain fond of the nation, since 'Most people would rather be free and equal within their own nation ... than be free and equal citizens of the world, if this means that they are less likely to live and work in their own language and culture.'[19] Hence, if we are to believe these authors, there can be no morality outside the boundaries of particular communities, since morality is nothing but 'the voice of ourselves as members of a community'.[20] Thus, given these basic ideas about the nature of human communities, and given these basic assumptions about the way their political identities are formed, we cannot but perceive the universal and particular as fundamentally opposed, and as long as these categories are stuck in opposition, the emergence of a world community will be but a distant dream.[21]

Particularity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 36–62.

[17] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 91.

[18] Rogers M. Smith, *Stories of Peoplehood. The Politics and Morals of Political Membership* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 9. For a critique, see Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 73–106.

[19] Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 76.

[20] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 59.

[21] For a similar argument, see Jonathan Seglow, 'Universals and Particulars: The Case of Liberal Cultural Nationalism', *Political Studies*, vol. 64, 1998, pp. 963–77.

But these particularistic conceptions of community have become a source of trouble today. In an age when it is widely believed that global flows of people and information have made political communities less homogeneous than they once were, traditional notions of political identity have become increasingly difficult to sustain.[22] Provided that the concept of community has been understood as more or less coextensive with that of the nation, a loss of national identity equals a loss of community, which now allegedly 'remains stubbornly missing, eludes our grasp and keeps falling apart, because the way in which this world prompts us to go about fulfilling our dreams of secure life does not bring us closer to their fulfilment'.[23] Such a loss of community is widely believed to pose a threat to modern democracy, since it seems to presuppose the prior existence of a people or a bounded community.[24] Simultaneously, many of the problems that modern societies have to confront are boundless in character. Problems of sustainability and justice transcend national boundaries, yet there is no political authority at the global level that could enforce efficient solutions.[25] And in those issue areas in which supranational institutions have proved efficient, they have suffered from a lack of legitimacy that can no longer be solved by an appeal to traditional conceptions of people or nation, but must be addressed with reference to wider conceptions of community.[26] In sum, and as Agamben remarked over a decade ago, 'The novelty of the coming politics is

[22] See, for example, John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000); Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization. The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

[23] Zygmunt Bauman, *Community* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 144.

[24] For this theme, see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democracy Past and Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 189–217; James Tully, 'The Unfreedom of the Moderns in Comparison to their Ideals of Constitutional Democracy', *Modern Law Review*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2002, pp. 204–28.

[25] See, for example, Thomas Nagel, 'The Problem of Global Justice', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2005, pp. 113–47; Thomas Dietz, Elinor Ostrom and Paul C. Stern, 'The Struggle to Govern the Commons', *Science*, vol. 302, 2003, pp. 1907–12.

[26] See, for example, Bert Van Roermund, 'Sovereignty: Unpopular and Popular', in Neil Walker, ed., *Sovereignty in Transition* (Oxford: Hart,

that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest and control of the state, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity), and insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization.'[27]

Given the problems faced by modern societies, the idea of a world community seems morally attractive, yet profoundly problematic. With few exceptions, accounts of the normative foundations of global authority have been silent about the possibility of a world community as the ultimate source of political legitimacy.[28] This silence is strange, especially in the light of the fact that one of the characteristic assumptions of modern political theory is that *all* political authority ultimately ought to derive its legitimacy from the consent of the people or community brought under its sway.[29] It is therefore hard to see how it would be possible to justify *any* global political authority without at least implicitly invoking the possibility of a world community, either as its normative foundation or as its empirical outcome. Yet, as I shall argue in this book, redefining the concept of community so that it becomes possible to make coherent sense of the idea of world community necessitates a wholesale change in the way we understand political identity. We need a theory of identity that makes it possible to regard the universal and the particular as mutually implicating rather than as fundamentally opposed – a theory of identity that also makes it possible to regard human beings and the communities that they inhabit as embedded in a more comprehensive human community than that commonly exemplified by the nation. As I would like to suggest in the next section, imagining these things becomes much easier once we start to situate visions of world community in the context of cosmological belief within which they have traditionally been articulated.

2003), pp. 33–54; Hans Lindahl, 'Sovereignty and Representation in the European Union', in Walker, *Sovereignty in Transition*, pp. 87–114.

[27] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 85.

[28] For an overview, see Jens Bartelson, 'The Concept of Sovereignty Revisited', *European Journal of International Law*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2006, pp. 463–74.

[29] See Jens Bartelson, *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 6–8.

II

Like most other socio-political concepts, the concept of community is ambiguous as a result of having been constantly contested and repeatedly recycled within political thought during past centuries. Since one of the primary tasks of this book is to explore some of the changes the concept has undergone as a result of all this contestation and recycling, any initial effort to define the concept of community would be to close the field of inquiry prematurely. At this stage of the inquiry we need to remain as open as possible to what the concept of community means or ought to mean in the present, in order to be able to better understand what it has meant in the past. However, once such a historical analysis has been accomplished, we might be able to recover meanings that do indeed transcend the particular contexts in which this concept has been used. Such continuity would in turn allow us to speak of a distinct tradition of thought, and from such a tradition we might be able to infer some more general theoretical observations about the concept of world community and the conditions of its meaningful usage. Yet the historical ambition of this book puts restrictions on what can be meaningfully accomplished in philosophical terms. While my aim is to provide a general sketch of what the concept of world community might mean and entail, I cannot provide any account of the principles according to which such a community ought to be governed in order to be legitimate and viable. The central concern of this book is instead to analyse the conditions of possibility of such a community. I will refer to the sum total of these conditions as the *social ontology* of world community.

Yet a few preliminary words need to be said about the object of our inquiry. Before the concept of community was nationalized, community was believed to be universal in scope and boundless in character. These conceptions of a universal and boundless community were essentially conceptions of *human* community, insofar as they were based on the assumption that human beings are distinct from members of other species, rather than on assumptions about what makes this or that group of people unique, and thus distinct from other groups of people. Far from being unproblematic, this distinction was drawn with reference to capacities believed to be uniquely human, such as the faculties of language and reason. Not only were human beings believed to share these capacities in common, but these