

Tianxia: Between Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism

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Abstract

This paper argues that besides the two popular global justice theories, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, the Confucian idea of *tianxia* 天下 (“All Under Heaven”) presents an alternative view. Cosmopolitanism focuses on individuals as the ultimate agents of the global community, while nationalism recognizes nations and states as the ultimate agents. The idea of *tianxia* can be understood as a version of cosmopolitanism that values the great unity and human love. *Tianxia* can also be read as a version of nationalism that prioritizes partial love. In this paper I argue that *tianxia* should be treated as a unique version of statist cosmopolitanism that insists on the priority of states but pursues global peace and development. However, *tianxia* does not treat states as mere instruments. It does not endorse the egalitarian aspirations either. In the first section, I introduce the debate between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. In the second section, I present major arguments for nationalism. In the third section, I discuss main arguments for cosmopolitanism. In the fourth section, I clarify the disputes between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In the fifth section, I present Confucian cosmopolitanism as a way to interpret Confucian view of global justice. In the sixth section, I clarify *tianxia* in the narrow and broad senses. In the seventh section, I argue that *tianxia* can be read as a version of statist cosmopolitanism that insists on the priority of states but pursues global peace and development. In the eighth section, I argue why *tianxia* is an alternative model of global justice that is neither nationalism nor cosmopolitanism.

Keywords: *Tianxia*, cosmopolitanism, nationalism, global justice

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I. Introduction

One of the key issues of the current debate about global justice is the rivalry between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. Cosmopolitanism commits to the general idea that as a citizen of the world, one has similar obligations to people inside and outside the national borders. In contrast, nationalism commits to the idea that due to our national identity, one has special obligations (only) to people inside the national border. There are various arguments for cosmopolitanism or nationalism. They disagree upon certain fundamental points of global justice. Even though their disputes cannot be reduced to those disagreements, those disagreements are helpful for us to understand their general views. In light of these disputes, I argue that the Confucian idea of *tianxia* 天下 (“All Under Heaven”) is an alternative to cosmopolitanism and nationalism. In the second section, directly following this introduction, I present major arguments for nationalism. In the third section, I discuss main arguments for cosmopolitanism. In the fourth section, I clarify the disputes between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In the fifth section, I present Confucian cosmopolitanism as a way to interpret Confucian view of global justice. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth sections, I argue that *tianxia* is an alternative model of global justice that is neither nationalism nor cosmopolitanism.

II. Arguments for Nationalism

In this section I will sketch some arguments for nationalism. Although none of those arguments are conclusive and the debates are ongoing, the sketched arguments give us some basic ideas about the debate. David Miller is one of the leading defenders of nationalism. Miller claims that nationality should be regarded as a fundamental moral principle (Miller 1995, 49–80). There are several elements of this principle. First, there should be boundaries of nationality. National border is necessary for nationality. Second, national sovereignty is important to nationality. Self-determination is required to maintain

national autonomy. Third, there should be measures to protect national identity if we want to treat nationality seriously. Fourth, nationality would require some ethical demands, which include partial duties towards fellow members of a nation.

Miller also claims that if one accepts the above elements of nationality, one would also be bound by the implications of this principle. For example, nationality becomes a core part of one's identity. Similar to family, nationality is closely associated with how others perceive a person culturally, morally, and politically. We would also have unique duties to our nation. These may include defending the nation's sovereignty and helping fellow citizens in the nation.

Miller does make the distinction among nation, state, and ethnicity. Nation refers to a community of people. State refers to a political institution. Ethnicity points to the common descent and shared features of a group of people. It is clear that one nation can include different ethnic groups. For example, China as a nation has Han and other 37 ethnic minority groups. Sometimes, one nation is divided into different states. For example, South Korea and North Korea (used to) belong to the same nation. Sometimes, one state can have different nations. The Soviet Union had multiple nations.

Miller argues that there could be instrumental and non-instrumental arguments to support nationality. Our special duties within a nation are more efficient in caring for all, comparing the case that there are no special duties. In other words, we care more for our fellow citizens in order for everyone to be cared for more efficiently. Furthermore, nation as a voluntary association generates special duties. However, Miller prefers a particularist defense of national duties. Miller claims that memberships and attachments are the basic level reasons that do not have to be reduced to other values. Thus, our membership in a nation and our attachment to our nation provide a fundamental reason for us to be partial to our nation.

Besides Miller, who is a defender of a comprehensive nationalism, others try to defend nationalism by appealing to important normative ideas. Michael Blake also argues against cosmopolitanism by appealing to the idea of coercion (Blake, 2020, 1–16). Blake claims that human beings are autonomous in deciding their lives. Autonomy does require

that a person has the ability of planning one's life. One of the necessary conditions of planning one's life is the enforcement of norms. We have to be able to anticipate how others act, especially that others follow the shared rules and norms. This is where the state comes in. The state would justify certain coercive norms, such as income tax and military service. Therefore, we do need different states and national borders. Coercion is perceived as an essential feature of nation state.¹

Some scholars of nationalism focus on the negative effects of cosmopolitanism. Yael Tamir argues for liberal nationalism by focusing on how the kind of globalism that is promoted by cosmopolitans would destabilize cultural and social identities (Tamir 2019, 3–42). Tamir claims that nationality is a source of cultural membership. Nation as a mental structure is similar to families, tribes, and friendships that count against alienation and loneliness. More importantly, globalism and neoliberalism might affect the interests of lower social classes. The worst off are hurt due to global markets and investments. Without a centralized political system, the most disadvantaged in a nation does not benefit from the global interdependence. They call for protection, which can be provided by nations.

Distributive justice is another key point for both nationalism and cosmopolitanism. For example, John Rawls and some of his followers defend a nationalist view of global distributive justice (Rawls 1999, 30–43). Rawls argues that there are several different kinds of peoples or nations in the international community: the liberal people who endorse liberal democratic constitutionalism, the decent people who respect basic human rights without liberalism, the outlaw people who do not respect human rights, and the burdened people who are under unfavorable conditions. Rawls believes that decent people are equal participants of international collaborations who should be tolerated. However, since the outlaw people do not respect the list of human rights, such as freedom from slavery, liberty of conscience, and security from genocide, we may intervene in various ways. We may help the

¹ There are extensive debates on the issue of whether coercion can justify nationalism. For example, Laura Valentini argues that systemic and interactional types of coercion can justify global justice (See Valentini 2011).

burdened people due to their unfavorable conditions. Here are a couple of distinctive claims made by Rawls. First, Rawls does not include certain civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression or freedom of association, into his list of universal human rights, which allows liberal people to tolerate decent people who do not recognize those liberal civil and political rights. Second, Rawls does not extend the principles of distributive justice to the global community. He claims that we should only offer humanitarian assistance. One of the reasons is that for him each nation's performance mostly depends on its own political culture. It would not be fair to burden well-off nations if their wealthy were redistributed to less well-off nations.

Thomas Nagel develops the above ideas from Rawls and argues that law and monopoly of force are required to coordinate a large number of people (Nagel 2005, 113–47). The institutional setup is required to enforce the principle of justice. Either that we can form a global sovereignty to implement global distributive justice, or that distributive justice is only practiced within national borders. However, the existing global institutions are voluntary associations that are based on bargaining relations. Nagel suggests that we may create a patently unjust and illegitimate global structure of power that are tolerable to the interests of the most powerful current nation-states first. However, this option is not acceptable to cosmopolitans.

The above arguments for nationalism defend the thesis that we have special obligations (only) to people inside the national borders from different angles. Despite their differences, they seem to share the following features. First, they view states as the basic moral agents of global justice. How states interact with each other, rather than with individuals, is the key issue for them.² Second, they do not think that a principle of distributive justice is applicable to global community.³

² Nationalists do not deny individuals as basic agents for justice within a state. However, they deny individuals as basic agents for global justice. Thanks to Owen Flanagan for pushing me to make this clear.

³ There is a subtle distinction between distributive justice and moral obligation to help. The difference is not just of degree, but of kind. For example, I am obligated to help those in urgent need, such as someone who is drowning, a victim of traffic accident, or someone who suffers from famine in Africa. However, it does not follow that this is a distributive justice issue.

Mere humanitarian assistance is required or expected from one country to another country, which is a moral issue, rather than a political or justice issue. A strong nationalist can even claim that humanitarian assistance is supererogatory rather than an obligation. Third, they can be regarded as realists rather than idealists. They take how nations actually interact with each other into account of their normative view of global justice.

III. Arguments for Cosmopolitanism

Even though there are strong arguments for nationalism, cosmopolitanism instead enjoys more popularity among contemporary philosophers. It seems that most philosophy scholars would support the idea that we are obligated to help those in need even if they are outside our national borders. The level of help can range from humanitarian aid to distributive justice.⁴ For example, Peter Singer appeals to the utilitarian principle that “if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of (comparable) moral importance, we ought morally to do it” (Singer 1972, 231). It seems that helping those who are in extreme poverty outside our national borders would prevent them from dying from hunger, while we are not sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance. Thus, we ought morally to help them. This simple principle establishes a cosmopolitan obligation to people outside the national borders.

Besides the utilitarian approach, Henry Shue appeals to the idea of human rights to justify our cosmopolitan obligations (Shue 1980, 13–34). Shue argues that basic human rights entail corresponding duties. For example, the right to security and the right to subsistence require others to provide protection and assistance to those who lack the resources to stay alive due to violence or poverty. Since basic human

⁴ A weak nationalist can claim that even if we are not under the obligation of justice to distribute resources to people outside our national borders, it is a decent act for us to provide certain assistance to those suffer from natural disasters in another country.

rights are universal, which means that they should be given to anyone inside or outside the borders, we are obligated to help those outside the borders too.

Onora O’Neill argues that duty is better than rights to justify cosmopolitan obligations (O’Neill 1989, 191–200). O’Neill claims that many rights do not correspond to an assigned duty-bearer and a clearly specified duty. It is not clear who is the duty bearer. The nature and the extent of this duty is not clear either. For example, the perfect obligations in the Kantian sense are clear. Anyone should not physically assault another. The duty bearer and the nature of this duty are clearly identified. However, the imperfect obligations are different. For example, if the right to food can be read as an imperfect obligation to help, the duty bearer is not clearly identified. Who should provide the food to those who have the right to food is not clear. Furthermore, how much food should be provided is not clear either. O’Neill suggests that instead we should specify and allocate our duties of justice to the poor through appropriate global institutional scheme. Kok-Chor Tan argues that the challenge of the assignment and enforcement of duties that correspond to rights, does not imply that rights are themselves empty. Tan points out that the duty-based approach is not distinct and that “rights and duties are different sides of the same coin on a deontological perspective” (Tan 2004, 53).

Besides the above three main moral approaches—utilitarian, rights, and duties—a political approach, which appeals to distributive justice, is also forceful. Scholars try to justify cosmopolitanism by globalizing Rawls’ view of distributive justice within a nation. Even though Rawls himself is clear about not extending his theory of distributive justice to the global community, and Nagel further supports Rawls’s own view, people like Thomas Pogge still make great efforts to apply Rawls’s distributive justice to the global community. Pogge appeals to the basic idea that one deserves justice if one is the victim of injustice (Pogge 2001, 6–24). Within a domestic society, the most disadvantaged suffer from injustice due to family, gender, religion, and other arbitrary factors. Within a global community, besides those arbitrary factors, Pogge argues that developing countries are also the victims of the current global order that is dominated by developed countries. For

example, Pogge argues that due to International Borrowing Privilege, a sovereign country, even if it is ruled by a dictatorship, can borrow from international financial organizations, such as the World Bank. The dictator might use the loan for his personal expenses. However, the people that he rules would have to pay back the loan. Similarly, due to International Resource Privilege, a sovereign country, even if it is ruled by a dictatorship, can sell the country's resource to other countries. The income might also go to his own pocket. The people of his country do not benefit from the transaction. They are the victims of those injustice. Thus, they should be compensated by some institutional and/or non-institutional arrangements. Furthermore, Pogge argues that a single global original position is more consistently implied by Rawls's own method, comparing with the dualism of domestic and global justice that Rawls himself endorses (Pogge 1989, 246–58).

IV. The Disputes

One may find that the arguments for nationalism and cosmopolitanism are both convincing and reasonable. The arguments for nationalism focus on the significance of nationality. In contrast, the arguments for cosmopolitanism focus on the significance of a global community. Thus, it is important for us to understand their real disagreements before we proceed to endorse either position. I think that there are at least three substantial disputes between nationalism and cosmopolitanism. As I explained before, although the differences between nationalism and cosmopolitanism cannot be reduced to those disputes, those disputes help us understand the general positions of them.

I think that the first dispute between nationalism and cosmopolitanism is about the ultimate moral agents of global justice. For nationalism, the ultimate moral agents of global justice are nations. At this point, for international relations, nations are indeed the key players. Even though international organizations, such as the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, and others are very important in shaping international relations, they still exercise their influences over different

states. International companies are also big players today. Some of those giant companies, such as Apple, Facebook, Walmart, and others have huge business presence globally. They do shape international economic developments. In most cases, they still have to work with local and national governments. Furthermore, nationalists argue that nations are instrumental for serving the welfare of all citizens. For them, nation plays a similar role to each citizen as family plays the role of a basic unit of a society. We cannot imagine a society without families. Similarly, we cannot imagine a world without nations.

In contrast, for cosmopolitanism, the ultimate moral agents of global justice are individuals, while states are also agents of global justice. States are instrumental for the survival and development of individuals.⁵ But nations and states are the result of historical developments. They were not part of how each individual co-existed with another other in the first place. Due to the rise of nation states, perpetual wars and competitions never stop. Nations are merely instruments for each individual to live a good life. Since nation states become an obstacle for many individuals, especially in developing countries, to live a flourishing life, nation states should not be endorsed by default. We should focus again on each individual. After all, each person's wellbeing should be the ultimate end of any normative theory, moral or political.

I think that the second dispute between nationalism and cosmopolitanism is about the boundary of distributive justice.⁶ For nationalism, nation state is the limit of distributive justice. The old debate between nationalism and cosmopolitanism is about whether we have obligations to help those outside the borders. However, the new debate is about the nature of this obligation. Tan first points out this

⁵ The state cosmopolitanism discussed later in this paper also recognizes states as basic agents of global justice, while claims that individuals are the ultimate agents of global justice.

⁶ As I explained earlier in the paper, helping those outside our borders can be explained in two different terms: humanitarian aids and distributive justice. In a broad sense, both are moral demands. However, in a narrow sense, the first one is a moral demand required by values of virtue, decency, or humanity. In contrast, the second one is a political demand required by the value of justice, which has more to do with institutional and structural issues.

shift and claims that “the central dispute, it seems to me, is now no longer between those who think that the scope of our moral concern ought to extend beyond our borders and those who do not,” and that “the new debate, as I see it, concerns the content of this moral concern and whether it is grounded on justice” (Tan 2004, 20). Nationalists now also recognize that we should help those outside the borders. However, they argue that it is mere humanitarian assistance, rather than distributive justice. I think that there are two significant differences relevant here. First of all, if one fails the obligation of humanitarian assistance, it implies deficiency related to personal characters, such as lacking of empathy. Similarly, one could also be regarded as indifferent or cold-hearted for not offering help to those who are in need in one’s own community. However, if a situation involves distributive injustice, it is more of social and political issue. We are collectively doing wrong to those who are wronged by injustice. We are actively harming them. Thus, for this new version of nationalism, a state could be morally blameful if the state fails to help those in need outside the borders. However, for cosmopolitanism, it is injustice if a state fails to help those in need outside the borders. Second, the extent of assistance could be different. A nationalist could easily argue for a minimal threshold of assistance by insisting on a sufficientarian understanding of welfare.⁷ However, a distributive justice would not easily stop with a minimal threshold of assistance. Some versions of egalitarianism might be assumed.

I think that the third dispute between nationalism and cosmopolitanism can be understood as about the nature of their approaches. Nationalism commits to non-idealism, while cosmopolitanism commits to idealism.⁸ Non-idealism recognizes factual human nature and actual

⁷ A cosmopolitan could also argue for a weak version of cosmopolitanism by claiming a minimally decent life for those in need, in comparison to a strong version that insists on global distributional justice (Cf. Brock 2009, 13).

⁸ There are two clarifications here. First, the distinction between idealism and non-idealism overlaps with the distinction between realism and moralism but is different. Realism claims that social and political domains are autonomous from the moral domain. Moralism claims that social and political domains are the continuation of the moral domain. Second, the distinction between idealism and non-idealism is not clear-cut. One debate is about the definition of ideal conditions (Cf. Levy 2016).

human conditions and take those as the pre-conditions for normative theory. In contrast, Idealism prioritizes the importance of moral and political ideals. The importance of those ideals consists in them providing guidance, even if they cannot be (fully) realized in reality. In other words, an idealist can even claim that “ought” does not imply “can” because “ought” guides us even if “ought” cannot be actualized. For example, even if there is no moral saint in real life, it does not imply that the ideal of moral saint is not important. Nationalism takes our commitment to national identity seriously. It treats nationality as part of our integrity. It is true that we have strong attachments to family, friends, and our own nation, especially in a nation where we grow up. We do support our national sports teams at international games. Thus, in a sense that nationalists take those natural attachments seriously. In contrast, cosmopolitanism seems to commit to a kind of idealism. It prioritizes our aspiration of equality. It does not take into account or value our natural attachments to our nations. The normative ideal of being a global citizen trumps over our partial love towards our own nation. We have impartial obligations towards those who are outside the borders.

Thus, it seems that nationalists and cosmopolitans disagree over the basic moral agent, the extent of distributive justice and the nature of the approaches to global justice. How should we treat those disagreements? And, what are the implications of those disagreements? We can support either side or suggest that both sides are required for a more sufficient account of global justice. However, we cannot suggest that the basic moral agents of global justice are both nations and individuals. Similarly, we cannot make the following claims that the distributive justice should be both limited within a nation and beyond a nation, and that global justice theory should be both ideal and non-ideal.

However, I do not think that the current positions of either nationalism or cosmopolitanism can stand alone to build a sustainable global order. I will propose that the idea of *tianxia* 天下, inspired by an ancient Confucian idea, does include certain elements from both nationalism and cosmopolitanism and present a viable alternative to both theories.

V. A Confucian Cosmopolitanism

Before I dive into the discussion of *tianxia* 天下, let me take a detour here. Some scholars argue that Confucianism is clearly a version of cosmopolitanism. For example, Guoxiang Peng argues that Kongzi holds a rooted cosmopolitanism (Peng 2023, 16–26). Peng claims that for Kongzi, a gentleman would have the drive for being virtuous, rather than being merely attached to one’s own homeland. Also, Peng claims that Kongzi travelled to different states over 14 years during his lifetime, which also shows his commitment to a kind of cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, Peng thinks that Kongzi’s commitment to a universal human nature renders him a rooted cosmopolitan, comparing to other Western cosmopolitans.

Other scholars do recognize the tension between partial love and impartial benevolence in Confucianism in relation to global justice. It seems that partial love would support a nationalist reading of Confucianism. In contrast, the impartial benevolence would support a cosmopolitan reading of Confucianism. However, it is interesting that none of those scholars take the nationalist reading. For example, Xuanwu Chen argues that even though Confucians recognize the four dimensions of human life: self, family, national and cultural belong, and the world, they still admit the “duty and obligation to the global human community—participating to bring about world peace” (Chen 2020, 47).

Chenyang Li argues that Confucianism is a version of cosmopolitanism. Li claims that patriotic life, similar to family life, is a good in itself, independent of other pursuits in one’s life. Li argues:

Confucians, as prescribed by classic thinkers, take family life as the foundation of a meaningful life. Such a Confucian can actively contribute to communal life, she can be a passionate patriot, she can live humanity as a whole and be a cosmopolitan, and she can also be an anthropocosmist, feeling a deep connection with the universe. However, at the end of the day, her life is most deeply rooted in her family life. (Li 2021)

In this sense, I think that for Li, Kongzi is a moderate cosmopolitan who recognizes the importance of national identity.

Justin Tiwald also argues for a moderate Confucian cosmopolitanism (Tiwald 2021). Tiwald claims that care with distinctions is the key to understand Confucian view of relationship. Care with distinctions is part of human nature. Since care with distinctions is necessary for special relationships, and also that any system of ethical value should take human nature seriously, Confucianism can only be understood as a moderate Cosmopolitanism that recognize our special commitment to our nations.

Jeeloo Liu argues for Confucianism as a humanitarian cosmopolitanism (Liu 2021). Liu appeals to the idea of “place” and argues that the fragile earth as our “field of care.” Liu argues that comparing to the abstract and lofty ideas of justice and universal human dignity, which are both “motivational inefficacious and practically unimplementable,” the ideas of *datong* 大同 (“Great Unity”) or *renai* 仁爱 (“humane love”) in Confucianism would support a cosmopolitanism that is based on a sense of shared earth.

Philip J. Ivanhoe makes a further step and argues that Confucianism “encourages us to regard non-kin, even distant strangers, on the analogy of the feelings we have for our own siblings.” He claims that this can be read as a unique conception of Confucian cosmopolitanism: “cosmopolitanism as the attitude of seeing other people as part of one’s family” (Ivanhoe 2014, 37).

I think that the above arguments for Confucianism as a kind of cosmopolitanism are reasonable and interesting. Kongzi himself does commit to the idea that family is the root of moral life and the idea that we should also care for everyone, even love strangers, which is required by the virtue of benevolence. Thus, on the one hand, one can recognize the partial love that Kongzi regards as the foundation of Confucianism, would support a kind of nationalism. On the other hand, the virtue of *renai* might support a version of cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, *renai* can be realized through the idea of extension as graded love. For the rest of this paper, I will not jump to the conclusion of whether Kongzi is a nationalist or a cosmopolitan, based on the discussion in this section. Instead, I will appeal to the idea of *tianxia*, rather than the ideas of

filial piety or benevolence, which is a key concept in Confucianism to further elaborate on this issue of global justice. I think that this approach would avoid the traditional tension between partial love and the extended love beyond the nation-state.

VI. *Tianxia* (“All Under Heaven”)

Many Mainland Chinese scholars claim that the idea of *tianxia* 天下 (“All Under Heaven”), rather than nation or state, is one of the most important and distinctive ideas in China culture (Liang 2016, 5-31). I think that the idea of *tianxia* can be understood narrowly or broadly. In a narrow way, following the historical usage, *tianxia* refers to the benevolent ruling and moral order among states governed by the Zhou state around three thousand years ago. In a broad way, *tianxia* could refer to a moral and political hierarchal global order that is not based on nation states with equal status that compete with each other.

Most contemporary philosophers who discuss *tianxia* focus on the broad understanding of *tianxia*. But not all of them endorse this broad understanding. Tingyang Zhao made this idea of *tianxia* a focal point of discussion less than two decades ago. Zhao claims that *tianxia* can be used to refer to three different things (Zhao 2011, 27–28). First, *tianxia* can refer to the whole world, which is the geographical meaning of this idea. Second, *tianxia* can refer to a big family, which is the psychological meaning of this idea. Third, *tianxia* can refer to a world government, which is the institutional meaning of this idea.⁹ Apparently, Zhao does not follow either the narrow or the broad understanding of *tianxia*. Zhao claims that the distinction of *tianxia* is that it perceives the world from inside, which means that it perceives the world as a unity. In contrast, the modern idea of nation state perceives the world from outside, which means that it perceives the world as divided parts. For Zhao, *tianxia* provides a holistic view of global order. Each individual and each nation is part of this world altogether. No one is outside, and no one is the enemy. Furthermore, Zhao claims that *tianxia* is more of

⁹ In his 2016 book, Zhao does not talk much about world government any more.

a moral vision, rather than a political vision. It enables us to perceive the world in a certain way. However, it does not imply a particular institutional design.

We may easily construe Zhao's understanding of *tianxia* as a kind of moral cosmopolitanism. A sense of equality among different parts of the world seems to be implied in this system. However, Tongdong Bai and Daniel Bell argue otherwise. They propose a hierarchical reading of *tianxia*, rather than an egalitarian reading.

I think that for Tongdong Bai, the idea of *tianxia* is basically a meritocratic nationalism, benign but hierarchal (Bai 2020, 175–213). Bai argues that the idea of *tianxia* implies that it is not a world government that abolishes states. Instead, in this new world order, states are still the members. However, those states are not nation states based on race, but on cultural and political identities. Furthermore, the idea of benevolence rather than power should be the foundation of those states. Bai claims that the Confucian idea of partial love is still the most fundamental idea in *tianxia*. One should still love with distinctions, which implies that one can prioritize one's own state among all states. Furthermore, another key feature of *tianxia* for Bai is that it is hierarchal. There is the union of civilized states against those uncivilized states. Bai makes the analogy between civilized states with Rawls's idea of liberal states and decent states. He claims that civilized states are those that serve the interests of the people, rather than just for the ruler or the political elites.

Daniel Bell and Wang Pei share this understanding of a hierarchal order in *tianxia* (Bell and Wang 2020, 106–42). Bell and Wang claim that there are two different hierarchal orders between strong and weak states. The first is a kind of weak reciprocity. It relies on the idea of mutual advantages between two states. Bell and Wang argue that this relationship is very fragile since the strong state might easily discard this collaboration when it does not benefit the strong state equally as it benefits the weak state. For example, a developed country could easily forbid the exports of high-tech equipment to a developing country when it thinks that the other country could develop and pose as a competitor. The second is a kind of strong reciprocity. It perceives the collaboration from the perspective of both states in terms of their

long-term common interests. So, when a developed country denies the exports of high-tech equipment to a developing country, this strong reciprocity view would suggest that it should not do so since the development of the other country would help booster a much stronger collaboration in the long term. Apparently, this cannot be easily practiced in the current nation state system since the immediate national interest of a country is behind most policy makings.

Bell and Wang also emphasize the hierarchal nature of *tianxia*. They do make the distinction between a state ruled by virtue and ruled by power. They claim that in the *tianxia* system, super powers with moral visions should rule the rest. They suggest that a moral China in East Asia can be such a super power even though they do not make any actual reference.

Based on the above discussions, we can easily see that if a cosmopolitan recognizes that individuals are the ultimate moral agents of global justice and that distributive justice should be extended to people outside the borders, *tianxia* certainly is not a cosmopolitanism since it does not recognize individuals as the ultimate moral agents and the extension of distributive justice.

So, is *tianxia* a kind of nationalism? *Tianxia* does recognize that states are the basic members of the global order while it makes the distinction between civilized and uncivilized states. It does recognize certain duties of humanitarian assistance by moral states. I do not think that it commits to the kind of distributive justice that cosmopolitanism requires. Thus, the idea of *tianxia* seems to present Confucianism as a version of nationalism, in a sense that is similar to what John Rawls presents in the Law of Peoples.

What makes *tianxia* a unique version of nationalism, according to Bai, Bell, and Wang, is the hierarchical nature of the global order. Some nations are superior than other nations. A moral nation is better than an immoral nation. A nation ruled by virtue is superior than a nation ruled by power. However, one may argue that *tianxia* is more than mere nationalism since it values *datong* 大同 (“Great Unity”) and *tianxia weigong* 天下爲公 (“the world belongs to all”). The dimension that Confucian cosmopolitanism philosophers have argued for cannot be merely ignored.

VII. *Tianxia* as a Statist Cosmopolitanism

I think that the above discussion of Confucianism as a cosmopolitanism or as a nationalism does capture key features of Confucianism with regard to global justice. On the one hand, love with distinctions and the hierarchical nature of the relationship among states support a nationalist reading. On the other hand, benevolence (*ren* 仁), *datong* 大同, and *tianxia weigong* 天下爲公 suggest a cosmopolitan reading. Is there an alternative to nationalism and cosmopolitanism that captures the full picture of Confucianism on the issue of global justice?

As an alternative to nationalism and cosmopolitanism, Lea Ypi proposes a statist cosmopolitanism (Ypi 2012). The basic idea is that states are still the basic members of the global order and that cosmopolitanism is the end of this global order. According to Ypi, states are instrumental to realize global equality.

Ypi shares the views and arguments with people like Thomas Pogge with regard to distributive justice. She claims that the absolute poverty of some developing countries is causally connected with their disadvantaged position in relation to those developed countries. As Pogge appeals to the principles of International Borrowing Privilege and International Resource Privilege, he concludes that the disadvantaged people in developing countries deserve justice. However, different from Pogge, Ypi recognizes that people are more motivated within a state to reform injustice of the state than move beyond, than starting outside a state.

However, I think that *tianxia* is a different kind of statist cosmopolitanism. Ypi's statist cosmopolitanism has the following features. First, it recognizes the unqualified equality among individuals within a state and outside a state. Individuals in the global context enjoy an equal moral status. Second, it recognizes the unqualified equality among states. No state is superior than other states. Third, an egalitarian global distributive justice is the ultimate end.

Tianxia is different regarding the above features. First, I think that the idea of *tianxia* recognizes certain formal equality among individuals in general. However, there is a complication. The distinction between gentlemen and common people is also crucial for Confucianism.

One may even argue that the formal equality among individuals can be easily trumped by the moral and even political inequality among gentlemen and common people.

Second, *tianxia* does not commit to the unqualified equality among peoples and states. The distinction between civilized and uncivilized states argued by Bai, Bell, and Wang is crucial for *tianxia*, which calls for moral states to lead. The distinction between morally superior and inferior states has implications with regard to policy makings and institutional reforms.

Third, *tianxia* does not promote the egalitarian global distributive justice among people from different states. Confucianism does endorse the idea of *datong*, which is the ultimate ideal of human society where, as stated in the Book of Rites:

... men did not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision was secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They showed kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who were disabled by disease, so that they were all sufficiently maintained. . . . This is called a society of *datong*. (Hu and Chen 2016, 127)

This ideal society does emphasize a flourishing community for all. However, it does not commit to the kind of distributive equality insisted by most cosmopolitans. Instead, a clear sense of sufficientarianism seems to be assumed in this ideal society.¹⁰ The satisfaction of basic needs is what *tianxia* requires.

Thus, I think that *tianxia* can be read as a version of statist cosmopolitanism that insists on the priority of states but pursues global peace and development. This version is different from Ypi's version since Ypi recognizes the mere instrumental value of states for the ultimate end of cosmopolitan aspirations. However, *tianxia* does not

¹⁰ A cosmopolitan can endorse this view too. For example, Martha Nussbaum claims that "the notion of a threshold is more important in my account than the notion of full capability equality: as I argue, we may reasonably defer questions about what we shall do when all citizens are above the threshold, given that this already imposes a taxing and nowhere-realized standard" (Nussbaum 200, 12).

treat states as mere instruments. It does not endorse the egalitarian aspirations either.

VIII. Why *Tianxia*?

The above discussion shows how *tianxia* 天下 as a version of statist cosmopolitanism seems to be different from nationalism or cosmopolitanism. I think that conceptually, *tianxia* is much closer to nationalism than cosmopolitanism. The idea of love with distinctions is built into *tianxia*. Nationalists, such as David Miller, in general recognize the significance of family, nation, and other unions to one's integrity and identity. The instrumental and non-instrumental values of nationality are also implied by the Confucian idea of love with distinctions.

Furthermore, *tianxia* is committed to the idea that there should be a hierarchical order among countries, rather than unqualified equality. Some countries are more qualified to lead. This hierarchical idea apparently is incompatible with cosmopolitanism. For cosmopolitans, each individual is morally and politically equal. Correspondingly, a state that is constituted by equal individuals should not be superior or inferior to another state that has similar constitutions. It is hard to find a reason of why a cosmopolitan would support a hierarchical order among states, which is in clear conflict with an egalitarian commitment.

However, one may wonder whether the above discussion can easily reduce *tianxia* as a mere nationalism, similar to what Bai, Bell, and Wang did. I think that it cannot. The idea of *datong* 大同 is also crucial to *tianxia*. Nation state is instrumentally valuable for *tianxia*.¹¹ *Tianxia*

¹¹ I think that most nationalists would argue that nations are not merely instrumentally valuable, but also intrinsically valuable. If one thinks that nations are merely instrumentally valuable, no intrinsic values at all, one is not that different from most cosmopolitans. Furthermore, if one thinks that nation is considered constitutively important to individual autonomy and identity, one would think that nation is intrinsically valuable. In contrast, most cosmopolitans do not think that nation is constitutively important to individual autonomy and identity. *Tianxia* seems to endorse both the instrumental value and the non-instrumental value of nations.

weigong 天下爲公 (“the world belongs to all”) is the ultimate end; “When the Great Dao prevails, *tianxia* will be a grand union” (Hu and Chen 2016, 127).¹² As I explained before, the flourishing of each individual inside and outside the national borders is crucial to the grand union. Thus, this aspiration is not constrained by nationalism. It does show the concern as a cosmopolitan.

In conclusion, I think that on the one hand, the *datong* ideal renders *tianxia* different from other versions of nationalism. On the other end, love with distinctions plus the idea of a hierarchical order among states renders *tianxia* different from other versions of cosmopolitanism. Thus, *tianxia* is neither a simple nationalism nor a simple cosmopolitanism. It is a version of statist cosmopolitanism that endorses inequality among states and aims for flourishing of all.

¹² Most nationalists would not claim that this grand union idea is the ultimate end of global justice. The peaceful co-existence among nations could be an end of global justice for most nationalists, which is far from being the grand union.

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