

## **Ancient philosophy and 21st century cosmopolitanism**

Juha Sihvola, PhD, Professor of General History, University of Jyväskylä

The most important challenge for 21st century cosmopolitanism is how to combine the requirements of universal global justice with the various local identities there exist within individual societies and world-wide. We now live in a world in which all human beings are globally interdependent on each other: innumerable economic, political and cultural ties connect all of us to a world-wide network no part of which can be regarded as truly independent. Global interdependence also has implications concerning discussions of ethics and justice. No serious pursuit of moral and political philosophy can any longer ignore the challenge of global justice and other world-wide considerations. The question, however, remains as to what kind of philosophical position is the most appropriate for establishing a balance between the various global and local affiliations and obligations human beings have.

The lecture will approach the issue from the viewpoint of philosophical cosmopolitanism. It will begin by turning to ancient philosophy in order to show that many of the issues raised by the Stoics, along with other ancient discussions, are still relevant to our modern concerns. Having considered the significant influence of the Stoic doctrines on the development of Western political thought, reflections will follow on the division between cosmopolitanism and patriotism. It will be acknowledged that the intrinsic value of local attachments has to be recognized in order to establish a political culture in which our moral sentiments are cultivated in an appropriate way. Local identities or affiliations will, however, continue to give rise to a number of different problems or tensions, the resolution of which will not be easy.

A just society will, however, strive to recognize the political equality of its citizens, protect the widest possible liberty of conscience and a fair chance for each individual to live a flourishing human life. To be successful in this pursuit a society should cultivate critical thinking, respect and toleration, as well as compassionate solidarity in the face of human neediness and vulnerability.