Foreword: Some Views on Cosmopolitanism

Regardless of geopolitical events such as last year's surprising rejection of the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands, this coming year will certainly witness a large surge in patriotism. The Winter Olympics in February and the World Cup in the summer both promise to whip national sentiments into a fever pitch. One other thing is certain, though: journals of philosophy and ethics will continue to debate the virtues of cosmopolitanism, as this number of *Ethical Perspectives* does through its contributions below.

Why is this? Why do philosophers and academics hold on to this idea of cosmopolitanism, an idea largely lacking in the convictions of the general public? Is it perhaps because the first cosmopolitans were in fact philosophers? The first to identify himself as a cosmopolitan was Diogenes the Cynic, and Plato's dialogues paint many of the Sophists in cosmopolitan hues. Although people generally support the idea of internationalism as far as it promotes trade, travel, and football tournaments, once it begins to meddle in internal affairs, as it does with outsourcing and transnational constitutions, they tend to fall back upon the patria. They killed Socrates for corrupting the youth of Athens, not the youth of the world.

Whether it is the service and manufacturing industries of Asia and India 'stealing' American jobs, or widespread fears of Brussels' legendary bureaucrats, the non-academic public consistently turns from its tepid embrace of cosmopolitanism to patriotism whenever threatened. Are we too quick to label this as self-interest or even selfishness? Or is there something else at work in the debate between cosmopolitanism and patriotism? Some approaches to cosmopolitanism are certainly guilty of an absolute removal of difference, of wishing away the nation state, of replacing it with an international body based on purely universal principles, and of wiping away the competence of nations on many levels. The call for the world state can come across as an appeal for an anodyne and internationalist

homogeneity based on a clinical morality that, for all its sensitivity, runs roughshod over the well-engrained cultural, legal, and social beliefs of many peoples. Clearly, this is what many Europeans fear, and to a large degree, Americans as well in their dislike for the International Court of Justice and other such bodies. Even the economic hegemony of outsourcing removes national power, and replaces it with pure economic rationality.

Our contributors below do not advocate these reductions, although some may point to them. Key to each contribution below is sensitivity to the world as it is, to its need for difference even in the face of an ever-increasing globalisation that sometimes is connected with cosmopolitanism. Yet, every proponent of cosmopolitanism must sketch how it is possible in practice. Of course, an obvious problem is how to dwell consequently as a cosmopolitan. Not many contemporary cosmopolitans would be prepared to follow Diogenes' commitment to rootlessness: living in exile after having been included in a forgery conviction aimed at his father, the ascetic Diogenes called a barrel his home. Such was his drive to live a levelled life that he cast away his only bowl upon seeing a poor peasant boy drinking from cupped hands. Today's cosmopolitan leads a much more prosaic life, and hence the problem with cosmopolitanism begins as something mundane. Does not a cosmopolitan still pay national taxes? Does not a cosmopolitan still need a national passport and second country visas? But, the questions quickly turn ontological: how can one shed oneself of one's nationality, of one's belonging, as if it is just an accident of one's own constitution, instead of as an important property of one's own constitution? In other words, belonging is important: a citizen of the world still values citizenship. Clearly, the absolute cosmopolitan reduction is an absurdity: one is always rooted, in some sense. Even cosmopolitanism is rooted in a specific Western mindset, and is no self-evident preference of human existence.

As Rudi Visker's contribution so clearly shows through an investigation of the narcissism of minor differences, these questions revolve around the question of confrontation with alterity. What I am, in no small

way plays off what I am not. I cannot be everything, if I am something. Freud's analysis of minor differences reveals that members of a group identify with that group on the basis these minor differences. What is self-evident to a particular culture marks that culture off from another culture, a culture that by definition does not share the same set of the self-evident. To be a foreigner, as any expatriate can attest, is to stand outside of the self-evident, whether this means interpreting gestures, understanding commercial practices, or, as Freud would have it, staying on the correct side of national taboos. There is thus a dialectic of inner and outer, a dialectic which refuses a reduction of one to the other. As Visker puts it, recognising the stranger within oneself is quite different than recognising the stranger outside of oneself, and to confuse these as being the same is not only to misunderstand the very issue at stake, it is also a dangerous trivialisation of difference.

But clearly, there is something viable and laudable in the idea of cosmopolitanism, since it stresses the universal moral community of humanity. Cosmopolitanism is an attempt to see all human subjects as subject to the same moral law. Indeed, the sort of federation to which cosmopolitanism leads, at least in a modified Kantian expression as Bert van Roermund tells us, even gives us good grounds to recognise the legitimacy and moral equivalence of states. Importantly, the international legal order does not draw its power from any supranational force, but from the choice of independent national actors to recognise it. Hence, this cosmopolitan order depends on nationhood, and good standing within this order depends on the degree to which a country decides to participate. Again, the universal here depends on well-rooted particularity, a particularity able to choose for the universal.

What do we do, then, with outlaw nations, those nations that are hostile to the choice for the universal? Through a clear reading of Hegel, Paul Cobbens proposes that the metric for a state's legality is the measure to which it permits the moral freedom of its citizens to bloom. A free person requires a free legal order; only in such can a person obtain the full

measure of human rights due. States that do not permit this blooming are illegitimate; they contradict the nature of the human person, and citizens dwelling under the yoke of these have the right to ask for outside assistance in removing this illegitimate power above them. However, for this plea to be met, two conditions must obtain: (1) the oppressed people must have the wherewithal to form a political order after the removal of the illegitimate state, and (2) the action must be grounded in the principles and support of a legal community, which in essence would be a world federation of states. In fact, it is morally incumbent upon all legal states to aim at such a world federation, upon pain of contradiction.

Our duty to others does not end with the politically oppressed; the economically oppressed also lay a moral claim upon us. So, as Toon Vandevelde asks in his contribution, what about the global poor? The poor are hungry and in need of shelter and a future, but to address these issues at the level of rights is in a way heartless: what good does it do to legislate that everyone has the right to food, when this right can never be called upon, or enforced, in any meaningful sense? Moreover, approaches that demand non-prioritised generosity not only ignore the fundamental economic fact of scarcity, they also run the risk of creating the moral hazard of dependence on charity. The true cosmopolitan approach is the recognition of our common humanity and of our concomitant duty to help others as far as this help does not endanger us. This duty is compounded by the marginalisation of the poor through globalisation, a globalisation that they did not ask for. The extent of our help is indeterminate, but its direction is clear: it must aim to integrate those poor who wish it within our international systems, and so to ease their own transitions from poverty.

Both Gil Anidar and Maria Bonnafous-Boucher continue this theme of economy, but each from a highly specific viewpoint. Indeed, their contributions are perhaps somewhat darker, delving into an aspect of the unspoken underneath the choice for the universal. Anidar begins with the relation between religion and economy within the interplay of Judaism

and Christianity, whereas Bonnafous-Boucher focuses on the development of political economy through a Foucaultian lens. Although highly distinct contributions, both share the insight that the economy is now the central theme of our power structures, and that economy, isolated from questions of morality or justice, must likewise play a decisive role within the structure of cosmopolitanism, or, at minimum, the political unity of peoples. For, national government long ago ceded to a promiscuous mix of governance, and religion to economy. This nexus enthrones governance as an economic rationale stripped of all other trappings, and inscribes any possible cosmopolitanism within a framework of an aggressive capitalism, a kind of economic theology, a kind of hegemony in which state boundaries are essentially liquefied. Capital, after all, knows no boundaries.

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