Debate

Emancipatory Cosmopolitanism: Towards an Agenda

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

ABSTRACT

This contribution explores what, in outline, an agenda of emancipatory cosmopolitanism would consist of. The first step in this treatment is to scrutinize capitalist cosmopolitanism as the dominant variant of cosmopolitanism. Understanding its influence is crucial to the task of counterbalancing it. The second section concerns the strange double life of conventional cosmopolitanism, which, while claiming universality, reflects a regional, parochial order. This paper argues that if globalization is multipolar then cosmopolitanism too is multicentric and this involves overcoming West-centrism or monocultural cosmopolitanism. Third, whilst acknowledging the importance of the reflection on planetary ethics, the tendency toward normative abstraction is problematic; bringing history back into cosmopolitanism is necessary as a counterpoint to monocultural cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitan narratives match ongoing changes, as bylines of globalization. Nations and cities, firms and institutions the world over face the challenges of globalization; cosmopolitan appeal is part of the factor X that is to attract investors, top talent, visitors, tourists. Cities attract renowned architects to erect signature buildings. Schools and universities, prompted by corporations and legislatures, make educating toward 'global competence' a keynote of their curriculum. Multiculturalism and multiethnicity, once a marginal nuisance, are reclaimed as part of cosmopolitan charm and decor. Cosmopolitanism is on the agenda in discussions of cosmopolitan democracy, cosmopolitan multiculturalism, cosmopolitan education, cosmopolitan cities, cosmopolitan Europe, etc. and in each case aims to be therapy for parochialism.

What is cosmopolitanism: the experience and practice of world citizenship, the institutions of world citizenship, the ethics of world citizenship, or all of these? If the first, we find cosmopolitanism in history. If the second, we find it in institutionalized expectations. If the third, we must consider planetary ethics. The emphasis is often on the third, cosmopolitan norms. A large body of criticism measures norms against practice, which makes sense because norms without practice are empty. If norms matter, their implementation matters too.

Historically 'cosmopolitanism' has been an outlook of those who look and journey beyond borders — whichever borders apply; of itinerant sages and scholars, warriors and aristocracies, merchants and moneylenders, journeying craftsmen, monks and pilgrims. The headings change with the times. The Communist Manifesto presented cosmopolitanism as a bourgeois capitalist project and internationalism as the proletarian cause (Colas, 1994).

Nowadays globalization is the circumstance and cosmopolitanism is the ethos. And so is neoliberalism. With ample simplification, because the dimensions of globalization are codependent, financial and corporate globalization are now more advanced than political and social forms of globalization. Arguably, neoliberalism is a heading for the existing imbalance between market, state and society that favours market forces. Contesting and transforming this imbalance is one of the major struggles of our times.

The question is: does cosmopolitanism make a difference, or rather what *kind* of cosmopolitanism makes a difference. I suggest cosmopolitanism matters if it offers an emancipatory perspective, in which emancipation refers to what is relevant and of benefit to the world majority. In general, I propose that cosmopolitanism is emancipatory if it contributes to *rebalancing corporate, political and social globalization* and enables legitimate political institutions and social forces to act as countervailing power and re-regulate corporate globalization and thus transform overall globalization. This large, complex agenda echoes in cosmopolitanism debates and differentiates cosmopolitanisms. Corporate, political and civic cosmopolitanisms vie for influence in shaping globalization.

This paper explores what, in outline, an agenda of emancipatory cosmopolitanism would consist of. It is not the agenda itself because that requires a much longer treatment.[1] The first step in this treatment is to scrutinize capitalist cosmopolitanism. This is not a matter of criticizing market forces; market forces per se are not at issue, but their aims are too narrow to rule. It is a matter of understanding the dominant variant of cosmopolitanism and its influence and thus the task of counterbalancing it. Second, if globalization is multipolar then cosmopolitanism too is multicentric and this involves overcoming West-centrism. Third, important as the reflection on planetary ethics is, I think the tendency toward normative abstraction is problematic and argue that bringing history back into cosmopolitanism is required as a counterpoint to monocultural cosmopolitanism.

CAPITALIST COSMOPOLITANISM

Why is neoliberalism ascendant? Growing technological capabilities, from nineteenth century machine technologies and transport revolution to

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1. I address emancipatory futures in Nederveen Pieterse (2000, 2001: Ch.10) on futures of development and (2004: Ch.9) on capitalisms.

contemporary information technologies, enable and facilitate cross-border operations. Arguably, growing technological capabilities first contributed to the formation of superstates that took forms such as imperialism, fascism and communism. Superstates generated various problems, including political, ethical and legal problems. States exhausted their licence for cross-border operations in colonialism, imperialism and warfare. Presently the one remaining superstate is the United States and its military industrial complex, its 'empire of bases' and worldwide strategic operations, notably in the Middle East and Central Asia.[2] A further general consideration is that the cost of war increasingly exceeds its benefits (thus, the Iraq war comes at a cost to the US Treasury that is estimated at between 1 and 2 trillion dollars, depending on the duration of the war).

One variable is that since states could not lawfully reach beyond national borders, corporations emerged as leading forces, particularly after World War II, in the form of multinational corporations. Facing competitive pressures, corporations adopted new information technologies on a large scale early on. This was not a necessary development per se — government could have been the leading sector, as it was for a long time, or the military, or universities; it is a consequence of a balance of forces, decision making and funding flows. That these developments occurred at a time of American hegemony meant that post-war globalization followed the imprint of American ways.

Duménil and Levy (2001) view neoliberalism as the ideological and institutional expression of the return to hegemony of finance capital which lost its sway during Keynesianism. Its comeback followed the crisis that began in the 1970s. While finance gleaned massive benefits from its comeback it has come at the cost of vast international instability and rising worldwide social inequality. By itself neoliberalism would not have been so influential; it had such a large impact because it came at the point of convergence of 1970s stagflation and profit squeeze, technological change and informalization, the debt crisis in the global South and American hegemony — in short, the package deal of neoliberal globalization (Nederveen Pieterse, 2004: Ch. 1). Rapid technological change enabled both accelerated globalization and neoliberalism; transport and communication revolutions enabled (and required) capitalism to go global. Accumulation became flexible, firms reorganized as lean firms and finance capital roped in developing countries, in the process establishing a worldwide knowledge grid of credit ratings and economic rankings such as the Competitiveness Index and Economic Freedom Index (Sinclair, 2000).

There are no borders, no boundaries — once an adage of nomads, gypsies and bohemians — is now a routine capitalist and marketing slogan (and a trope in academia where conferences are routinely titled across,

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2. Cf. Nederveen Pieterse (2004: Ch. 8) on hyperpower exceptionalism.

beyond, transgressing boundaries or borders). As usual, the description (the borderless world) is, in effect, a prescription. Deregulation, liberalization, privatization, the WTO and the intellectual property rights regime seek to expand the frontiers of 'free enterprise'. Cosmopolitanism serves both as a marketing device of neoliberalism and as a critical position. Corporate cosmopolitanism seeks a world of pliant government and legal limbo as a global regime. No frontiers would expand the existing oases of corporate cosmopolitanism, tax havens and free trade zones, the liberated zones of free enterprise, and would maximize capital mobility. It would enable corporations to pick nations where labour and environmental protection standards are low and the terms of investment most profitable, the way Wal-Mart negotiates with suppliers. The reality of the borderless world is corporate arbitrage (Brennan, 1997; Gowan, 2003).

Cosmopolitan is a magazine of choice for young upwardly mobile women in Europe, the US, South Africa, Turkey, Brazil and China. With its aura of chic and civilized panache, it speaks to their desire to be style savvy beyond their locale. From an individual viewpoint this is an emancipatory knowledge, a promise of a better life through an education of desire that leads to a higher level, more demanding consumerism, which, however, is not emancipation at all but an exercise in glamour. Thus, corporate cosmopolitanism meets consumer cosmopolitanism — the best brands at the best price in the world as a duty free store, in Kenichi Ohmae's fetching description (1992).

ICT and accelerated globalization since the 1980s have amplified the reach of marketing so now it is ubiquitous. Transnational corporations make world products and try their hand at global brands; a pattern set by Coca Cola followed by Benetton to Nike. No frontiers marketing seeks to create cross-border consumer appeal where brand loyalty supersedes patriotism, a post-modern neo-tribalism of brands (Maffesoli, 1988), with Chinese aficionados buying shares in Manchester United and Vietnamese gambling on European soccer games. Banal cosmopolitanism, 'We Are the World' cosmopolitanism, Wal-Mart cosmopolitanism, McCosmopolitanism make the world an every-day place and world citizenship ordinary, unremarkable for those who can afford the gate fee. 'Cosmopolitanism is not only embodied, but also felt, imagined, consumed and fantasized' (Skrbis et al., 2004: 121). Beck (2002) views cosmopolitanism as a process, cosmopolitanization, and proposes thirteen indicators.

Meanwhile cosmetic cosmopolitanism seeks to produce a gloss that overlays local realities, which is yet a different kind of achievement. Is cosmopolitanism the cosmetics of the chauvinism of prosperity? Capitalist cosmopolitanism is instrumental. Corporations change the world but the world they make excludes many and, in the end, is opaque to its makers. Instrumental cosmopolitanism and banal cosmopolitanism raise the question on what terms internationalization takes place. All forces, economic, political, military, social and cultural, expand and operate across borders. Table 1 is a brief overview of varieties of cosmopolitanism.

Table 1. Varieties of Cosmopolitanism

Varieties	Discourses	Practices, institutions (keywords)
Corporate	Neoliberalism, free enterprise, free trade, McWorld.	TNCs, offshoring, outsourcing, tax havens, world product, global marketing, global brands. Institutions: IFIs, BIS, WTO, FTAs, ISO.
Political	Global governance global public goods cosmopolitan democracy.	International law, treaties, organizations, protocols, standards, UN system, pooling sovereignty. Regionalism.
Social	Global solidarity, global civil society.	International NGOs, labour organizations, social movements, World Social Forum, international socialism, professional organizations, churches.
Cultural	Transnational communication, aesthetics	Art, architecture, Esperanto, media museums, world music, creolization, tourism.

THE STRANGE DOUBLE LIFE OF COSMOPOLITANISM

As some authors note, 'specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do' (Pollock et al., 2000: 577). Because of its universal aspiration normative cosmopolitanism cautiously seeks to be on the abstract, general side. Bruce Robbins puts it this way:

> To the extent that it floats outside or above social life, a normative concept like cosmopolitanism will always be vulnerable to charges like elitism and inefficacy. It can only live up to its own critical and world-changing aspirations by being grounded in a constituency or constituencies. But to the extent that it is so grounded, becoming the possession of actual social groups, it takes on the less-than-ideal political characteristics of those groups, each of which can of course be seen less than ideally cosmopolitan in its treatment of others . . . What cosmopolitanism gains in empirical actuality and forcefulness, it surrenders or threatens to surrender in radical normative edge. (Robbins, 2003: 214)

This leads to the strange double life of cosmopolitanism. The general script is world citizenship, human rights, capabilities, entitlements. The theoretical lineage is Aristotle, Stoics, Renaissance humanism, Kant, Rawls, Habermas, Derrida. The main stations in this account are Greece, Renaissance, Enlightenment, the West, United States. Consider this alongside the conventional structure of other major discourses:

- Capitalism: sixteenth century, industrialism, West;
- Modernity: Renaissance roots, Enlightenment, West;
- Globalization: sixteenth century world market, industrialism, West;
- Democracy: Greece, Enlightenment, West;
- Cosmopolitanism: Greece, Renaissance, Enlightenment, West;
- Liberalism: Enlightenment, West.

There are, of course, alternative and more nuanced histories for each of these tropes, but the above, in shorthand, are the mainstream accounts. They share a common structure that can be summed up as from Plato to NATO (a phrase coined by Gress, 1998). So it is not that these discourses are abstract but rather that they are completely embedded in the self representation and career of western power. Their signal feature is their cultural monotony and historical parochialism. They are overdetermined by the West to the point of appearing exercises in narcissism. They also serve as boundary marking discourses — as in Weber's Protestant ethic, Bernard Lewis's *What went wrong?*, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, the *Lexus and the Olive Tree*, the clash of civilizations, etc. To each of these tropes there are critical counterpoints: Marxism, critical theory, critical globalism, radical democracy, critical cosmopolitanism, etc. The strange double life of conventional cosmopolitanism is that while claiming universality it reflects a regional, parochial order.

The move toward abstraction may be intended to accommodate pluralism (for instance, in Nussbaum's account of general basic capabilities; 2003: 42), but does it work? First, decontextualizing norms does not give them greater legitimacy. Second, the norms do reflect a theoretical and therefore historical lineage. Third, omitting their history is stripping them of part of their actual meaning. Casting cosmopolitanism as an abstract, 'empty' knowledge is short-changing cosmopolitan knowledge. The sociology of cosmopolitan knowledge shows that normative prescriptions may be abstract, but their context is not.

Many of the Greek Stoics were *metics*, resident foreigners and social outsiders who were not part of the citizen body. Zeno, from Citium in Cyprus, was 'described as a "Phoenician" (a euphemism for a "Semite") ... Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynics, was a Thracian while Diogenes was in exile from Sinope in Pontus' (Fine and Cohen, 2002: 138). Since their proponents were not citizens the cosmopolitan views of the Stoics did not build on or extrapolate from Athenian citizenship but bypassed or transcended it. Kant's cosmopolitan agenda for perpetual peace was a reaction to absolutist statism and Realpolitik, as in the Treaty of Basel of 1795; it was not an attempt to transcend nationalism or popular nationalism because that didn't exist at the time (Cheah, 1998). Kant's proposals for strengthening international law built on Grotius, and Grotius' *Mare Liberum* must be understood in the context of seventeenth century Dutch hegemony (Wallerstein, 1984: Ch. 4). Besides, he built on the tradition of Islamic international law (Nederveen Pieterse, 2006). Pleas for a cosmopolitan Europe by Habermas (2003), Derrida and others are reactions to tendencies toward a Fortress Europe. Nussbaum's plea for cosmopolitanism (2002) is a response to Rorty's invocation of American patriotism. Thus to each cosmopolitanism there is a politics of discourse; real cosmopolitanisms are situated and often polemical. Fourth, while suppressing its situatedness abstract cosmopolitanism can mesmerize itself into being right. Thus, a campaign against exclusion starts out from exclusion: the

exclusion of its own origins. By stripping off history this limits the opportunity for reflexivity (and besides loses the beauty of imperfection).

In development policy, positions such as structural adjustment, good governance, transparency, civil society lead a similar double life: the recommendations are universal while their political origins, selective and opportunistic implementation and double role as disciplinary regimes are not up for discussion. Hegemony speaks the language of freedom and liberty.

Cosmopolitanism is often cosmopolitanism from above — extrapolating from existing institutions, translated into general principles. How often are cosmopolitan claims an imposition of ethnocentric norms? According to Ashis Nandy (1989) the dominance of human rights discourse produces the 'standardization of dissent'. Parochialism dressed up as universalism is well-established in relation to the Enlightenment, progress, civilization, rationality, modernity and further in liberalism, democracy, development, human rights, good governance, etc. Recognizing this is one of the boundaries that separates modern and postmodern thinking. Universalist claims can be an expression of unreflexive ethnocentrism (a genuine belief that conversion produces redemption), ethnocentrism in disguise (civilization, reason) or a plain disciplinary regime (the march of progress). In the debate 'is multiculturalism good for women?' (Okin, 1999) some western feminists place themselves as cultural arbiters. Some of the terms of debate reflect western feminist standards, which has been criticized as 'imperial liberalism':

> Imperial liberalism is the general attitude that it is desirable for us to spread and enforce our liberal conceptions and ideals for the good life in all corners of society and throughout the world. More specifically, imperial liberalism is the doctrine that all social institutions and dimensions of social life (not just political but associational and family life as well) should be ruled by principles of autonomy, individualism, and equality. . .

> Where there are ethnic groups and social categories let there be individuals. Where there are individuals let them transcend their tradition-bound communities and experience the quality of their lives solely in secular and ecumenical terms (for example, as measured by health or wealth or years of life). (Shweder, 2002: 235, 236)

The 2004 Human Development Report, devoted to *Cultural Liberty,* criticizes cultural conservatism, cautions that 'defending tradition can hold back human development' (UNDP, 2004: 88) and argues that 'The central issue in cultural liberty is the capability of people to live as they would choose, with adequate opportunity to consider other options' (ibid.: 17). By declaring identity to be a matter of individual choice this imposes liberalism as a general framework (Nederveen Pieterse, 2005). This is not essentially different from the IMF and the World Bank making stabilization lending conditional on structural reform. It is not different in principle from the G. W. Bush administration withholding foreign aid from organizations that support family

planning. Parochial norms elevated to general norms: hegemony speaks the language of freedom.[3]

A case in point is the refusal to recognize that cartoons depicting Mohammed as a terrorist are not just free speech but insults to Muslims. No one now claims that painting Swastikas or anti-Semitic slogans are a matter of free speech; in many countries this falls under legislation that prohibits discrimination and hate speech. The recent dispute ultimately is a matter of establishing new standards of intercultural etiquette in which denigrating Islam will become not *bon ton*. Such standards did not exist in Dante's time, so the Divine Comedy placed Mohammed in the inferno. With Islam as Europe's second religion and growing transnational links with the Muslim world, new standards of cultural courtesy apply. Establishing such standards requires struggle — just as American blacks waged a long struggle against Jim Crow stereotypes before they gradually faded from the public sphere. In several countries rightwing forces seek to foment a 'clash of civilizations'. In Denmark anti-immigrant sentiment is a way to garner support for rightwing parties, and Muslims, though few in numbers (2 per cent of the population), are vulnerable targets.

The normative character of cosmopolitanism talk is a virtue because it takes us out of flat land and a limitation if it removes us from practice. As Bauböck notes, 'All such prescriptions are subject to the constraint of "ought implies can"' (2002: 119). Again, if norms are important so is their implementation.

EMANCIPATORY COSMOPOLITANISM

> It is proper to learn values from others whereas unjust to impose one's values onto the others. Or to say, the values are to be learnt by rather than to be taught to the others. (*Interpretations of rites*, ca 500 BCE, in Zhao, 2006: 36)

Kurasawa (2004) finds 'cosmopolitanism from below' in the alternative globalization movement and the World Social Forum. We can look further to diasporas, migrants, traders, itinerant artisans, pilgrims, scholars who have been traversing the world for ages. Theirs is the cosmopolitanism of experiencing, practising, making world citizenship. Poor people's cosmopolitanism includes migrants making do with little, refugees in camps, the homeless sharing a fire, friends made on the road, and working class migrants (Skrbis et al., 2004: 121). Poor people's cosmopolitanism doesn't usually promote ethical standards, but Rwandan refugees in camps in Tanzania also write letters to the secretary general of the United Nations in the name of humanity (Malkki,

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3. A related theme is liberal imperialism. Thabo Mbeki cautions against 'the call made in the aftermath of September 11 2001 for the developed North to institute a so-called "liberal imperialism"' (Mbeki, 2006).

1994). Cosmopolitanism from above is empty without cosmopolitanism from below, without the actual experience of world citizenship. Cosmopolitanism in history has at times diffused from a civilizational centre outward. Pollock (2000) describes the Sanskrit cosmopolis as a civilizational sphere framed by a common language and culture, which broadly coincided in time with the Latin cosmopolis.

Considering cosmopolitanism as experience and action rather than as general ethical standards, places *can* on a par with *ought*. Considering cosmopolitanism as experience and action the first place to look is history, diaspora histories, migrant experiences, grassroots transnational enterprise, multiethnicity. Multiethnicity has a long profound history and exists across the world. Multiculturalism is more institutionalized than cosmopolitanism — as sets of norms, standards of political correctness, as policy in many countries and point of reference in many more. If tight communitarianism is the counterweight to cosmopolitanism, then multiethnicity and multiculturalism can be viewed as applied cosmopolitanism. According to Amy Chua (2003) contemporary globalization promotes ethnic conflict because it privileges market-dominant minorities.

The Eurocentrism of much cosmopolitanism is a familiar story (from Plato to NATO). The days that all roads led to Rome are no more. Nowadays 'All roads lead to China and India' (Thomson, 2006). As the centre of gravity of globalization changes, so eventually does the character of cosmopolitanism. Alternative and rival globalization projects involve alternative world visions, some of which go and come, like 'Asian values'. Emancipatory cosmopolitanism means engaging alternative cosmovisions beyond Eurocentrism (for example, Dallmayr, 1998). Alternative cosmopolitanisms include the long history and wide scope of the Muslim *umma* and Sufis. The journeys of Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Battuta show the Islamic world as a 'middle world', a bridge between civilizations (Nederveen Pieterse, 2006). Khatami's 'dialogue of civilizations' in Iran builds on this experience (Sayyid, 2006). The Chinese view of 'All under Heaven' offers a different perspective on global governance: 'the utopia of All-under-Heaven is not a narrowly defined empire but an extendedly defined world society with harmony, communication and cooperation of all nations, guaranteed by a commonly-agreed institution' (Zhao, 2006: 36). The Zapatista movement against neoliberalism in the name of human dignity is another contemporary point of reference. We can ask each culture about its ethics of hospitality, its treatment of strangers and minorities and its vision of humanity. Derrida sought to ground cosmopolitanism in ethics of hospitality. De Sousa Santos (1999) argued that human rights should not be conceived from a single centre outward but rather from the viewpoint of different cultures and their visions of human flourishing — Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Confucian — and thus yield a multicentric perspective.

The options are to go with Plato to NATO, carried by frequent travellers (Calhoun, 2002); to go normative and abstract and risk the standardization of dissent; or alternatively, to reckon with the real cosmopolitanism of

history and accept pockmarks. Globalization has many faces and so does cosmopolitanism. I have discussed corporate and hegemonic cosmopolitanism briefly because the themes are in outline familiar. The relationship between cosmopolitanism and history is less often discussed. But cosmopolitanism that does not acknowledge its lineages and does not examine its positionality is unreflexive, unexamined cosmopolitanism. The search for emancipatory cosmopolitanism includes finding cosmopolitanism in history and experience.

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Jan Nederveen Pieterse is at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (702 S. Wright, Urbana, IL 61801, USA; www.staff.uiuc.edu/~jnp) specializing in transnational sociology. He is the author of several books. The latest is *Pants for an Octopus: Ethnicities, Global Multiculturalism* (Rowman & Littlefield, forthcoming 2007).