

# THE TRUTH OF OTHERS

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## A Cosmopolitan Approach

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The “cosmopolitanization of reality” is, contrary to conspiracy theories of various sorts, an unforeseen social consequence of actions directed at other results in a context of global interdependence and its attendant risks. These cosmopolitan side effects, often undesired and mostly unintended, frustrate the equation of the nation-state with national society and create new transnational forms of living and communicating, new ascriptions and responsibilities, new ways in which groups and individuals see themselves and others. The result, at the level of opinion, is or could be a realistic cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitan realism—as distinct from cosmopolitan idealism (and distinct also from universalism, relativism, and multiculturalism). Realistic cosmopolitanism, considered apart from any philosophical prehistory, responds to a fundamental question about what I have called “second modernity.”<sup>1</sup> How ought societies to handle “otherness” and “boundaries” during the present crisis of global interdependency?

1. “Second modernity” (rather than “postmodernity”) is my preferred term for our present historical phase, in which modernity has become reflexive and is now modernizing its own foundations. See Ulrich Beck, *Risk Soci-*

*ety: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992), and Beck, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994).

To answer that question, it is necessary, first, to distinguish the various ways in which societies handle otherness now—universalism, relativism, ethnicism, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and so on—and then relate each of these alternatives to the social formations of premodern, modern, and post-modern times. What we will learn in the process is that each alternative is guided by a set of contradictory impulses. Universalism, for example, obligates respect for others as a matter of principle, but, for that very reason, arouses no curiosity about, or respect for, the otherness of others. On the contrary, universalism sacrifices the specificity of others to a global equality that denies the historical context of its own emergence and interests. Relativism and contextualism are likewise self-contradictory: stress on the context and relativity of particular standpoints has its source in an impulse to recognize the otherness of others. But, conceived and practiced in absolute terms, that recognition is transformed into a claim that perspectives cannot be compared—a claim that amounts to irremediable mutual ignorance.

From these observations it follows that realistic cosmopolitanism should be understood, fleshed out, and practiced in conscious relation to universalism, contextualism, nationalism, transnationalism, and other current approaches to otherness. The cosmopolitan vision shares with these a combination of semantic elements that, at the same time, serves to differentiate it from all other approaches. Realistic cosmopolitanism presupposes a universalist minimum that includes a number of inviolable substantive norms. The principle that women or children should not be sold or enslaved, the principle that everyone should be free to speak about God or one's government without being tortured or threatened with death, are so self-evident that no violation should meet with cosmopolitan tolerance. There can be talk of "cosmopolitan common sense" when there are good reasons to assume that large majorities would accept such minimum universalist norms.<sup>2</sup>

Cosmopolitanism, if it is realistic, also will accept a number of universalist procedural norms of the kind that make it possible to deal with otherness across frontiers. Realistic cosmopolitanism must thus confront the painful question of its own limits: should recognition of the other's freedom apply equally to despots and democrats, predators and their prey? Realistic cosmopolitans, in other words, must come to terms with the idea that, in making respect for the other the heart of their program, cosmopolitanism produces enemies who can be checked only by force. The contradiction must be embraced that, in order to protect one's basic principles (the defense of civil rights and difference), it may in some circumstances be necessary to violate them.

2. See, in *Common Knowledge* 1.3 (winter 1992): 12–29: Sissela Bok, "The Search for a Shared Ethics"; Amartya Sen, "Three Questions"; Bok, "Three Answers."

As for nationalism, a realistic cosmopolitan will take its continuing existence as a given but will work to develop cosmopolitan variations on the nation-state, national society, and patriotism. Without the stability that comes with national organization and feeling, cosmopolitanism can lose itself in an idealist neverland.

### The Two Faces of Universalism

How the Western world should handle the otherness of others is not a new question. There are striking resemblances between the terms of discussion today—exemplified by such books as Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History* (1989)—and the terms of debate at the legendary conference of 1550 in Valladolid, Spain. Comparing the questions under dispute—in 1550, the extent to which Amerindians differed from Europeans was at issue—should help clarify what we ourselves are arguing at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Huntington’s influential argument is that, whereas the main lines of conflict during the Cold War were openly political and derived their explosive nature from considerations of national and international security, the lines of conflict today correspond to major cultural antagonisms involving a clash of values between civilizations. The culture, identity, and religious faith that used to be subordinate to political and military strategy now define priorities on the international political agenda. We are witnessing the invasion of politics by culture. Divisions between civilizations are becoming threats to international stability and world order. The democratic values of the West and the premodern values of the Islamic world stand opposed to each other in ever more menacing and hostile ways, both within individual countries and between different regions of the world. As to Fukuyama, his simplistic view is that, since the collapse of the Soviet communist system, there is no longer an alternative to the Western model of liberal democracy and the American-style market economy. “Democratic capitalism” is the genuine core of modernity, which by its own inner logic must spread through and refashion the world. Thus, a universal civilization will arise that brings history to an end.

Variations on these ways of handling otherness confronted each other at the Valladolid conference nearly five centuries ago. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, an Aristotelian philosopher, and the Dominican priest Bartolomé de Las Casas represented, respectively, a universalism of difference and a universalism of sameness. Sepúlveda argued, as Huntington does today, that human groups are defined hierarchically, while Las Casas, more like Fukuyama, maintained that civilizations are fundamentally similar. Sepúlveda emphasized the differences between Europeans and Amerindians: the latter went around naked, sacrificed human vic-

tims, made no use of horses or asses, were ignorant of money and the Christian religion. He accordingly structured the human species into peoples that, while living at the same time, were at different cultural stages. In his eyes, *different* meant *inferior*; and it followed, viewing barbaric America from civilized Spain, that man was the god of man—some men the gods of other men—and that subjugation could be a pedagogic responsibility.

Similarly, Huntington conceives the relationship of the Western world to its cultural other, the Islamic world, as one of vertical difference. “Others” are denied sameness and equality, counting in the hierarchy as subordinate and inferior. From that point it is a short step to treating others as barbarians, which means that they must be converted to the superior values of Christianity or democratic capitalism, or else must be resisted with military force. The basic distinction between Huntington and Sepúlveda is that, while the latter’s sense of superiority is easy and assured, the most striking thing about Huntington’s diagnosis is its apocalyptic tone: a new “decline of the West” is inevitable unless we join hands to battle against the “Islamic threat” on behalf of Western values.

Las Casas eloquently defended the rights of the Amerindians and saw them as remarkably similar to Europeans. They fulfilled the ideals of the Christian religion, which recognizes no difference in terms of skin color and racial origin: they were friendly and modest, respected interpersonal norms, family values, and their own traditions, and were thus better prepared than many other nations on earth to embrace God’s word. In the name of Christian universalism, this Dominican vehemently opposed hierarchical differentiation. Against the principle that held others to be axiologically subordinate, he argued for the dissolution of differences—either as a present fact of anthropology (all humans are human) or as an inevitable development of human progress (modernization).

Universalism, then, sponsors more than one way of handling the otherness of others. For Las Casas, a Christian universalist, it is not otherness but sameness that defines the relationship between the other and ourselves. In any form of universalism, all forms of human life are located within a single order of civilization, with the result that cultural differences are either transcended or excluded. In this sense, the project is hegemonic: the other’s voice is permitted entry only as the voice of sameness, as a confirmation of oneself, contemplation of oneself, dialogue with oneself. An African universalism, for instance, would hold that the good white has a black soul.

Even the United States, which is home to all ethnicities, peoples, and religions, has its own variety of universalism and an ambivalent relation to difference. To be an American means to live in the immediate proximity of difference, which often further means living in Huntingtonian fear that a stress on difference will spell the decline of the West—a fear that ethnic differences can never be bridged and that, without assimilation to an American identity in which dif-

ferences are transcended, the chaos raging beneath the surface will emerge. This fear demands and promotes a compulsion toward sameness and conformism. The greater the diversity and the more unbridgeable the differences that appear and are staged, the louder are the calls for conformity and national ethos (in the American academy, this development is known as communitarianism).<sup>3</sup>

From Paul of Tarsus, through Kant and Popper, to Lyotard and Rorty, variants of the same dialectic serve to limit the danger of ethnic difference by stressing a common humanity—by recourse, in other words, to Western universalism. From this perspective, ethnic diversity does exist but has no intrinsic value such as universalism claims for itself. Take the case of Christian universalism and the opposition between Christian and heathen. This sort of universalism releases all from their attachment to skin color, ethnic origin, gender, age, nationality, and class, and addresses them as equal before God in the existential community of Christendom. The duality thus belies the asymmetry that it posits. As Reinhart Koselleck puts it: “The opposition between all men and all the baptized is no longer quantifiable as the previous tokens were, but involves a reduplication of the reference group itself. Everyman must become a Christian, if he is not to sink into eternal damnation.”<sup>4</sup> Imperial Christian universalism accordingly released emancipatory impulses that can be traced down to the modern movement for the abolition of slavery. Feminist movements have also made reference to Paul. But in these contexts as well, the dual face of universalism is visible: the blackness of blacks, the womanhood of women, the Jewishness of Jews, are stigmatized as “particularisms” inferior to the humanity of humans. Anyone who rejects universalism supposedly fails to recognize the higher morality that distinguishes it and becomes liable to a verdict of amoral or immoral particularism.

In such an atmosphere, particularities tend to seek transfiguration and displacement in the direction of universality: the majority raise their own ethnicity to absurd heights and proclaim their own norms as universal. In societies where whites are dominant, being white is the privilege of not noticing one is white. The postulate of abstract identity puts pressure on the ethnic other to yield to the dominant identity and give up the insistence on difference. If blacks, Jews, Chinese, Japanese, and women then call themselves black, Jewish, Chinese, Japanese, or female, they in this context lack theoretical and philosophical authority—they are not up-to-date, they are imprisoned in an antiquated self-image. To put the point as a mainstream sociologist of modernization might: the otherness of others is a

3. There is therefore a close connection between the popularity and political effectiveness of communitarian currents and Huntington’s catchphrase, which maintains that the intention of destroying civilization can be found only in non-Western societies and non-Christian organized religions. This position typically excludes in advance two alternative accounts: it is nowhere considered possible that

barbarism could break out again in the West itself; and no systematic attention is given to the potential for conflict to feed off the effects of global interdependence.

4. Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 231.

relic that modernization reduces to eventual insignificance. Las Casas and Fukuyama represent the disappearance of diversity as a civilizing process—in the one case, through baptism and, in the other, through the infectious superiority of Western values (the market economy, democracy). Then as now, no alternative route is acknowledged. The way forward is Christian/Western universalism. Clearly, the “end of history” began some five hundred years ago.

But Western universalism, again, has two faces: it also promotes the principles of liberty and equality throughout the world. It is not possible to proclaim global human rights, on the one hand, and to have a Muslim, African, Jewish, Christian, or Asian charter of human rights, on the other hand. To respect the otherness and the history of others, one must consider them as members of the same humanity, not of another, second-class humanity. Human rights infringe the local right to wall off cultures from external pressure or assault. Respect for traditions that violate human rights is taken by Western universalism as tantamount to disrespect for their victims. The dilemmas that stem from this attitude are not easily resolved. Raising questions of global responsibility leads to accusations (and to the temptation) of colonialism. Colonialism is now called humanitarian intervention. Still, with all of us faced with the risks of global interdependency, can the affairs of others be regarded purely as their own responsibility? Is there no option other than interference? Liberians—who for two decades had to endure war, banditry, and a succession of criminal regimes—took to the streets to ask the United States to restore order by force. In such instances, it is universalism, cosmopolitan sympathy, by no means greed or ambition or self-aggrandizement, that lead to the engagement of foreign armies. “Human rights colonialism,” that hybrid, may well be practiced more and more widely in the form of “UN protectorates”—beginning with Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia, moving through Afghanistan and Iraq, on to Liberia and elsewhere they may yet be needed and desired.

### **The Two Faces of Relativism**

To oppose universalism is to support relativism—or so matters appear to those who think in terms of either/or alternatives. Whereas universalism removes the protective boundaries around the cultural other, relativism permits, constructs, and imposes new ones. Where and how the boundaries run or are drawn depends on whether the relativism in question is associated with nationalism, localism, or culturalism. Since relativism aims to underscore all the distinctions that universalism wants to transcend, relativism of whatever kind tends to reject even the possibility of recognizing or developing general norms. Such norms have to be imposed and so, from the relativist’s perspective, universalism and hegemony are merely two aspects of the same phenomenon.



Relativism, like universalism, is dual. Universalists impose their standpoint on others yet take the fate of others as seriously as if it were their own. The duality of relativism is complementary. On the one hand, a dose of relativism may serve as an antidote to the universalists' hubris. Relativism and contextual thinking sharpen our respect for difference and can make it both attractive and necessary to change perspectives with one's cultural other. But if relativism and contextualism are made absolute, this attentiveness to others turns into its opposite: any change of perspective is rejected as impossible. The instrument by which we close ourselves to others and reject any outsider's perspective on our own culture is the incommensurability principle. If everything is relative, then everyone is simply "like this" or "like that"—no more to be said. Ironically, the relativist's principle of incommensurability has much in common with its supposed opposite, essentialism. Both are compelled to accept things as they are. There is a will in both to be left in peace and to leave others in peace, on the grounds that the trenches between cultures can never be crossed. However polemical and wrong-headed the motives behind it, the presumption of incommensurability does lead to a nonintervention agreement between cultures—though, in a world where it is impossible not to intervene, where intervention is always under way, that agreement can easily veer around into violence. What is more, a strict relativism, however coherent (or no) philosophically, is historically and empirically indefensible. It fails to recognize, or it distorts the facts concerning, the interpenetrating histories of supposedly incommensurable cultures. Moreover, the cultural boundaries that relativism reifies are the project of a particular time (the nineteenth century) and place (Europe).<sup>5</sup> Those boundaries are oddly out-of-date and provincial.

But there is no reason that universalism cannot modify to take account of such realizations. A more contextualist universalism could acknowledge that cultural interpenetration is historically the normal case and that nonintervention is certainly an impossibility now. The effort to escape from the crisis of global interdependency into a fantasy of separate worlds is comical and quaint. Let me ensure there will be no complaints about false counterpositions: the opposite of the incommensurability thesis is not an assertion that dialogue takes place easily, meaningfully, and constructively. The true counterposition to incommensurability is: there are no separate worlds (our misunderstandings take place within a single world). The global context is varied, mixed, and jumbled—in it, mutual interference and dialogue (however problematic, incongruous, and risky) are inevitable and ongoing. The fake joys of incommensurability are escape routes

5. See Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); William H. McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

leading nowhere, certainly not away from our intercultural destiny. The object of debate should be not whether but the how of mutual interference, of further mixing and confrontation. We cannot stand back from Africa's parlous state, because there is no Africa beyond the West's sphere of security and responsibility. That truth is not absolute does not mean that there is no truth; it means that *truth* continually requires an updated contextual definition.

### **The Two Faces of Nationalism**

Nationalism handles otherness strategically and borrows freely from all the strategies that I have already described. Nationalism tends to take a hierarchical approach (like that of Sepúlveda) to its external relations, and takes a universalist approach (like that of Las Casas) to the relationship among groups internal to the nation. Nationalism moreover tends to adopt a (we might call it) territorial relativism with regard to national boundaries. In other words, nationalism denies the otherness of others internally, while producing and reifying it externally. To be sure, there can be politically effective solidarity with others who are defined as like us and therefore have the duty to pay taxes and the entitlement to social support, educational facilities, and political participation; but this sort of cooperation stops at the garden fence and may indeed function to deny other nations equal rights, to classify them as barbarian, or to make one's own nation barbarous.

This territorially restricted compromise among relativism, the universalism of difference (the hierarchical approach), and the universalism of sameness is typical of what I have termed the "first modernity." This compromise is used not only to maintain opposition between barbarians and compatriots but also to establish a somewhat parallel relationship between the internal "majority" group (as defined nationally) and internal "minorities."

### **The Two Faces of Ethnicism**

One argument recently mobilized to enable retreat from global interdependence comes from the arsenal of anticolonialism: "Algeria for Algerians," "Africa for Africans," "Cuba for Cubans." Paradoxically, these solutions involving ethnic territorial autonomy have also been taken up by Europeans, so that the slogan "Europe for Europeans" becomes a means of mobilizing people against a supposed invasion by Turks and Russians. To maintain these fantasies of independent life, common ground between ethnic groups has constantly to be removed from view. Modernization comes with an impression of freedom, and if it coincides with discrimination and extreme poverty, those who suffer social exclusion may respond by closing themselves off further still. In many parts of the world,



there is a danger that autistic ethnicism, charged with a modern consciousness of freedom, will wreck the nationalist compromise—to their own hurt, for that compromise recognizes minority rights.

Nonviolent coexistence with those who are culturally different must be part of the definition of civilized society. None of us can count on being shown the tolerance that we deny to others. Neither violence to ourselves nor affronts to our own dignity give us the right to treat neighbors as aliens and use violence against them. We certainly cannot (as we sometimes hear) excuse a Palestinian woman who blows herself up in a café filled with Israeli women and their children. What we can do, though, is understand that the differentiation and exclusion involved in an emphasis on ethnicity involve as well a dynamic of violence in which the minimum requirements of civilization are at last rendered irrelevant.

### **The Realism of Realistic Cosmopolitanism**

Cosmopolitanism, again, means a recognition of otherness, both external and internal to any society: in a cosmopolitan ordering of society, differences are neither ranged in a hierarchy nor dissolved into universality, but are accepted. Debates between exponents of universalism and relativism, or between those of sameness and diversity, are generally conducted as either/or propositions. From the viewpoint of what I am calling realistic cosmopolitanism, these either/or debates are between false alternatives. We can get beyond them by reconsidering them as both/and propositions. Realistic cosmopolitanism should not be understood as in opposition to universalism, relativism, nationalism, and ethnicism, but as a summation or synthesis of those four. Contrary to their own proponents' usual understanding of them, these strategies for dealing with diversity do not exclude but actually presuppose one another; they are mutually correcting, limiting, and protecting. It is impossible to imagine a viable, realistic cosmopolitanism outside the context in which universalism and relativism, nationalism and ethnicism, are dominant strategies. What is new, what is realistic, about cosmopolitan realism derives from the reciprocal correction of these semantic elements, whose combination is greater than the parts.

### **Neither Huntington nor Fukuyama**

Given its foundational respect for otherness, cosmopolitanism must differentiate itself from universalism and its totalizing impulses yet also look for ways of making difference universally acceptable. In itself, universalism is as heedless as it is indispensable. Returning to the either/or dispute at Valladolid, many have praised Las Casas's advanced thinking and criticized Sepúlveda's early racism. But

what the two shared, from a cosmopolitan perspective, is no less interesting. Neither one could allow the Amerindians *both* their difference from *and* their sameness to Europeans. Las Casas and Sepúlveda equally assumed a universal axiology that sorts difference into superiority and inferiority. Even Las Casas accepted the sameness and equality of the Amerindians only because he thought them capable of acknowledging, and ready to acknowledge, the universal truth of Christianity—the barbarian can be baptized and join the body of Christ. Or, in Fukuyama's version, non-Western civilizations can be “modernized”—that is, attain the salvation of Western universalism through baptism in market economy and democracy.

A realistic cosmopolitanism would include what is excluded from these apparently opposite varieties of universalism: an affirmation of the other as both different and the same. It is time to leave behind, as anachronisms, both racism (of whatever type) and the apodictic, ethnocentric universalism of the West.

### **Postmodern Particularism vs. Realist Cosmopolitanism**

Realistic cosmopolitanism cannot rest content to differentiate itself from the totalitarian features of universalism. If we are not to fall into the reverse trap of postmodern particularism, universalism cannot be abandoned. What the former involves is the strategy of making difference absolute and outside any binding normative framework. Combining the principle of homogeneity with the principle (borrowed from relativism) of the incommensurability of perspectives, the postmodern variety of particularism ultimately holds that dispositional criteria are impossible. By rejecting universalism altogether, postmodern cosmopolitanism is at risk of slipping into multicultural randomness. The danger is clear but the solution is not. How are we to put a limit on universalism that takes into account the arguments of contextualism and relativism? How can we affirm universal norms and at the same time ward off imperialism (in politics) and triumphalism (in religion)? One answer to this question would be that cosmopolitan norms should be defined not positively but negatively. A second plausible answer would entail procedural universalism. A third would consider the possibility of a contextual universalism.

The realism of realistic cosmopolitanism is expressed perhaps best by what it rejects: dictatorial standardization, violation of human dignity, and of course crimes against humanity such as genocide, slavery, and torture. Since cosmopolitanism respects the diversity of perspectives on any issue, cosmopolitans are sometimes thought incapable of decision and action. The reality test for cosmopolitanism is the existence of evils so great and obvious that there is virtually universal acknowledgment of the need to oppose them. To what extent does this negative definition establish common ground across frontiers? The most diverse kinds

of cosmopolitanism can find a place under this negative roof, so long as they also accept the norm of procedural universalism, which holds that stated procedures and institutions are required for the regulation of conflict within transnational space. By such means, violent disputes are at best pacified but not consensually resolved—a problem that points to the ambivalences and dilemmas of “second modernity,” which realistic cosmopolitanism is positioned to diagnose. *Cosmopolitanism* is thus not another word for *consensus*: managing conflict is a more realistic and cosmopolitan expectation. We need not the “ideal speech situation” of Jürgen Habermas, but rather a realistic theory about severe conflict among truths.

Negative and procedural universalisms make room for various “contextual universalisms.”<sup>6</sup> Here, terms commonly understood to exclude one another link up in ways that may be mutually preserving and correcting. Thus, contextualism serves as a brake on the universalist cancellation of otherness, while universalism serves as a brake on the contextualist belief in the incomparability of perspectives. The result of this mutual tempering could be a “cosmopolitanism of humility” (in contrast to the pedagogical “cosmopolitanism of impatience” more in tune with Western attitudes).<sup>7</sup> Cultural relativists (often non-Western) and universalists (usually Western) tend to find themselves facing off during NGO debates and conferences, with the result that contextual universalist solutions tend to emerge. A good example is the Vienna human rights conference of 1993, when what I would call a contextual universalist alliance—actually, an alliance of African, Latin American, and Asian NGOs—actually transcended the opposition between hard-line universalists and cultural relativists. Extremely delicate problems were under discussion, including violence against women (marital violence and incest not excluded) and the extent to which violations of human-rights law can be a matter for UN intervention. The synthesis of contextualism and universalism that the alliance against domestic violence managed to develop was especially noteworthy in that it was directed against both Western arrogance and the expectations of the NGOs’ own home governments. Women from the Islamic world combined a claim to universal human rights (the right to a secular education, notably) with the claim that they were first of all Muslims and wanted to continue thinking and acting as Muslims. Many women, even those who described themselves as secular, defended others who chose to wear headscarves and to embrace a conservative theology. This both/and approach is typical of the creativity that contextualist variants of universalism can release, and it justifies the hope that cosmopolitanism can resist degenerating into a “Eurocentric, ‘rationalist,’ secular-democratic jihad.”<sup>8</sup>

6. See Beck, *What Is Globalization?* trans. Patrick Camiller (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 81.

*the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

7. Scott L. Malcomson, “The Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience,” in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond*

8. Malcomson, “Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience,” 237.

Scott Malcomson writes that, one hot Dakar afternoon, he happened to be in the U.S. embassy when a motley group was discussing human-rights issues. Experts flown in for the occasion spoke predictably about democracy and freedom of opinion while the assembled Senegalese listened in amiably. When their turn came to speak, a man in military uniform began by praising the unique character of Senegalese culture and gave polygamy as his illustration. But he undermined his position by giggling continually as he spoke, until it became obvious that he did not himself believe in his assertion. Everyone else, whether male or female, laughed as well. Other Senegalese contributions focused on the simple question of whether freedom from starvation is a universal right. The American experts had seen the question coming but could reply only, unpersuasively, No. The Senegalese pressed the issue, repeated the question, until all present broke into laughter. That universal rights do not protect every human being against death by starvation became suddenly a kind of joke. For the Senegalese, the defect was of white and Western origin. They did not attack the American experts but rather tried to help the Americans see more clearly, and did so with a generosity and humor that is best described as cosmopolitan.<sup>9</sup>

### Cosmopolitanism, Ethnicity, and Nationalism

Cosmopolitanism and ethnicity, like universalism and contextualism, appear to be mutually exclusive but can in practice combine. A cosmopolitan ethnicity or ethnic cosmopolitanism would be directed against the universalist dissolution of otherness but also against any ontological definition of ethnicity. As Stuart Hall has shown in some detail, marginalized groups have been rediscovering their sometimes hidden, and sometimes suppressed, histories: there has been a “cultural self-empowerment of the marginal and the local.”<sup>10</sup> No longer universalized out of existence or viewed as ontologically given, ethnic otherness is now, increasingly, historicized. Cosmopolitan realism thus relies upon a twofold negation: it negates both the universalist negation of ethnic difference and the essentialist stress upon it.

In the same way, it is inadequate to emphasize the opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. For, as Edgar Grande says, “cosmopolitanism requires a certain degree of nationalism, which is the best and most reliable mechanism for the institutional production and stabilization of collective otherness. Where such stabilizers of difference are lacking, there is a danger that cosmopolitanism will veer off into substantive universalism.”<sup>11</sup> Among the out-

9. Malcomson, “Varieties of Cosmopolitan Experience,” 242.

10. Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King (Houndmills, U.K.: Macmillan, 1997), 19.

11. Edgar Grande, “On *Reflexiver Kosmopolitismus*” (discussion paper, Munich, January 2003), 5.

standing feats of nationalism is that, for every problem, it finds an excuse rather than a solution. Only a nationalism modified in the direction of cosmopolitanism can utilize the political potential for cooperation between countries and, in a context of interdependence, regain its capacity to solve, rather than elide, problems. A fusion of national and international strategies is necessary to check the potential for ethnic violence that globalization unleashes both internally and externally, and to do so without dismissing the otherness of others as merely a premodern prejudice.

Cosmopolitanism becomes more realistic and contextually grounded, more persuasive and seductive, as different modes of handling the otherness of others come to interact. The resultant fusion of these modes is such that the cosmopolitan impulse in each is strengthened, and the anticosmopolitan impulse weakened and finally curtailed.<sup>12</sup>

### The Provocativeness of “Transnationality”

If, in the social handling of otherness, the strategies of nationalism and cosmopolitanism not only contradict but also complement and correct each other, then the opposition between “transnationality” and the national/international schema of social order must be called into question as well. The principle of the nation presupposes the principle of internationality. There are nations only in the plural: internationality makes nationality possible. The exclusivity and totality of the national/international order stands in opposition to a transnational/cosmopolitan conceptual order. Conational (and therefore nonnational) forms of living, thinking, and acting—forms that do not respect the boundaries between states—are transnational. Transnationality replaces the national *either/or* with a nonnational *both/and*.

Among numerous examples I could cite is the Hmong people, some 25 million strong, who preserve a transnational unity in China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and France. For a Hmong symposium in the United States a few years ago (“towards a common future on cultural, economic, and educational issues” was the symposium’s motto), the anthropologist Louisa Schein set herself the task of analyzing the scope for a transnational Hmong identity in the force field of rivalry between the United States and China. Not only did Schein’s study not confirm the opposition one

12. Apart from nationality, there is a need to clarify the relationship between religiosity and cosmopolitanism, but that clarification cannot be undertaken here. The new significance of belonging to a religious community cannot be adequately understood by reference to former circumstances, nor brushed aside as a mere reaction. Could it be that answers to the postmodern constellation are to be

found within it? Or that it is an attempt to find a synthesis or connection which is both transnational and rooted in the particular universalism of “the Church”? Would the cosmopolitanization of religions then serve to uncouple the binding power of religiosity from historically generated affiliation to particular (ethnic) groups?

would expect between national and transnational interests; it concluded that the United States and China used the transnationality of this Asian diaspora culture to redefine their own nationalities. “I want to draw attention,” Schein wrote, “to a pernicious zero-sum logic that portrays transnationalism and the ‘nation-state’ as mutually exclusive and as locked in competition for pragmatic primacy. Why, instead, can these debates not work toward imagining nation-state and transnational as interlocked, enmeshed, mutually constituting?”<sup>13</sup>

Schein’s idea makes two further developments possible. First, we can imagine a world of transnational nationalism, where, if all goes well, a historicized ethnic identity may be simultaneously nationalized, internationalized, and opened up to cosmopolitanism by participating in venues that define themselves as mutually exclusive. Second, the uncoupling of state and nation raises the question of what constitutes statehood and what would make it possible for the concept of the state to acknowledge global interdependence and respond to its crises. What alternatives to the nation-state and its mystique are indicated by cosmopolitan realism? How should the idea of a transnational or cosmopolitan state be developed systematically?<sup>14</sup> Schein’s study indicates that there are impulses in transnationalization that weaken and transcend the distinction between us and others, and that even transnationalize the sphere of state action. Both China and the United States gave considerable financial support to the Hmong symposium. Chinese officials regarded their contribution as part of their overall strategy of opening to the world market, while the United States was celebrating its own *internal* globalization—consolidating its global sphere of influence (in line with the subordinate phenomenon of Americanization) and at the same time transnationalizing the American dream by “Asianizing” it.

One example that can stand for many: there are now Hmong Boy Scouts. One speaker at the Hmong symposium in the United States stressed the exotic abilities of these scouts. “I work with a Hmong troop and an American troop,” he told Schein:

Parents of the American troop want to know what the Hmong secret is. They want to know how to raise such children, how to get them to work hard, be serious at school, listen to adults, be so polite. . . . Hmong scouting builds on what parents teach. . . . The last thing I have learned about Hmong scouting is that you must teach Hmong traditions. Many of the boys in the troop have grown up with Power Rangers, Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan. They want to learn about Hmong traditions. We invite their fathers now to teach about music and stories. We have

13. Louisa Schein, “Importing Miao Brethren to Hmong America: A Not-So-Stateless Transnationalism,” in Cheah and Robbins, *Cosmopolitics*, 169–70.

14. See Beck, *Macht und Gegenmacht im globalen Zeitalter: Neue weltpolitische Ökonomie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002).



changed from teaching refugee kids about America to teaching American kids about Hmong tradition.<sup>15</sup>

Who is importing what from whom? Bearing in mind that Latinos are already more numerous than blacks in the U.S. population, can we not speak of an Asianization and Latin Americanization of the United States as well as an Americanization of Asia, Europe, and Latin America? Do a “transnational Asia” and a “transnational Latin America” perhaps have the same national-territorial definition of themselves as a white, Anglo-Saxon United States already destabilized and denationalized to its core?

New categories of fusion and interdependence are taking shape—hybrid forms for which the either/or logic of the national has no name, while the both/and logic of the transnational and cosmopolitan is still conceptually too underdeveloped. It would be a great mistake to think of the national/transnational distinction as an either/or alternative. Schein’s study makes clear that, although the national and transnational paradigms of social order appear to contradict each other, they also complement and fuse with each other in many ways. Behind the facade of persistent nationality, processes of transnationalization are everywhere taking place; it is precisely the extension of power into the sphere of the transnational that makes it possible to define anew the national core behind the facade of nation-state continuity. These processes are all context-specific. And, so far from ruling it out, these processes actually assume a politics of neonational closure.

For instance, both India and Singapore are attempting to tie “their” transnationals to their respective national projects by delinking citizenship more and more from territorial presence. The Indian diaspora, stretching from Sydney to Silicon Valley, is linked to political and religious debates both in the countries of settlement and in India itself. For these “foreign native citizens,” the Indian government has devised the legal category of “Indians not living in India”; and in order to encourage them to invest in India, the government associates this category with various property rights, tax benefits, and freedom to travel. Similar practices apply in Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia, and other countries. Yet such practices go hand in hand with strategies of political closure and reassertion of nationality. In Singapore, the financing of local NGOs by international NGOs and other organizations is forbidden, as is foreign participation in the national mass media. The national economy has been opened to transnational forces, including link-ups to transnational networks, at the same time that political participation and the public media have been closed to outside involvement. Cosmopolitan realism must develop its keen eye for this selective transnation-

15. Schein, “Importing Miao Brethren,” 183.

alization, inclusion-cum-exclusion, simultaneous transnationalization, denationalization, and renationalization.

It is often asked to what extent deterritorialized ethnicity leads to a nationalism without frontiers. But the question poses a false alternative, since transnationalization means a balancing act between political loyalties, each of which presupposes multiple affiliations and plural nationalisms. The expansion of power associated with transnationalization makes possible both denationalization and renationalization, for the game of openness sets up a series of contradictions. If the state even partially uncouples citizenship status from territoriality, it undermines the principle of territorial sovereignty. The national framework is replaced with a transnational one, through which a reciprocal relation between rival states (for example, the United States and China) takes shape. Thus arises a new arena of conflict in which the various national projects combine with one another. Transnational identities and loyalties take shape and assert themselves in a contradictory relationship of opening and closure, denationalization and renationalization.<sup>16</sup>

Of course, these transnational and cosmopolitan complexities also significantly undermine the sense that ethnicities are natural and absolute (both at the national level and at the level of cultural identity). How can this effect be more precisely theorized? Koselleck suggests a distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical opposites in the field of political action and political history. Among the former, he includes such general polarities as the friend/enemy relationship; and among the latter, oppositions such as those between Greek and barbarian, Christian and heathen, superhuman and subhuman, where the opposites are conceived as essentially unequal. The category of the transnational eludes both these conceptual oppositions—its irritating potential comes from its negating any such logic, any either/or. *Transnational* is not conceptually opposed to *indigenous*. Transnationals are local people (neighbors), though in some respects they are not locals (sometimes from their own point of view and, sometimes, from another, indigenous point of view). Generally speaking, the category of the transnational runs counter to (or cuts across) all concepts of social order. Hence the category is provocative, both politically and analytically.

16. See Bruno Riccio, "The Italian Construction of Immigration," *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* 9.1 (2000): 53–74; Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, "From Spaces of Identity to Mental Spaces: Lessons from Turkish-Cypriot Cultural Experience in Britain," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27.4 (October 2001): 685–711; Ruba Salih, *Gender in Transnationalism: Home, Longing, and Belonging among Moroccan Migrant Women* (London: Routledge, 2003); Herbert Schiller, "Disney, Dallas, and Electronic Data Flows: The Transnationalization of

Culture," in *Cultural Transfer or Electronic Imperialism? The Impact of American Television Programs on European Television*, ed. Christian W. Thomsen (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1989); Nina Glick-Schiller, "The Situation of Transnational Studies," *Identities* 4.2 (1997): 155–66; Levent Soysal, "Beyond the 'Second Generation': Rethinking the Place of Migrant Youth Culture in Berlin," in *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: German and Israeli Perspectives on Immigration*, ed. Daniel Levy and Yfaat Weiss (New York: Berghahn, 2002).

In this sense, the category of the transnational sublates the distinctions between foreigner and native citizen, friend and enemy, alien and indigenious. It is no longer a question of aliens or enemies, native citizens or foreigners; there are now locals-cum-aliens and foreigners-cum-native citizens in large numbers. To put the point sharply, we might say that enemies are in a sense less threatening than transnationals, because enemies at least belong to the established order of “us” and “them” stereotypes. By contradicting this order, transnationals constantly point out that the world might be different from how it presently seems. Anyone hoping to clarify the category of the transnational must in any case reject the current forced equation of transnationals with foreigners, and therefore reject as well the expectations of “assimilation” and “integration” and the deprecatory judgments that these categories imply. Transnationality is a form of integration that makes the alien one’s own, and the effect of this process is both worrying and enticing. The result for national policy would be immigration laws no longer tied entirely, or even at all, to the objective of integration.

By this point it should be clear how little transnationality and cosmopolitan realism have to do with the concept and attitude of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism shies away from the complexity and ambivalence that I have been describing. It should also be clear that cosmopolitanism is an age-old concept and attitude, since the phenomenon of mingling (usually compulsory) across frontiers is an age-old phenomenon. What makes cosmopolitan “new” at our historical juncture is its reflexivity.

### **A Critique of Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism locates respect for cultural difference within the nation-state, and that strategy for dealing with otherness results in a contradiction. National homogeneity is both required and, at the same time, opposed.<sup>17</sup> Multiculturalism is trapped in the epistemology of nationhood, with its either/or categories (national/international, most crucially) and its tendency toward essentialist definitions of identity. The diversity that multiculturalism celebrates is a diversity among identities lacking in ambivalence, complexity, or contingency. Someone has said that multiculturalism is a highly refined variant on the idea that cats, mice, and dogs eat from the same bowl: it postulates, in other words, essentialist identities and a rivalry among them. The strategy of multiculturalism presupposes collective categories of otherness and orients itself toward homogeneous groups conceived as either similar to or different from one another, but in either case separate. Multiculturalism amounts to national multinationalism.

17. See Ulf Hedetoft, *The Global Turn* (Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg University Press, 2003), 159.

Duplicating nationalism *internally*, multiculturalism views groups that the nation would assimilate as nationalities themselves. A view of this kind is necessarily opposed to processes of individualization. For multiculturalists, individuals are epiphenomenal, conceived as members of territorial, ethnic, and political units, which then engage in “dialogue” with one another “across frontiers.”

The social predetermination of the individual that marks classical sociology is broken down and transcended only by cosmopolitanism, where the claims of different identities do not define individuals but set them conflictually free, *compelled to forge links in order to survive*. The resources that individuals have for this work are, doubtless, comprehensively uneven.

### Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism

“It is therefore apparent,” Edgar Grande argues,

that cosmopolitanism must not only integrate different substantive norms and principles, but also integrate and balance different modes and principles of the social handling of otherness. It cannot simply supplant other principles of modernity; it must recognize and preserve them. I would therefore maintain that, if cosmopolitanism is to have a lasting effect, it must become reflexive and be conceptualized together with its own conditions of possibility. Cosmopolitanism must therefore achieve the meta-integration of principles of modernity. I would describe this as reflexive cosmopolitanism. It is thus not least the “regulative principle” with whose help the combined action of universalist, nationalist, and cosmopolitan norms must be regulated in the second modernity. Whether or not this can succeed, and in which conditions, should be one of the key questions to ask.<sup>18</sup>

Reality is becoming cosmopolitan, surely, but how does the cosmopolitanization of reality become *conscious*? What conditions hinder or favor a collective awareness of actually existing cosmopolitanism? To what extent might the present article be an element in the process of becoming aware?

To discuss these questions properly, it is essential to appreciate that in world history the mingling of boundaries and cultures is not the exception but the rule.<sup>19</sup> The separate worlds or spaces claimed by territorial nationalism and ethnicism are historically unreal. If we look back to the great migrations, we might stretch a point and say that there are no indigenous peoples. Every native began as an alien who drove the prior natives out, then claimed a natural right to self-

18. Grande, “On *Reflexiver Kosmopolitismus*,” 5.

19. See McNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity*, and Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

protection against the next wave of intruders. If contiguous cultures and religions (Islamic, Christian, and Jewish, for example) interpenetrate at their origins and are hard to distinguish, then questions need to be asked about the historical process of separating and “essentializing” them. How is it possible, first, that the historical norm of intermingling has been falsely portrayed as the exception (or even completely driven out of our historical consciousness), whereas the exception to the rule—the ideal of national, cultural, or religious homogeneity—has been held up as an eternal reality? Second: what conditions contributed to the turn away from belief in that eternal reality by the national orthodoxies of the second half of the twentieth century? What conditions favor a growing awareness of the largely unconscious and unobserved cosmopolitanization of reality? The focus of this first question is the history and historiography of nationalism, and exploring it is not strictly relevant to my purposes here. But the second question points toward the distinction between what I call first and second modernity, and I would like to respond, however briefly, to that question in conclusion.

The rise of a realistic, politically effective cosmopolitanism (discernible in institutions such as the United Nations, European Union, International Criminal Court, World Bank, NATO, OECD, and so forth), should be understood as a truly unintended consequence of Hitler and of Germany’s rage for racial purity, with all its ravages—moral, political, and psychological. Auschwitz was among the most traumatic experiences of Western civilization. “Never again”—the orientation toward inalienable human rights—is by now a basic moral principle both of the new Europe and of the global political order.<sup>20</sup> This new orientation has tended to discredit axioms of thought about the nation-state. All attempts to propagate and practice the ideal of ethnic unity within existing states conjure up memories of Nazi terror, and the assimilation of ethnic minorities has also become a politically dubious notion. Were not Jews who thought of themselves as German systematically murdered along with the less assimilated? The question for all minorities, then, is whether to assert their difference and strengthen it both internally and externally in the form of transnational networks and identities. A cosmopolitan common sense is taking shape that not only authorizes but demands a break with the principle of national sovereignty, because genocides are not internal affairs of nation-states but crimes against humanity whose defeat or prevention is not the responsibility of individual states.

Another element in the rise of cosmopolitanism has been the postcolonial movement.<sup>21</sup> First to be discarded was the myth that the internal, unintended,

20. See Beck, Daniel Levy, and Natan Sznaider, “Erinnerung und Vergebung in der Zweiten Moderne,” in *Entgrenzung und Entscheidung: Was ist neu an der Theorie reflexiver Modernisierung?* ed. Beck and Christoph U. Lau (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), esp. “Kosmopolitisches Europa.”

21. See Hall, “When Was ‘the Post-colonial’? Thinking at the Limit,” in *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996).

forced cosmopolitanization of Western societies and cities in the second half of the twentieth century constituted a historical novelty. The experience of transculturation undergone by colonial peoples belongs not only to the external but also to the internal history of Europe's imperial states. As Stuart Hall writes:

Hybridity, syncretism, multidimensional temporalities, the double inscriptions of colonial and metropolitan times, the two-way cultural traffic characteristic of the contact zones of the cities of the "colonized" long before they have become the characteristic tropes of the cities of the "colonizing," the forms of translation and transculturation which have characterized the "colonial relation" from its earliest stages, the disavows and in-betweens, the here-and-theres, mark the *aporias* and redoublings whose interstices colonial discourses have always negotiated.<sup>22</sup>

The discourse of postcolonialism has effectively disrupted our political and cultural forgetfulness. Very diverse transnational political movements, in which minorities have developed a life and self-understanding of their own, have blocked every way back to closed, ethnically centered historiography. No one can stake a special claim or right to understand how cultural practices originate; and terms such as *diaspora*, *cultural mélange*, and *hybridity* are emerging from their dark derogation to speak an infectious truth about the human condition. The experiences of being foreign or living-between, of social isolation, ambivalence, and rootlessness: these all have lost much of their apocalyptic ring. The question mark has become a form of existence with positive connotations for many.

The term *diaspora* in particular has exposed the lack of clear-cut analytical norms, while at the same time its widened use has contributed positively to our understanding of terms like *equality* and *solidarity*. Flirting with whatever is "uprooted" or "alienated" in the national either/or, the concept of diaspora has nursed a well-hidden unease about the thoughtless and reckless overintegration of culture and society. Use of the term combines an interest in the preservation of particularity, however diffused geographically, with a knowledge that particularity can survive only if human rights, rising above fatherlands, are universally affirmed and make the whole planet livable for all. The question "who am I?" is now irrevocably separated from origins and essences, but there are answers with greater and lesser potential for authenticity. The term *diaspora* has by its wide use become inflated—in cultural studies, of course, though also in the ways in which minorities everywhere understand themselves and their actions. But the inflation does not so much demonstrate that the concept is losing force as it shows the extent to which a both/and consciousness is emerging in the self-understanding of individuals, groups, publics, movements, and ultimately even religions.

22. Hall, "When Was 'the Post-colonial'?" 251.