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**MIND THE GAP: INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS ON  
GLOBALIZATION AND COSMOPOLITANISM**

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**ABSTRACT:** Globalization stands for systemic integration, mainly economic and technological. It is related to the expansion of the free market economy, trade, and the global integration of systems of communication and information technology. As such, globalization co-exists with strong cultural affirmations of individual and collective difference and with political fragmentation. Cosmopolitanism needs to take into consideration cultural and political conditions of human existence. The cosmopolitan imperative to form a political community beyond the nation state is a process-guiding principle or regulative ideal, not an institutional blueprint. Cosmopolitanism needs to stress the voluntary character of integration among self-governed peoples who are willing to enhance the transnational rights and freedoms of their citizens while accepting institutional constraints.

The topic of this symposium unites two concepts that are often used and abused in our times and that provoke controversial discussions in philosophical as well as public discourse. Especially “Globalization” has become a “buzzword,” a general term to explain a myriad of phenomena in economic, social and political life. “Cosmopolitanism” is an age old concept of philosophy that has known an impressive renaissance in recent decades.

I suppose the organizers of this congress put these concepts together because they seem to be so closely related: Globalization can be conceived as the general economic, social and technological process which liberalizes trade, generalizes economic rationality, promotes world wide communication, and triggers increased migration and interaction. In other words, globalization integrates humanity systematically. Seemingly, many people seem to believe that globalization makes humanity ready for a cosmopolitan structure of government and turns people into citizens of the world before they know it.

Globalization is to be conceived as a phenomenon of systemic integration, mainly economical and technological. It is related to the expansion of the free market economy, trade, and integration of systems of communication and information technology. It is often presupposed that it leads to cultural homogenization. But this is true only on the systemic-technological level. It does not apply to the levels of culture and politics. Globalization is actually a phenomenon that co-exists with strong cultural affirmations of individual and collective difference and with political fragmentation: in our age of globalization the number of independent sovereign states has increased considerably and continues to do so.

We are thus called upon to reflect on this seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of globalization and fragmentation and its relation to cosmopolitanism. And, the conception of the relation of globalization and cosmopolitanism also depends on the concept of cosmopolitanism which we might want to adopt. Cosmopolitanism is a very rich concept with a history as old as philosophy itself, at least as far as western philosophy is concerned. Without simplifying too much, I think that the contemporary discussion of cosmopolitanism and anti-cosmopolitanism uses three different concepts:

1. Some use the term cosmopolitanism to refer to the imperative of creating a world state or world government, in order to guarantee human rights and to address global challenges such as global security and climate change.
2. Some use the term cosmopolitanism to refer to a Kantian model: ie. cosmopolitanism is a regulative idea to put all human relations under the rule of law and to enforce this law through a cooperative structure of domestic, international and supranational institutions. In this model, no definite political structure such as a world state is explicitly anticipated in a counterfactual manner. Cosmopolitanism is seen as a civilizational process underpinned by political institutions at different levels, but the final nature of these institutions is not determined and should not be determined.
3. Some use the term cosmopolitanism to refer to a strictly moral reality: i.e., a critical concept used to evaluate all worldly political institutions, be they national or global, a concept that considers all human beings as beings of equal value or a concept that puts all positive law under the guidance of morality or an eternal law of nature. In this vein of thought, cosmopolitanism can actually become an anti-political concept, a concept that refers to the *forum internum* of human conscience and establishes a dual concept in which we are always citizens of two polities, the worldly political polity we live in and the universal polity of moral ends.

Critics of cosmopolitanism usually invoke:

1. The essentially local nature of all politics
2. The difference between systems and life worlds, and the fact that politics has as much to do with the historical and hermeneutic condition of people as with the technical realities of systemic integration. There is thus no

necessary link between systemic integration of globalization and the political organization of people.

3. The excessive abstraction of cosmopolitanism's disregard for difference: the cultural world is anything but flat
4. The excessive repression and bureaucracy needed to achieve the finalities of global distributive justice
5. They invoke the fact of democratic peace which contradicts the Hobbesian argument in favor of a world state as the only way to guarantee peace among nations.

Given the complex nature of globalization and given the non-analytical nature of the concept of cosmopolitanism, the thinking of the relation between globalization and cosmopolitanism is a matter that requires a high degree of differentiation and analytical work. This symposium and many of the sessions in our program address this issue which I think is of great importance for the well-being of humanity.

However, critical philosophy has to acknowledge the bounds of reason regarding teleological conceptions of global government as proposed by the first school of cosmopolitanism stated above. The direction the debate on this issue takes depends on how one conceives of such a global political community or global basic structure as the ideal and end point of political development. Given the bounds of reason regarding the *telos* of history, a legal or political community beyond the nation-state ought to be conceived in a constructivist manner respecting existing self-governed peoples. Political units have to form voluntarily and in a process in which every step is based on the ownership of the peoples involved. These points can be argued from two perspectives: the perspective of the individual and the perspective of the self-governed people. On the one hand, a legitimate political and legal construction cannot be conceived uniquely based upon the will of states. Citizens as individuals must be granted institutionally guaranteed voice, participation and exit in any law-enforcing polity. On the other hand, the individualist dimension cannot be taken as the only normative reference of politics beyond the nation state, given that the principle of self-government applies to the collective will of individuals organized as peoples. It is up to people to deliberate, negotiate, and decide at what level they want to constitute a "self" that governs and defends itself. Individuals organized as particular peoples form a realm of justice, and they have the right to preserve self-government as a people. Self-determination is a collective strategy of guaranteeing non-domination. Political justice is ill served if this dimension is totally disregarded in the name of an abstract, context-detached, individualistic cosmopolitan liberal democracy underpinned by globalization. Given the person- *and* people-centred normative foundation of political organization, political constructivism applied to the post-national realm leads to a position which considers the individuals *and* the peoples as normative references.

Furthermore, the constructivist approach presupposes an initial context of peoples engaged in the common realization of rights, freedoms, and life chances

for their citizens while seeking to preserve a maximum of self-government and democratic self-determination. Abstract cosmopolitanism thus faces the difficulty that, while advocating the obligation to form a global political community, it has to recognize the peoples as separate realms of self-government. Normative theory for political organization beyond the nation state has to be based on the principle of non-domination of peoples, not just of individual citizens. This is not an argument against political integration of peoples, but it is an argument for the subordination of political integration of peoples to the collective political will of citizens of individual peoples. Above the minimum of human rights and *ius cogens*, peoples have to be given the freedom to engage (or not to engage) in systemic and political integration.

The problem political philosophy has to focus on is thus not the counterfactually assumed validity of an abstract and elusive concept of world republic, but on the conditions of realization of incremental institutionalized cooperation among statespeoples. It has to weigh the intended and unintended consequences of every step of integration without presupposing that the morally justified end of forming a world republic will necessarily justify the means of promoting such an end. If the claim to form a global political community is made concrete without giving attention to the conditions and intermediate consequences of realization, cosmopolitanism turns from a noble ideal into an oppressive practice very easily. The primary goods of politics being peace, security, and freedom, the formation of a global political community has to be contemplated in the light of the normative difficulties any cosmopolitan theory faces regarding the realization of these primary goods. The counterfactual anticipation of an ideal world state offers little to no guidance on how it could be legitimately realized under adverse conditions in which not all states adhere to republican principles and pursue strategies of domination and oppression. This is in fact the essence of Machiavelli's political theory: instead of conceiving the ideal state, political theory ought to determine the conditions of preservation of the republic given the fact of its ever possible "death" due to internal and external threats.<sup>1</sup> One might add to Machiavelli's observations that real threats are as dangerous for the republic as threats stemming from the paranoia about threats. But in any case, given the primacy of the process of realization and preservation of freedom, the counterfactual anticipation of an ideal state of world affairs does not give the normative guidance it pretends to give and it carries a heavy teleological burden of proof. Do we really have a way of knowing whether the world republic is the ideal state of world affairs for all possible worlds and possible futures? If we answer the question in the negative, which we humbly should, a normatively guided political constructivism is the adequate approach to the shaping of an argument on how to institutionalize political cooperation beyond the democratic statespeople. Cosmopolitanism has a place in this design as a regulative ideal containing no more than the abstract idea of the *contractus originarius* holding that any political arrangement ought to follow the ideal of the coexistence of free and equal individuals and their free associations. Furthermore,

if the right to self-government is taken seriously, republicanism has to refrain from any generalization and imposition of culture, lifestyle and political organization on existing collective political “selves” against the will of their members. The areas in which such an imposition can take place ought to be limited to the most basic human rights and *ius cogens*.

Cosmopolitanism’s imperative to form a political community beyond the nation state, i.e., cosmopolitanism as process-guiding principle or regulative ideal, cannot directly be understood as the imperative to the formation of a world republic without a careful normative analysis of the consequence of every step of integration taken along the way. Kant himself pointed out that the anticipation of the ideal of the world republic should not be confused with the normative guidance for gradual integration, and it is certainly not to be taken as a general justification for the aggressive use of force against states, or as an argument against the voluntary character of the integration process among statespeople.

#### NOTE

1. See Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, III.41, ed. S. Bertelli (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1960), p. 495.