

Cosmopolitanism and the De-colonial Option

Walter Mignolo

Published online: 9 December 2009
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2009

Abstract What are the differences between cosmopolitanism and globalization? Are they “natural” historical processes or are they designed for specific purposes? Was Kant cosmopolitanism good for the entire population of the globe or did it respond to a particular Eurocentered view of what a cosmo-polis should be? The article argues that, while the term “globalization” in the most common usage refers and correspond to neo-liberal globalization projects and ambitions (roughly from 1980 to 2008), and the Kantian concept of “cosmopolitanism” responded to the second wave (XVIII and XIX of European global expansion), “de-colonial cosmopolitanism” refers to global processes and conceptualizations delinking from both neo-liberal globalization and liberal cosmopolitan ideals. But it delinks also from theological and Marxist visions of a homogenous world center around religious ideals or state socialist regulations. De-colonial cosmopolitanism is a cosmopolitanism of multiple trajectories aiming at a trans-modern world based on pluriversality rather than on a new and good universal for all.

Keywords Coloniality · Decoloniality · Modern/colonial world · Modernity/coloniality · Our modernity and their modernity · Modernity as an Eurocentered and imperial narrative

The first version of this paper was presented as the opening lecture for the project “Multiple Trajectories, Critical Interrogations” lead by Kamari Clarke, Ariana Hernández-Reguant, and Moira Fradinger (Yale University, November 2, 2008), under the title of “De-colonial Cosmopolitanism between Theology and the Spirit of Global Capitalism.” The final version benefited from the workshop “(De)colonial Cosmopolitanism” at the Center for Global Studies and the Humanities, Duke University, February 2008, <http://trinity.duke.edu/globalstudies/de-colonial-cosmopolitanism>, and also from a workshop “Between Cosmopolitanism and Empire: Europe, Human Rights, Sovereignty” and round table “The State We’re In’—Cosmopolitanism,” in March 2009, organized by Costas Douzinas at Birkbeck College, London, <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/law/research/events/pastevents>.

(For: “Cosmopolitanism in the Making,” a special issue of *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Torill Strand, editor; University of Oslo, Institute for Educational Research).

W. Mignolo (✉)
Duke University, 101 Science Building, East Campus, Box 90670, Durham, NC 27708-0670, USA
e-mail: walter.mignolo@duke.edu

I

I.1

In 2000, I published an article in *Public Culture* titled “The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism” (Mignolo 2000). The starting point was to brazen out “cosmopolitanism” with “globalization.” For, indeed, is not globalization cosmopolitan? And, in reverse, is not cosmopolitanism global by definition? It appears then, and in retrospect, that “globalization” was a term introduced in the vocabulary of political theory and political economy when markets were de-regulated and profit was equated with growth. “Globalization” became, in the 1980s, the replacement for “development” that invaded the field of political theory and political economies approximately from 1950 to 1975. But once the theories of Milton Friedman began to take hold in the late 1970s, and were institutionalized by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, “globalization” was the rhetorical term to describe imperial designs in the remaking of global coloniality. Global coloniality, the darker side of globalization, explains the frequent concern with the fact that, during the past quarter of a century, globalization also meant the expansion of the poverty line and the growing divide between the have and have-nots. Cosmopolitanism, instead, was a term re-invigorated by progressive humanists of liberal, postmodern, and Marxist bent. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism was mainly a concern of Western intellectuals and scholars. I did not encounter any interest in Bolivia and Ecuador for example, and I wonder what cosmopolitanism may mean in the Middle East or in Central Asia. Cosmopolitanism, like globalism, was also unidirectional.

Thus, I was asking myself, what is the place of “cosmopolitanism” in the dreary scenario at the end of the twentieth century? My response, at the time of writing (late 1990s) and its publication (mid 2000), started from Immanuel Kant’s cosmopolitan ideals (and, by extension, with enlightenment, clear cosmopolitan ambitions) co-existing with his notorious racist underpinnings. So, the question was, how could cosmopolitanism be possible when the designer of the project had a hierarchical view of humanity around the planet? It became clear to me then, that “cosmopolitanism” was willingly or not a project of Western expansion (that is today what we describe as “globalization,” see above), whose implementation was through the “civilizing mission” rather than by free market in economy and democracy in politics. In that regard, Kant’s cosmopolitan ideals were as imperial as the late twentieth century’s march through free-trade, military bases, and “spreading democracy,” one of the preferred expressions of the politically defunct ex-President George W. Bush. I believed, however, that Kant was an honest and true believer.

Once I reached this conclusion, I set myself to explore the issue in two directions: one historical and the other co-eval with particular “faces” of cosmopolitan projects. Historically, I realized that Kant’s cosmopolitanism was co-eval with the declaration of The Rights of Man and of the Citizen. While cosmopolitanism was a world (or global) project, The Rights of Man and of the Citizen was concerned with what would be the modern (and European) nation-states. It doesn’t take too much effort to conclude that The Rights of Man and of the Citizen in France and, by extension, in England and Germany, formation of the modern nation-state would become—directly or indirectly—linked to cosmopolitan projects. How come? If The Rights of Man and of the Citizen in Europe were to warrant the civil security of Man (let’s say, of human beings) and that the civil security of Man was tied up to citizenship, then The Rights worked in two complementary directions. One was chronological, as The Rights of Man and of the Citizen are necessary to secure the life of the citizens under secular rule of governmentality within the history of Europe itself. The

other was geographical, as The Rights will become the measuring stick to judge social behavior that, according to Western standards, are un-civilized and, therefore, violates the rights of Man outside Europe. The silent assumption was that there was no violation of the rights of citizens, because there was no such social role outside Europe. Thus, the civilizing mission and cosmopolitanism appeared to be the underlying project of secular Western expansion.

9/11, 2001 was the first wake-up call and not only for globalization, but for cosmopolitanism as well. It was, perhaps, the first global event that put a halt to the dreams of Kantian cosmopolitanism, but also revealed the imperial underpinnings of the Kantian vision and legacy.

I.2

“Cosmopolitanism” was a buzzword in the late 1990s and continues to be in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Why the such widespread interest in “cosmopolitanism?”

I see four main motivations:

1. One was the previous widespread concerns and limits of “national thinking.” Nationalism was what cosmopolitanism was trying to overcome. Cross-cultural and planetary dialogs were argued as ways toward the future, instead of leaping to defend and enclose the borders of the nations. Immigration contributed to the surge of cosmopolitanism. Nationalists saw immigration as a problem; cosmopolitans as an opening toward global futures.
2. The second motivation was the need to build arguments that, moving away from nationalism, did not fall into the hands of neo-liberal and economic globalization. That kind of global world was not what cosmopolitans liked to support at the end of the twentieth century. Thus, one of the strands of cosmopolitan thinking, confronting globalization, was caught in between honest liberalism opposed to neo-liberal globalization and a renovated Marxism that saw new global players invited to think cosmopolitanism beyond the international proletarian revolution.
3. A third motivation, related to the first two, was to move away from closed and monocultural conceptions of identity supporting State designs to control the population by celebrating multiculturalism. At this level, cosmopolitanism focused on the individual: the person was invited to see herself as an open citizen of the world, embodying several “identities.” In a word, it was a liberal conception of cosmopolitanism born out of dissent simultaneous with the formation in Europe of the modern nation-states. That legacy has been translated into an ideal of flexible and open cultural citizenship simultaneous with the process of neo-liberal globalization.
4. The fourth motivation, compatible but also distinct from the second, was the legal proposal putting on the agenda “cosmopolitanism from below” that was eventually connected with the agenda of the World Social Forum.

II

In his lectures on *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (published toward the end of his life, [Kant 1996], Kant brought cosmopolitanism in the section devoted to the “characters of the species.” The characters of the species, in relation to his cosmopolitan ideas and ideals, shall be understood in relation to two preceding sections: “the character

of the nations” and the “character of races.” The characters of the nations are limited to six European nations: France, England, and Germany in the first round; Italy, Spain, and Portugal in the second round. Kant arrives at the frontier of “nations” encloses this section stressing its limits:

Since *Russia* has not yet developed definite characteristics from its natural potential; since *Poland* has no longer any characteristics; and since the nationals of European Turkey never have had a character, nor will ever attain what is necessary for a definite national character, the description of these nations’ characters may properly be passed over here.¹

Kant then moves to the “character of races,” which is a short section in which “nature” takes the place of “nations” in the previous section. Kant delimits the question of races by focusing instead on “the character of species.” And in this section, the character of the species “human” (of the race animals), deserves close scrutiny. Cosmopolitanism then comes into the picture in the section “basic features concerning the description of the Human Species’ Characters.” And here is how Kant envisioned cosmopolitanism, quoted at length:

The human race taken collectively (as the entire human species) is a great number of people living successively and simultaneously. **They** cannot be without peaceful co-existence, and yet they cannot avoid continuous disagreement with one another. Consequently, **they** feel destined by nature to develop, through mutual compulsion and laws written by **them**, into a **cosmopolitan society** (*cosmopolitanisms*) which is constantly threatened by dissension but generally progressing toward a coalition.

The cosmopolitan society is in itself an unreachable idea, but it is not a constitutive principle (which is expectant of peace amidst the most vigorous actions and reactions of men). It is only a **regulative principle** demanding that **we yield generously** to the **cosmopolitan society as the destiny of the human race**; and this not without reasonable ground for supposition that there is a natural inclination in this direction.²

The idea and the horizon of a cosmopolitan society is predicated, by Kant, on the bases of a previous consideration that he has established between freedom and law, the two pivots or pillars of any civil legislation: “If authority is combined with freedom and law, the principles of freedom and law are ensured with success”.³ And he considers four conceivable combinations of authority with freedom and law:

1. Law and freedom without authority (anarchy);
2. Law and authority without freedom (despotism);
3. Authority without freedom and law (barbarism);
4. Authority, with freedom and law (republic).⁴

Needless to say, Kant privileges the last one. And, therefore, cosmopolitan ideals presuppose the republican organization of society in which authority goes hand in hand with freedom and law. As Kant himself recognizes it, cosmopolitanism is an idea which may become despotic and anarchic if authority with freedom and law in place A is

¹ Kant 1996, op.cit., p. 235.

² Kant, op.cit., p. 249, bold added.

³ Kant, op.cit., p. 248.

⁴ Kant, op.cit., p. 248.

considered to be the ideal of social organization for B, C, D, E, F, G. And this was precisely the presuppositions underlying Kant's ideals envisaging a global order that he conceived as cosmopolitan.

III

There is still another aspect which we need to bring to the foreground in order to understand the implications of a cosmopolitan social order that were put forward in the eighteenth century.

In his landmark book *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, Toulmin (1990) brought the idea of a cosmo-polis into new light—cosmo-polis as a significant aspect of the hidden agenda of modernity. Why the hidden agenda? What motivated Toulmin to write this book was the moment when he understood that the image of *modernity* which he had learned in England in the 1930s and 1940s were faulty, partial, and overtly celebratory. Toulmin uncovers two dimensions of the idealistic and triumphal image of modernity ingrained mainly in protestant Europe. One is that the seventeenth century, far from being a golden age of Europe that prompted the advent of science and philosophy, was a moment of economic crisis marked by the decay of the Spanish empire and the not-yet flourishing of a new imperial era. Holland was enjoying a moment of commercial glory, but Western Christians were killing each other in the Thirty Years' War. The second aspect underlined by Toulmin, prompted by his early reading of Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*, was to the humanistic tradition (that is, not just the advent of modern science and secular philosophy with Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes), but the humanistic tradition initiated during the European Renaissance breaking away from the theological and epistemological control of the Church and the Papacy. That, in a nutshell, is the hidden agenda in which modernity and cosmo-polis appears in Toulmin's argument in that humanistic vein, although, of course, mixed with scientific models of the world. Precisely, cosmo-polis or the polis (society) was organized following the model of the *cosmos* that physics and astronomy were making available at the time.

Thus, Toulmin adumbrates the issue in the following manner:

We are here concerned, not with "science" as the modern positivists understand it, but with a *cosmopolis* that gives a comprehensive account of the world, so as to bind things together in "politico-theological," as much as in scientific or explanatory, terms (Toulmin 1990, p. 128).

Toulmin explains that the reconstruction of European society after the Thirty Years' War was based on two pillars or principles: *stability* and *hierarchy*. *Stability* applied to inter-relations among sovereign nations. Sovereign nations were a conception in the mind of European thinkers (like Kant, for example), and it applied to the very society in which they were dwelling and thinking. Thus, beyond the realm of sovereign nations (which were basically the six modern and imperial European nations [Germany, England, France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, with Holland interregnum]).⁵ The imperial question was not in the picture of stable relations among sovereign nations in the process of becoming states. *Hierarchy* applied to the internal organization of society or within the internal organization

⁵ Holland had a flourishing commercial interregnum in the seventeenth century, but Dutch is not one of the top 10 languages with the larger number of speakers. Portuguese is in seventh place, above Italian and French, and below Arabic and Bengali.

of each individual state. But, again, the presupposed totality was that of the six or seven Western European countries.

Toulmin further explains—and reminds us—that by 1700, social relations (hierarchy) within nation-states were defined *horizontally* based on super-ordination and subordination of class relations: “Social stability depended on all the parties in society ‘knowing their place’ relative to the others, and knowing what reciprocal modes of behavior were appropriate and rational”.⁶ The planetary model of society was based on the hierarchical relations within nation-states and it was, Toulmin observes, “explicitly *cosmopolitical*.” How come?

Without such a justification—Toulmin observes—the imposition of hierarchy on ‘the lower orders’ by ‘the better sort’ of people would be arbitrary and self-serving. *To the extent that this hierarchy mirrored the structure of nature*, its *authority* was self-explanatory, self-justifying and seemingly rational.⁷

Here, we encounter *authority* and *law* (posited by Kant), but not yet *freedom*. Let’s take one step further and see how the *polis* can be organized following the model of the *cosmos*. In this light, we understand that the undisclosed assumption was that:

- a. The *hierarchical organization* of each nation (*polis*) state shall follow the model provided by the law of the *cosmos*;
- b. The *stability relations* among nation-states shall also be modeled on the law of nature (*cosmos*) that serves the model for the organization of each state within itself (*polis*).

Thus, Toulmin puts it this way:

The philosophical belief that nature obeys mathematical “laws” which will ensure its stability for so long as it pleases God to maintain it, was a socially revolutionary idea: both *cosmos* and *polis* (it appeared) were self-contained, and their joint ‘rationality’ guaranteed their stability. As recently as 1650, people worried that the World was grinding to its End: by 1720, their grand children were confident that a rational and omniscient Creator had made a world that ran perfectly.⁸

The idea was shortly after that (by 1776) applied to the economy and the belief took hold that economic transactions were guided by an “invisible hand” which, like God or Nature, regulated and balanced the field of forces. This idea lasted until the Fall of 2008, when Wall Street exploded, blowing off the fingers of the invisible hands and depriving them from playing the strings and guiding the marionettes.

IV

If *cosmopolitan* ideals shall be maintained *in and for* the twenty-first century, *cosmopolitanism* shall be accountable for its crimes: the very foundation of *cosmopolitanism*, as envisioned by Kant and explained by Toulmin, was in complicity with the formation of European imperial powers and of European expansion in America, Africa, and Asia, as

⁶ Toulmin, op.cit., p. 133.

⁷ Toulmin, op.cit., p. 133.

⁸ Toulmin, op.cit., p. 133.

well as with the continuation of Europe in the United States, as Hegel was anticipating.⁹ To maintain *cosmopolitan ideals*, we (i.e., all those who engage in this project) have to decolonize cosmopolitanism, which means moving toward a de-colonial cosmopolitan order no longer modeled on the law of nature discovered by science. *De-colonial cosmopolitanism* shall be *the becoming of a pluri-versal world order* built upon and dwelling on the global borders of modernity/coloniality. In what follows, I explain this idea. I will proceed by taking a step back from the seventeenth century, where Toulmin learned that “modernity” planted its seed toward the Renaissance, where Toulmin discovered humanism as modernity’s hidden agenda beyond the celebration of science and secular philosophy. And I will take a step forward toward the formation of the United States and the transformation of European cosmopolitan ideals in the early twentieth century, when massive immigration from Europe agitated the quiet waters of two centuries of Pilgrim’s pro-creation, Native American repression, and enslaved African exploitation.

IV.1

About 130 years before Immanuel Kant pronounced his lecture on anthropology from a pragmatic point of view (1772–1773), the need of international law emerged in the consciousness of Western Christians. While in Europe the Trent’s Council was setting the stage for a bloody scenario that will consume Western Christian Europe until the Peace of Westphalia (1648), ending both the Thirty Years’ War that piggy-backed on the 80 years war between Spain and the Netherlands, legal theologians at the University of Salamanca were starting their long journey to solve two interrelated problems: to what extent Indians in the New World were Human and to what extent, as a consequence, they have property rights. Far from the mind of Castilian was to just think for a minute that property rights was not universal, and that in the Inca and Aztec civilizations, as well as in other existing communities in the Caribbean, natives do not relate to land as property by as Mother Earth (Pachamama was the name in Aymara and Quechua). Francisco de Vitoria and his followers were confronting, during the second half of the sixteenth century, issues of a history parallel to and intertwined with the internal history of Europe that Kant framed in terms of nation-state and national characters. This double history, its imperial and colonial side, were certainly at work in the seventeenth century, but as Toulmin has elegantly narrated in the first chapter of his book, only the bright side of imperial European history was transmitted to his generation, in England, in the 1930s and 1940s.

Dwelling in a secular era, Kant revamped the Greek word *cosmopolis* and gave it a different meaning. Greek philosophers were not thinking next to modern science, Christian religious war, and modern imperial colonialism. Greek *cosmopolis* has more in common with Quechua-Aymara *Tawantinsuyu* (the world [cosmos and the city] organized in four *suyus* or sections) than with Kant’s *cosmo-polis*. However, one could surmise that *Tawantinsuyu* could have served equally well to imagine a global and social organization of the Human species. And, as a matter of fact, Guaman Poma de Ayala did exactly that 250 years before Kant when he laid out his *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* and proposed to Philip III an organization of “The Indies of the New World” (as Guaman Poma de Ayala referred to the mixed co-existence of Inca and Spanish rule in the Viceroyalty of

⁹ Crimes that have been covered in velvet and shoveled out of the main stream, by the beautifully written and well advertised essay *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers*, by Kwame Anthony Appiah (Appiah 2006).

Perú and the Inca Tawantinsuyu).¹⁰ The organization of the first imperial/colonial society since the sixteenth century was meant to solve a cosmo-political problem of a particular kind: the formation of modern/colonial inter-state relations and inner-state social organization (stability and hierarchy).

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, that is, merely 50 years from the moment Spaniards were able to gain control of Tawantinsuyu and began to build the Viceroyalty of Peru, was not very much time to figure out what to do in a new situation in the history of human kind. Guaman Poma knew his own history and the history of the world he read in Spanish authors, mainly those writing on the New World. The internal organization of Tawantinsuyu he solved by giving one *suyu* to each of the existing ethnicities at his time: Spaniards, Indians, Moors, and Blacks. On the other hand, the world was remapped according to Tawantinsuyu: he drew a map and then divided it into two parts. On the upper part, he located Tawantinsuyu and in the lower part, Spain. However, Spaniards did not see themselves below Tawantinsuyu and they prevailed. Prevailing, however, did not mean that the forces of history were killed forever. The current process of re-writing the Constitution in Bolivia and Ecuador, and the entire discussion on the pluri-national state is nothing else than the continuation of the problem Guaman Poma saw emerging 500 years ago when the territory of Incas and Aymaras became a mix of ethnicities. His de-colonial political treatise was, and remains, exemplar: he did not propose to co-exist with the *enemy*. On the contrary, the very idea of the *enemy* was not in his mind. Thus, one of the first steps of de-colonial cosmopolitanism is to get rid of the idea of *friends and enemies*, in which *the political* finds its *raison-d'être*. Carl Schmitt's proposal only makes sense with European "political theology," that is, in the secularization of Christian theology, in which the world was already divided between Christianity and "those barbarians who hate it and want to destroy it."

The problem is not minor, and the whole idea of de-colonial cosmopolitanism is at stake.

IV.2

"Cosmopolitanism" was not a term in use in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The "idea," however, was there in theological, rather than secular terms. Kant's conception of cosmo-polis presupposed the already existing "typus orbis terrarum" mapped by Abraham Ortelius in 1570.¹¹ In other words, "cosmopolitanism" in the eighteenth century (in the sense of a human polis modeled on the law of the cosmos) is the secular version of a word that did not exist but that we can invent: "Christianism." Christianity did not image society regulated by the law of the universe (quite the contrary, Christianity was against scientific discoveries—as we know through Galileo's trial—but none the less, imagined a society modeled according to Christian views of divine and natural laws). In the last analysis, it was the same: secular thinkers who dethroned God and replaced it with Science and Reason and placed themselves in the driver's seat of civilization. So, let's go back in search of the Christian version (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and the foundation of secular cosmopolitanism (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).

The concept of "good governance" recently entered the vocabulary of international relations and international law. Paradoxically, the term is not used in the sense proposed by

¹⁰ Guaman Poma de Ayala *Nueva Corónica y buen Gobierno* was finished in 1516, presumably composed during a period of two decades. See de Ayala (1985).

¹¹ See Abraham Ortelius's world map (Ortelius 1570).

Guaman Poma, and even less in the sense that the Zapatistas in Southern Mexico use the term (“Juntas de Buen Gobierno,” “Council of Good Governance”), but in the implied version elaborated by legal theologians of Salamanca. Thus, there is a direct line connecting the emergence of international law in the sixteenth century (there is no such a thing before then) with cosmopolitan ideals in the eighteenth century and with good governance and development in the twentieth century promoted by the United Nations and the World Bank. Not by chance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948, came at the time in which such institutions were being created and, therefore, Human Rights, good governance, and development began to work in tandem towards the new version of “Christianism” and “cosmopolitanism,” now baptized as “globalism.” “Globalism,” like “cosmopolitanism,” names a vision rather than a process (e.g., globalization). Interestingly enough, what words highlight and hide is different in the three successive and now coexisting imperial projects. Christianization and globalization are accepted words. However, “cosmopolitanization” is not accepted by the Thesaurus, which doesn’t accept “Christianism” either.

The continuity from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century, that is, the formation, consolidation, and expansion of Western ideals and civilizations, is one of the central theses of the project modernity/coloniality (Grosfóguel 2008). The thesis is the following: the process of governing the Indies, managing the riches and controlling the population, forcing Spaniard and Portuguese first, then British, French, and German intellectuals, merchants, and officers of the State to invent both discourses and managerial technologies that introduced transformations of scale in relation to previous technologies of control, in Europe, and introduced others unknown until then. The end result was the formation, during the sixteenth century, of the *colonial matrix of power*.

The colonial matrix of power has been described in four interrelated domains of practices and arguments (as well as laws, edicts, institutions, and implicit and explicit assumptions):

1. The management of the control of subjectivities emerged first in the Spanish encounter with natives. The church and the monastic orders took over the management and control of subjectivities by converting Indians to Christianity and teaching them Spanish and also by controlling the Spanish and Portuguese population, and their descendants, in the formation of colonial societies.
2. The control of authority, shared between the papacy and the monarchy, was established by a series of law and edicts, such as El Tratado de Tordesillas (1394), by which the Pope donated the Americas to Spanish and Portuguese monarchs; by the infamous Requerimiento, by which Spaniards gave themselves the right to expropriate lands and by the establishments of Viceroyalties from Mexico to Peru and the River Plate. International law came about as a need to regulate the interactions between European foreigners and native Indians.
3. The control of the economy was organized first around the exploitations of mines and the creation of *encomiendas*, by means of which Spaniards obtained lands and Indians to work on it. Later on, plantations in the Caribbean accelerated the slave trade and the exploitation of labor. By the end of the seventeenth century, the economy engendered a set of discourse that will engender, in the eighteenth century, the emergence of political economy.
4. The control of knowledge was managed by several means. First of all, the already existing printing press that allowed Europeans to publish and circulate reports, narratives, treatises, and debates about the New World. Indians did not have the same

possibility and, therefore, whatever they said and thought was either unheard or, if it was heard, it was through Iberian first and then French and British travelers, historians, or philosophers in later centuries. And the same happened with millions of enslaved Africans transported to the New World, and with Africans in Africa who did not have any say in the debate, until late in the eighteenth century, when the ex-enslaved had the opportunity to write and be published. And, secondly, the control of knowledge was managed through the installation of colleges, monasteries, and universities.

These four domains are all and constantly interrelated and held together by the two pillars of enunciation: *the racial and patriarchal foundation of knowledge without which the colonial matrix of power would not have been possible to be established*. Racism and patriarchy took the form of Christian theology (regardless of whether Catholic or Protestant principles are defended or critiqued) and manifested itself in the theo-politic of knowledge. Since the eighteenth century, the secular science of philosophy (regardless of whether different schools of thought confronted each other) displaced (but did not replace) theology and grounded itself in secular reason and egology. When France and England, for example, displaced Spain and Portugal in the leadership (or when the United States displaced England after WWII), the colonial matrix of power was transformed and was adapted to the new circumstances, but the basic principles in the control of knowledge remained. Another story appears when, for example, the confrontation is not between England and Spain, but between all of the Western Christian countries of the Atlantic and the Islamic countries of the Middle East. In the former case, the dispute was, and still is, for the control of the colonial matrix of power. In the second case, the confrontation is between countries, agents, and institutions that built and controlled the colonial matrix and countries, agents, and institutions that were destined to be controlled by it. Thus, “good governance” meant the imperial management of authority and the control of knowledge directly related to good governance. International law sprang out of the necessity to justify the control of Indians and justify the expropriation of their lands.

IV.3

Francisco de Vitoria was celebrated mainly among Spanish and other European scholars for being one of the founders of international law. His treatise, *Relectio de Indis*, is considered foundational (de Vitoria 1532). The idea of the *Orbis Christianus* (or the Christian cosmos) was not new. It was the legacy of the Roman Empire; particularly from the moment Constantine brought together Christianity with *Imperium* (e.g., dominium), to which later on England will claim their own inheritance and more recently, the United States. The novelty of the sixteenth century was the emergence of a part of humanity (named Indians by Christians) and lands (named Indias Occidentales, New World, and, later on, America). The historical and colonial foundation of international law was, at the same time, the foundation of *rights and racism* as we know it today. Let’s see how.

Central in Vitoria’s argument is the question of *ius gentium* (rights of the people or rights of nations). At Vitoria’s time, a distinction was made between divine, human, and natural law. By divine law, the Pope was the ultimate sovereign, above the monarch—more precisely, between God and the monarch. Vitoria was a humanist and he rejected divine law. Nations, that is, communities of people, were bound by natural law and, therefore, they all have the *rights of the people*. Thus, there was no difference for Vitoria between Spaniards and Indians in regard to *ius gentium*. The problem appeared when he had to find a reason to legally authorize Spaniards to take possession of Indian lands. Vitoria found his

way out by recognizing that the Indians are human but they “lack” something. Lack and excesses were two constant features of Indians, as well as non-Christians, to locate their correspondence with the standard model of humanity. Thus, although bound and equal to Spaniards in the domain of *ius gentium*, Indians were sort of childish and needed the guidance and protection of Spaniards.

At that moment, Vitoria inserted the colonial difference into international law. *Orbis Christianus* encountered its limits, limits that will remain when secular cosmopolitanism recast the imperial project and set the stage for the civilizing mission. Anthony Anghie has provided an insightful analysis of the historical foundational moment of the colonial difference.¹² In a nutshell, the argument is the following; Indians and Spaniards are equal in the face of natural law, as both, by natural law, are endowed with *ius gentium*. In making this move, Vitoria prevented the Pope and divine law from legislating on human issues. That is, it deprived the Pope of its sovereignty. Natural law endows the monarch and the state as sovereign. The question now is whether Indians who, like Spaniards, are endowed with *ius gentium* by natural (and not divine) law are sovereigns. If they are sovereigns, then wars with Indians will be ruled by international law legislating between two sovereign states. Vitoria’s foundational move consisted in this:

By bracketing divine law and putting the Pope out of legislation of human affairs, he established natural law as the ultimate sovereign. Society shall be governed according to natural law and, at the time where science (astronomy and physics) were in its inception and not on good terms with theology, the interpretation of natural law was in the hands of legal theologians, like Vitoria himself. Now, by natural law, all human beings were born equal—a principle to which no one will object—and because of it, are all endowed with *ius gentium*, with the rights of people or nations. Vitoria devoted the first two of the three sections of *Relectio de Indis* to defend the rights of Indians (to whom he consistently refers to as “los bárbaros,” “the barbarians”) not to be dispossessed or invaded, and put a halt to Spaniards’ anxiety to invade and dispossess.

However, once Vitoria established the distinction between “principes Christianos” (and Castilian in general) and “los bárbaros” (the barbarians), and he made his best effort to balance his arguments based on the equality he attributed to both people by natural law and *ius gentium*, the entire discussion is based on Spaniards’ *rights and limits* toward “the barbarians” to expropriate or not, to declare war or not, to govern or not. Vitoria frequently offers counter or parallel examples imagining what would happen if, instead of Christians and barbarians, the situation would be between French and Castilians without calling attention to the difference. The difference is that communication and interactions between the French and Castilians are established on the assumption of two sovereign nations or people, in which case in any litigation, both parties will have a saying. On the contrary, communication and interactions between Christians and barbarians are one-sided: *the barbarians have no saying in whatever Vitoria said because barbarians are deprived from sovereignty even when they are recognized as equal per natural law and ius gentium.*

The move is foundational in the legal and philosophical constitution of the modern/colonial world and will be maintained through the centuries, modified in the vocabulary from barbarians to primitives, from primitives to communists, from communists to terrorists. Thus, *Orbis Christianus*, secular cosmopolitanism, and economic globalism are names corresponding to different moments of the colonial matrix of power and distinct imperial leadership (from Spain to England to the United States). These are the many faces of cosmo-polis that I outlined in my previous article tackling the question of rights (of

¹² On the topic, see Anghie (1999), Mignolo (2000), and Weik (2007).

people, of man, and of the citizen and of humans) to flag the limits of imperial cosmopolitan projects.

Anthony Anghie made two decisive points about Vitoria and the historical origins of international law:

My argument, then, is that Vitoria is concerned, not so much with the *problem of order among sovereign states but the problem of order among societies belonging to two different cultural systems*. Vitoria resolves this problem by focusing on the cultural practices of each society and assessing them in terms of universal law of *ius gentium*. *Once this framework is established*, he demonstrates that the *Indians (e.g., barbarians in Vitoria's vocabulary) are in violation of universal natural law. Indians are included within a system only to be disciplined.*¹³

Three limits to cosmopolitan ideals (from *Orbis Christianus* to globalism) deserve attention. The first is that the distinction between two cultural systems has not been proposed by Indians (or barbarians), but by Vitoria unilaterally. Unilateralism in this particular case means that *the colonial difference* was inscribed in the apparent equality between two cultures or nations endowed by natural law with *ius gentium*. The colonial difference was mainly and foremost *epistemological*. That is, by recognizing equality by birth and by natural law, Spaniards and barbarians are ontologically equals. However, epistemically, barbarians are not yet ready to govern themselves according to the standards established by *human law*. And here is where Vitoria's distinction between divine, natural, and human law pays its dividends.

The second is that the framework is there to regulate its violation. And when violation occurs, then the creator and enforcers of the framework had a justification to invade and use force to punish and expropriate the violator. This logic was wonderfully rehearsed by John Locke in his *Second Treatise on Government* (1681). One can say that "coloniality," in Vitoria, set the stage not only for international law but also for "modern and European" conceptions of governmentality. It seems obvious that Locke did not get as much from Machiavelli as from the emergence of international law in the sixteenth century, and in the way that Vitoria, and his followers, settled to discuss both the question of "property" and "governance" in the interaction between Christians and the barbarians. Machiavelli was thinking politically in the conflicted Italy of the first half of the sixteenth century. His concern was to advise the Prince as how to obtain or maintain power and how to regulate conflict in Italy, not between Spaniards and the barbarians! So, for Machiavelli, there was no "thief," like in Locke, or violators of natural law, like in Vitoria.

The third is that the "framework" is not dictated by divine or natural law but by human interests, and, in this case, the interests of Christian Castilian males. Thus, the "framework" presupposes a very well located and singular locus of enunciation that, guarded by divine and natural law, it is presumed to be universal. And third, the universal and unilateral frame "includes" the barbarians or Indians (a principle that is valid for all politics of inclusion that we hear today) in their difference, thus, justifying any action that Christians will take to tame them. The construction of *the colonial difference* goes hand in hand with the establishment of *exteriority*: the invented place outside the frame (barbarians) that is brought into the frame in order to secure the control of the frame (civilized) and to legislate. *Exteriority* in other words, is the outside, invented in the process of building the inside. In order to do so, you have to control the enunciation both institutionally and conceptually.

¹³ Anghie, op.cit., p. 102, emphasis added.

Anghie made a second single observation that coincides with one of the basic principles upon which de-colonial thinking and the analytic of modernity/coloniality has been built:

Clearly, then, Vitoria's work suggests that the conventional view in which sovereignty doctrine was developed in the West and then transferred to the non-European world is, in important respects, misleading. *Sovereignty doctrine acquired its character through the colonial encounter*. This is the darker history of sovereignty, which cannot be understood by any account of the doctrine that assumes the existence of sovereign states.¹⁴

Anghie points toward a radical epistemic shift necessary to de-colonize the inherited view of Eurocentered modernity. That is, that international relations based on the concept of sovereignty emerged in Europe, after the Peace of Westphalia, to regulate an emerging inter-state system, within Europe where states were considered to be sovereign. This is the local and regional situation in which Kant was thinking cosmopolitanism. But beyond the heart of Europe, as we saw above, when Kant faces Russia, Turkey, and Poland, what he faces is indeed the *colonial difference*. And the *colonial difference*, at the time of Kant, was refashioned in two complementary directions:

1. Orientalism, as analyzed by Edward Said, was nothing else other than updating the colonial difference of secular Europe with the Orient, that Vitoria had already established Christian Europe and the barbarians.
2. The invention of the South of Europe (clear in Kant and Hegel) recast the colonial difference into *internal imperial difference*: the emerging imperial countries (England, Germany, France, now leading the European Union), separated themselves from Christian and Latin countries (France occupying an intermediary position, but also taking the leadership of the Southern Latin countries—Italy, Spain, and Portugal).

Kant's cosmopolitanism was cast under the implicit assumptions that, beyond the heart of Europe was the land of those who had to be brought into civilization and, in the South of Europe, the Latin and Catholic countries, some of them—like Spain and Portugal—too close to the Moors and with mixed blood.

Now, if we jump from the era of European “cosmopolitan” modernity and the civilizing mission (with England and France leading the way) to a post-modern world guided by “globalism,” we have the sketch of the continuity and diachronic accumulation of the rhetoric of modernity (salvation, conviviality, prosperity, and freedom) and its darker side, the logic of coloniality (discrimination, racism, domination, unilateralism, exploitation). What is “globalism?” Manfred Steger introduced suggestions that globalism—is “an Anglo-American market ideology that reached its zenith in the 1990s—was inextricably linked to the rising fortunes of neoliberal political forces in the world's sole remaining superpower (Steger 2006, 12). It is anchored in neo-liberalism, a doctrine associated with the ideas developed after WWII by Hayek and Milton Friedman—in radical confrontation with the state-regulated economy of the Soviet Union—implemented by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher and brought to their disastrous consequences by the spectacular collapse of Wall Street in September–October 2008. The extreme interest of globalism, in relation to the previous periods of theological international law and secular state and inter-state regulations after Westphalia (Locke, Kant), is that, while the first (*Orbis Christianus*) has Christian theology (divine, natural, and human law) as the overarching frame and the second (secular cosmopolitanism) had secular philosophy and science (the physical law of the cosmos unveiled by from Copernicus and Galileo to Newton) to regulate society and imagine a cosmopolitan world, the third (globalism) had an “invisible hand” regulating

¹⁴ Anghie, op.cit., p. 103. emphasis added.

economy. The “invisible hand” introduced by Adam Smith—during the same years that Kant was imagining cosmopolitanism and conviviality—as the regulator of economic transactions, always had, for me, a hidden complicity with Vitoria (and Christian) divine and natural laws.

Thus, when we move from “good governance” in the sense that Vitoria and Locke imagined it (the first through international law, the second regulation national-state) to globalism, we put *homo economicus* in the front row (instead of Christian and civilized confronting the barbarians) and the underdeveloped at the other end. At this point, “barbarians” of all kinds lose their appeal and their forces: globalism is not so much concerned with taming the barbarians and in the legality of international relations, but in reducing costs and increasing gains. Thus, barbarians were replaced by “communists” first and by “terrorists” later: the forces that prevent *homo economicus* from becoming global.

Questions related to the nature of humanity, of who is human or less human and who is more, lose their relevance. What counts are people who can work and consume disregarding their religious belief, their skin color, or their sexuality. “Globalism” is the global sharing of a particular type of economy disregarding, once again, whether the leaders of that economy are Saudi Arabians, Indonesian Muslim, Hindu Indians, Orthodox and Slavic Russians, or White and Christian French, British, and Anglo-Americans. *Orbis Christianus*, cosmopolitanism, and globalism are, then, different versions in the long history of Western imperial expansion, to the point, today, of having loosened the grip it had on the colonial matrix of power under dispute.

V

De-colonial cosmopolitanism proposes a double departure, a radical shift in the geopolitics of knowing and being. The scenarios in which de-colonial cosmopolitanism could be thought out and acted are the following:

1. The transformation of the mono-centric (and unilateral) Western world from the sixteenth century establishment of the colonial matrix of power to 2000. In that period, the colonial matrix of power that we created was consolidated, augmented, and controlled by Western imperialism (Spain, England, and the United States basically). Since 2000, approximately, the colonial matrix of power is under dispute. We are witnessing the transformation of a mono-centric to a poly-centric world sharing the same type of economy, capitalist of economy. However, poly-centricity appears at the level of control of political authority, control of knowledge, and control of subjectivity (e.g., gender, sexuality, religiosity, etc.). At the time of writing this article, the meeting of the G20 is taking place in Washington to rectify the Wall Street disaster. However, while the G20 would agree on many points regarding the economy, there is no question that China and the United States, India and Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Germany, etc., would have contentions in other arenas, from political to epistemic and religious issues. Furthermore, countries like Iran and Venezuela, economically powerful and capitalist, are not part of the G20 precisely because contentions are played out in the domain of controlling authority, subjectivity, and knowledge.
2. A poly-centric capitalist world is not, of course, a de-colonial world: a world that has dispensed with the colonial matrix of power and the colonial and imperial differences regulating the field of forces in the modern/colonial world. De-colonial cosmopolitanism is not so much (yet) thought out and activated in the sphere of the state

(perhaps with exceptions like Evo Morales in Bolivia), but in the domain of what Partha Chatterjee describes as “political society” (Chatterjee 2004, 27–52). That is, the sphere of the “civil society” described by Hegel in the framework of liberal cosmopolitanism and the secular order of society has been expanded, mainly in the twentieth century, by the eruption and disruption of the “political society,” part of which is described as “social movements.” De-colonial cosmopolitanism shall be placed in the sphere of the political society, although not necessarily the entire sphere of political society would be de-colonial. De-colonial projects and de-colonial cosmopolitanism are defined in relation to the definition of coloniality, that is, of the formation and transformation of the colonial matrix of power as described above.

De-colonial cosmopolitanism dwells in the borders, in *exteriority*, in the colonial difference. While cosmopolitanism, in its different versions (*Orbis Christianus*, globalism), were concocted and enacted in and from the “center” (that is, in the heart of Western imperial countries and histories), de-colonial cosmopolitanism is a proposal from the “margins.” The margins are places, histories, and people whom non-being Christian and secular Europeans, without dwelling in that particular history, were forced to deal with it, from the “barbarian Indians” and enslaved Africans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to China and India in the nineteenth century, Iran and Iraq in the twentieth, since oil was discovered. I am not saying that all Indians and Afro-descendants in America, Chinese and Indians, Iranians and Iraqis will get up and rise in arms, harmoniously and unified against the evil forces of Western modernity. I am just saying that de-colonial projects are emerging from colonial modernities, that is, non-European subjects who had to deal with European modernity in spite of themselves. Inhabitants of colonial modernities have an array of options. In one extreme, there is the assimilating option and the contribution to Westernization of their backward countries. The other is enrolling and adapting Marxism to detach from European modernity and capitalism. Another would be to enroll in theologies of liberations, in places where theology entered mainly as an imperial force. And still another will be the de-colonial option. The de-colonial option starts from narrating a silenced history, the history of the formation and transformation of the colonial matrix of power.

The de-colonial option is the connector, the spine of de-colonial cosmopolitanism, the links between the commonality of colonial experiences between people with uncommon local histories—Indians in India and the indigenous in America, New Zealand, and Australia; Chinese struck by the Opium War and by neo-liberalism and the legacies of Maoism in struggles of liberations. In summation, de-colonial cosmopolitanism is the cosmopolitanism that emerges from the de-colonial option and cut across—at the same time that respects—identities *in* life and politics: all human beings confronting—at different scales—the consequences of modern/colonial racism and patriarchy have something in common, beyond their religious, ethnic, gender, sexuality, nationalities, and languages. Frantz Fanon had a name for them/us: *les damnés de la terre*. The de-colonial option materializes in multiple trajectories where identities emerge. But, beyond identities, the commonality that identifies people and communities for being “not quite human” runs like a thread across identities, connecting (rather than uniting) many projects and trajectories in a global process of de-colonial cosmopolitanism, toward the horizon of pluri-versality as a universal project.

3. Mehrzad Boroujerdi (Boroujerdi 1996) distinguished between “Orientalism in reverse” from “Nativism.” In the first case, subjects that became oriental objects in Western knowledge responded by making the West the other. By so doing,

“Orientalism in reverse” accepts the rule of the game and attempts to change the content—not the terms—of the conversation. “Nativism” in Boroujerdi’s conceptualization is something different. The term “Nativism” here may surprise members of the cosmopolitan club. Let’s first listen and then comment upon:

Nativism stands in the same relation to Orientalism in reverse as Eurocentrism does to Orientalism proper. Both Nativism and Eurocentrism provide an ontological and epistemological umbrella under which it becomes possible to develop a theory of history and a political platform. Whereas Eurocentrism does advocate such ideas as the uniqueness and superiority of the West and its unequivocal manifest destiny, Nativism champions the cause of abandoning, subverting, and reversing these same meta-narratives and master codes. *Nativism was born of the lamentable circumstance of colonialism and the agonizing milieu of the post-World War II period of decolonization.* It represents a cultural reflex on the part of many Third World intellectuals from Southeast Asia to the Caribbean eager to assert their newly found identities (1996, 14; italics mine).

The reader may suspect that we are here confronting another essentialist proposal. The interesting aspect of the proposal is that Frantz Fanon comes up, for an Iranian intellectual, as the paradigmatic example of “Nativism.” Boroujerdi doesn’t offer any specific reference or quotation as to why Fanon would be a paradigmatic example of “Nativism.” I suspect that he has in mind statements like this one:

I am ready to concede that on the plane of factual being the past existence of an Aztec civilization does not change anything very much in the diet of the Mexican peasant of today... But it has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped. Because they realize they are in danger of losing their lives and thus becoming lost to their people, these men, hotheaded and with anger in their hearts, relentlessly determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people (Fanon, 1963, 209–210).

Let’s then translate “Nativism” into “Localism” and be clear that locals have been conformed by the formation and transformation of the colonial matrix of power. The point is, then, that Localism emerges because of the advent of a powerful intellectual and political elite, some of them still linked to Europe through Marxism but in the colonies, and some plainly already decolonial. Localism, crossed and conformed by historical forces (in this case, Persia, Islam, the Western creation of the Middle East as a region, and the Middle East becoming part of the Third World) then emerges as a pluri-versal response and confrontation with universal Eurocentrism.

Eurocentrism, in the last analysis, is Western localism (or perhaps “Nativism” is a good name for Eurocentrism), with a global design that became synonymous with universalism. Thus, Kant cosmopolitanism and its legacy propose the universalization of Western Nativism/Localism. And the Marxist left, for better or worst, belongs to that world. And this is a challenge for cosmopolitanism. On the contrary, non-Western localism is plural, since there are many multiple memories and colonial wounds infringed by racism, ways of life, languages, beliefs, experiences connected to the West, but at the same time, not subsumable to it. Localism (which shall not be confused with “national fundamentalisms”

or “Nativism from the right”) should be pluri-versal and, therefore, decolonial. Since Localism originated “from the lamentable circumstance of colonialism,” or better yet, of the logic of coloniality common to different Western imperial/colonial expansion (Spain, France, England) and its surrogates after the sixteenth century (imperial Russia, Soviet Union, Japan), a trademark of localism is the decolonial thread that connects and makes pluri-versality a global project. De-colonial localism is global or, if you wish, cosmopolitical. Thus, we arrive at the paradoxical conclusion that, if cosmopolitanism shall be preserved in the humanities goal toward the future, it should be “cosmopolitan localism,” an oxymoron no doubt, but the Kantian project of one localism being the universal is untenable today. “Cosmopolitan localism” is another expression for pluri-versality as a global project. Kantian’s legacies shall be reduced to its proper localism and stripped of its imperial/global pretensions. Recognizing the “idea” doesn’t mean accepting its implementation. Cosmopolitanism can only work if there is no master global design, but a global agreement in which no one will rule without being ruled. It is a tough call for those who believe that his/her party, religion, or ideology is the best for everybody and has to be imposed for the well-being of all and for universal peace. A tough but realistic call now that the global political society is growing and is on its feet; it is aware that the era of being ruled and obeying, or being repressed for disobeying, is reaching its limit.

References

- Anghie, A. (1999). Francisco de Vitoria and the colonial origins of international law. In E. Darian-Smith & P. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Laws of the postcolonial* (pp. 89–108). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Appiah, K. A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a world of strangers*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Boroujerdi, M. (1996). *Iranian intellectuals and the West—The tormented triumph of nativism*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Chatterjee, P. (2004). *The politics of the governed. Reflections on popular politics in most of the world*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- de Ayala, F. G. P. (1985). Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno ([1617], 1985). In J. V. Murra & R. Adorno (Eds.). México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- de Vitoria, F. (1532/1989). *Relectio de Indis*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (Constance Farrington, Trans.). New York: Grove Press.
- Grosfóguel, R. (2008). Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality. Decolonizing political economy and postcolonial studies. In *Eurozine*; <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-07-04-grosfogu-el-en.html>.
- Kant, I. (1996). *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view* (Victor Lyle Dowdell, Trans.). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2000). The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism. *Public Culture*, 12(3), 721–748.
- Ortelius, A. (1570). *Typus Orbis Terrarum*. <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm2044>.
- Steger, M. (2006). *Globalism. Market ideology meets terrorism*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Toulmin, S. (1990). *Cosmopolis. The hidden agenda of modernity*. New York: Free Press.
- Weik, A. (2007). “The uses, hazards of expatriation”: Richard Wright’s cosmopolitanism in process. *African American Review*, 41, 459–475.

Copyright of Studies in Philosophy & Education is the property of Springer Science & Business Media B.V. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.