Cosmopolitanism as Utopia

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Since the end of the Cold War, cosmopolitanism has undeniably experienced a renaissance. It re-emerged in the humanities and social sciences as well as among political theorists, until it was criticised for being overstrained with content, and alternative concepts were suggested to cover parts of its meaning. One of the most influential points of reference in the discussions of cosmopolitanism is the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). In the context of the recent refugee arrivals in Europe, the Kantian definition of cosmopolitan right as hospitality made cosmopolitanism less attractive as it demonstrated a gap between theory and practice that had changed over time. The restricted Kantian definition of hospitality as the right to visit, not to be treated hostile, and for the host, the right to reject the visitor as long as there was no risk for life, was formulated in a time of colonialism, perhaps to save parts of the world from colonisers. As the situation was quite different in the recent refugee situation, Kant's cosmopolitan right was turned upside down. However, Kant's cosmopolitanism is not just a cosmopolitan right.

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The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the complexity of cosmopolitanism as theory, with its long history, as well as its use in different intellectual and cultural spaces, and to demonstrate what might be lost if it is rejected. I suggest cosmopolitanism to be read as a utopian idea. After an opening section on cosmopolitanism and its critics, I present utopia as a method. Then, I discuss utopia in Kant's work and lift forward other aspects of his cosmopolitanism in order to understand it as an important part of an implicit utopia, before ending up with concluding reflections on cosmopolitanism as utopia.

COSMOPOLITANISM AND ITS CRITICS

With a background in ancient Greek and Roman thinking, the notion of cosmopolitanism has a rich tradition within especially the Western world (Cheneval 2002). With such a long history, it is not surprising that it has been loaded with different content over the centuries. Among the elements that construct its core are those of universalism and human dignity, elements that take different shapes depending on spatial and temporal situations and contexts. The complexity of the concept, its wide range of connotations and meanings today encourages the introduction of other concepts to partially replace it.

Cosmopolitanism was one of the ideas that were enthusiastically re-explored around the latest turn of century. Scholars within a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences considered it as a necessary stance for creating a better world through jointly finding solutions to problems that do not correspond to national borders, such as environmental and climate threats, and making efforts towards ending historically embedded globe-spanning injustices. This re-exploration has contributed to what sociologist Gerard Delanty (2019b) refers to as cosmopolitanism studies, an academic field characterised by a mixture of normative analyses and empirical applications, whose diversities were recently demonstrated in a revised an enlarged collection edited by him (first edition 2012), *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies* (Delanty 2019a). Cosmopolitanism has been criticised for its Eurocentric, exclusive, and idealistic tendencies, and for ignoring controversies and clashes (Bernasconi 2001, 2011; Gilroy 2015). Paul Gilroy's critique of cosmopolitanism for being born out of colonialism and European expansion (2004) led him, as well as many other authors, to prefer the concept of "conviviality". It is an indisputable fact that the concept of cosmopolitanism is overstrained,

as Magdalena Nowicka puts forward in Chapter 2 in this volume. She also prefers "conviviality", as it reframes the discussions on human togetherness, society, and the state and opens for focus on sociality rather than diversity.

It is tempting to understand cosmopolitanism as a coherent theory or at least as a well-defined concept because of its literal form as an "ism". Besides, when a word has been in use for a long time, as cosmopolitanism has, it may be considered as something of a catchword and hence be applied as a rhetorical tool (Kurunmäki and Marjanen 2018: 246). Today, cosmopolitanism refers to a very wide range of theories and practices including universal embracement of humanity, political systems, ethics, migration politics, education, attitudes, multiculturalism, the vernacular, and elite cultures as well as everyday cultures (see Delanty 2019a). This is not the first or only time that its referential frame has been so vast. In the late eighteenth century, the concept had several diverse meanings, for example in Germany, where these connotations pertained to moral cosmopolitanism, international federal cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan law, cultural cosmopolitanism, market cosmopolitanism and romantic cosmopolitanism (Kleingeld 1999). Being cosmopolitan could then also be used as an invective (Lettevall 2008). Today, it is more common to identify three main varieties of cosmopolitanism: cultural, moral and political (Etinson 2010) while yet another definition speaks of societal cosmopolitanism (Pendenza 2017).

One of the main questions of cosmopolitanism concerns the multiplicity of realms of cosmopolitanism as theory and cosmopolitanism as practice. Cosmopolitanism as theory has been criticised for being too distant from practical experience and, as has already been mentioned, for its alleged Eurocentric as well as elitist perspective. However, cosmopolitanism as theory could mean the ability to see what unites rather than the differences and particularities. This has been illuminatively explored through the application of the "cosmopolitan lens" to the empirical case of a neighbourhood in Sweden, characterised by a working-class past and a diverse presence with cosmopolitanisation from within at a particular time and space (Povrzanović Frykman 2016). Cosmopolitanism as practice—i.e. research on cosmopolitan practices—often refers to forms of living together. One way to practise cosmopolitanism is to develop the idea of world citizenship. The inter-war period's attempt to issue a certain kind of identity cards— the so-called Nansen passports—for refugees who had lost their citizenship through the First World War can be understood as such a cosmopolitan practice, even though the project was not very successful (Lettevall 2012). The former US bomber pilot Garry Davis' initiative after the Second World

War to reject his US citizenship in order to create a world citizenship could also be conceived as part of such a movement (Gustafsson 2019, forthcoming).

In some debates, the neologism cosmopolitics has been introduced in the attempt to bridge between theory and practice (Cheah and Robbins 1998). It refers to politics within and beyond the nation where the perspective of global social justice and equality is included, as well as more concrete attempts to deal with the global challenges without the abstract universalism of cosmopolitanism (ibid.: 13). Defined like this, cosmopolitics could be a tool for a cosmopolitan utopia.

It has been argued that cosmopolitanism as practice depends on an idea of openness towards others (Skrbiš and Woodward 2013: 27). The openness that characterises cosmopolitanism is not universal, but rather depending on situation and context, which means that there is a performative dimension to the openness. Skrbiš and Woodward suggest that when researchers study expressions of cosmopolitan identities as practice, they must search for performances and manifestations (ibid.: 28). Besides the idea of openness as a crucial principle of cosmopolitanism in practice, Skrbiš and Woodward lift forward the idea of an applied ethics of inclusiveness (ibid.: 40).

As mentioned above, the openness that characterises cosmopolitanism as practice is dependent on time and space, while interpretations of cosmopolitanism as theory do not always pay attention to this. However, it can be argued that the historicity of a concept is an important part of the production of its meaning. From Gadamer's perspective of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, often translated as "effective history", but sometimes as "reception history", a concept is always dependent on its history, as its interpretations over time also become part of the concept and thus interpretations cannot be separated from the concept itself (Gadamer 1960). Earlier interpretations influence the meaning the concept is attributed today—thus the need for being aware of its history.

General criticism of cosmopolitanism often targets its universalism. Abstract universalism cannot solve specific problems in the world. One example of this is the relation between, on the one hand, abstract and general human rights and, on the other hand, the possibilities of implementing them in particular situations. Ever since Hannah Arendt's (2000 [1949]) sharp criticism of universal human rights as a failure unless there are citizen rights to protect them through a government, the question has been whether cosmopolitanism with its implicit universalism can include

some kind of citizenship. Both international law and nation states have failed to guarantee rights for the many victims of war that have lost either their citizenship or their possibility to stay in their countries. This was true in the inter-war period, after the Second World War and not least today. The recent refugee situation in Europe has brought into light the rights of strangers, and it has been argued whether Kant's concept of hospitality as a cosmopolitan right implies a right to asylum or not (Brown 2019: 18). Is it possible to combine national citizenship with world citizenship? Being a crucial question when discussing cosmopolitanism, this is where the Kantian understanding of hospitality becomes relevant.

The definition of Kant's cosmopolitanism as cosmopolitan right springs from a rather narrow understanding of cosmopolitanism, where it is understood as hospitality in a restricted form that only grants the right of a stranger to visit a place when there is a risk for her life. If we approach cosmopolitanism through such a narrow reading, large parts of the historicity of the concept tend to be ignored. When cosmopolitanism is dismissed because of the narrow understanding of Kant's definition of cosmopolitan right, many other parts of cosmopolitanism are also dismissed. While hospitality without doubt plays an important role concerning mobility and migration, cosmopolitanism can easily refer to several other issues.

The long tradition of discussions on cosmopolitanism contains many perspectives that stretch over time and space and should thus be understood with a sensibility to temporality. Since Diogenes, who is attributed to having introduced the concept, and over the different meanings developed during the Enlightenment and onwards to our time, cosmopolitanism has contained a utopian dimension. I propose to look at its potential to be used as a tool in a utopian method.

Utopia as a Critical Method

The function of utopias has been described both as offering a dreamy escape from the real world and as stimulating societal changes. Sociologist Ruth Levitas (2013) argues that utopia is a reflexive method for conceiving alternative—better—futures in a time and space suffering from different crises, whether ecological, social, economic, political or existential. Utopia offers an integrated way to think about these different areas.

> The core of utopia is the desire of being otherwise, individually and collectively, subjectively and objectively. Its expressions explore and bring to

debate the potential contents and contexts of human flourishing. It is thus better understood as a method than a goal – a method elaborated here as the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society, or IROS. (Levitas 2013: xi)

For Levitas, utopia is understood as the expression of a hope and desire for a better way of being or living and of the conviction that the present society could be different from what it is now. Utopia is existential as well as relational. Levitas argues that her definition of utopia is analytic rather than descriptive and that it generates a method which is primarily hermeneutic but oscillates between the social and structural and the existential-aesthetical. For Levitas, "utopia has at least three potential functions: compensation, critique and change" (ibid.: 107). The three functions are intertwined. While compensation primarily refers to the (individual's) imagination of living in a better world, critique refers, rather, to the group or a more general societal perspective on the private experience such as identifying the dissatisfaction as depending on something systemic. Change is the most important function of utopia. According to Levitas, the importance of utopia consists of its capacity to embody hope rather than desire and to stimulate fantasies about a transformation to a better world. She observes that contemporary public discourse and political culture are anti-utopian, partly because of the fear of the totalitarian political consequences a "perfect society" would imply (ibid.: 7).

The utopian method comprises three modes: the archaeological, the ontological and the architectural (ibid.: 153). These modes are not isolated from one another but rather overlap. The archaeological mode combines "the images of the good society that are embedded in political programmes and social and economic policies" (Levitas 2013: 153). Further, the archaeological mode enables the imagination and reconstitution of a whole society from fragments. The ontological mode tries to answer the question about the kind of people a certain society develops and encourages—or "the historical and social determination of human nature" (ibid.: 153). The architectural mode, finally, imagines potential alternative future scenarios, including the descriptions and imaginations of a new world and its social institutions, as well as the imagination about and consequences for the people that might inhabit them. Levitas argues that the core of good society is equality (ibid.: 215), and that utopia is a fertile method to help us think differently about the present and the future and imagine ways of reaching equality. This threefold holistic utopian method is not

limited by technological determinism but founded on imagination (Goode and Godhe 2017).

Ever since Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), the mode to describe an ideal society placed in another time and space has been a practice for criticising the present society or some of its components. Utopia has been a method for describing future goals, whether political, social or religious. In fact, that tradition prevailed even long before Thomas More's work. It seems to have been an important idea of many religions as well as in ancient Greece (Manuel and Manuel 1979). Because of the liberty of the projection into time and space, utopias tend to contain descriptions of societies without change and movement, where there are no dynamics between different expressions of ideas and thus no further development. These are the characteristics of the visions of utopian societies from the paradise to the future golden age. In their major work *Utopian thought in the Western world*, Manuel and Manuel summarise that

> [u]topians of the past have dealt with war and peace, the many facets of live, the antinomy of need and desire, the opposition of calm felicity and dynamic change, the alternatives of hierarchy or equality, the search for a powerful unifying bond to hold mankind together, whether universal love or a common identification of a transcendent being. (Manuel and Manuel 1979: 802)

Manuel and Manuel conclude that utopia might be an imagined dream world. It could, however, also have realistic characteristics. From around the First World War and onwards, the genre of dystopia developed within literature and film, in which future societies were portrayed as being horrifying. Utopias and utopianism have been criticised for being unrealistic and fluffy constructions of dreams suitable for the most committed idealists. Still, with the support from Levitas, it is clear that they could be useful for exploring the directions for the future. In the following, I will use cosmopolitanism to explore the idea of expression of a hope and desire for a better future. Here, I define cosmopolitanism as a utopia, which means that it is not understood as a concrete plan or model for change, but as a hope for the better through imagination that supports a new view of the present and the future. It is hardly possible to construct an ideal world theoretically, but it is possible to outline utopias. Kant's political and historical philosophy is implicitly utopian, and cosmopolitanism is an important part of that utopia.

Kant's Implicit Utopia and Cosmopolitanism

One of the interesting peculiarities of Kant's work is that, even though he put such an effort into defining the boundaries of human knowledge, he concentrates perhaps most of his intellectual work on what seems to lie beyond those borders, on what is not really a part of that which can be conceived as knowledge. Kant's philosophical system is often referred to as an architecture, also by himself, and within it we can find an implicit utopia. This is developed mainly in his smaller works on history and politics but has a foundation in his large critical works, the *Critique of Judgement* (1790) in particular. Besides *Towards Perpetual Peace* (1795), also *What Is Enlightenment?* (1784), *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (1786), *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective* (1784) and the *Anthropology* (1798, 1800) belong to the works that sometimes are referred to as the historic-political writings.

Kant's implicit utopia concerns humanity in general, and the human being's development towards fulfilment of her capacities, especially reason. The human being, according to Kant, is part of the world of necessity and nature on the one hand and the world of freedom on the other. His famous definition of Enlightenment as "the human being's emancipation from its self-incurred immaturity", where immaturity is the "lack of resolve and courage to make use of one's intellect without the direction of another" indicates a part of that development (Kant 2006 [1784]: 17). Within his main works on the critical philosophy, it is particularly in the third critique that Kant describes the teleological development of mankind. In short, Kant's implicit utopia is described as if nature had a purpose, a teleological purpose directed towards the final goal, which is the fulfilment of the capacities of the faculties of the human being and especially the development of reason. It is as if nature helps the human being to reach the development of all her capacities.

One part of Kant's implicit utopia is thus the supposed teleology, the "as if" philosophy, to act as if or conceive the world as if there was a final end. In some of his later writings, he sketches the history of mankind assuming its way towards a perpetual peace, thereby connecting to the tradition of millenarianism. He seeks empirical evidence that humanity as a whole is making progress towards a better world. Still, it is not the past but rather the future that he is interested in. One of his observations is that human beings are characterised by unsocial sociability, "ungesellige Geselligkeit",

a feature that makes them neither satisfied with others, nor satisfied with being alone.

Cosmopolitanism is thus one of the important components of Kant's implicit utopia. The central question is the telos in the historical world, and that the human being is the final goal, not just concerning the faculties she has in common with non-human creatures, but her unique rational capacity to construct an ideal society governed by human reason—and where no laws are needed, as human actions are guided by a moral law. According to Kant's thought experiment, human history began when the human species left a peaceful Arcadia and then began to develop their reason. As the destiny of a person cannot be fulfilled in a lifetime, the alternative is that it be fulfilled through history. Human beings are characterised by an antagonism between nature and freedom and by unsocial sociability. Through conflicts, humans are spread all over the globe, but because of its spherical form, they cannot spread forever. At some point, they need a developed rational capacity in order to advance towards an ideal world where peace of mind as well as peace between states prevails.

Cosmopolitanism is central to this development, since Kant considers it as being a part in the development of the rationality of the human being. One important part of the fulfilment of the human capacities is the development of a moral law, leading to a utopia where there is no contradiction or conflict between moral law, political law and the inclination of the will and desire.

According to Kant, human nature is not peaceful, and humans will occasionally break out in quarrels, hostilities and war. For this reason, a system of law is needed, founded on a constitution that guarantees the freedom of each individual in coexistence with the freedom of others. The ideal constitutional form is what he describes as republican, and the free republics should then unite in a federation founded on federal right (Kant 2006 [1795]: 74f.). Kant's system of right regulates the law between citizens (republicanism) and the law between states (international right) and adds the third cosmopolitan right, between states and the individual who is not a citizen and where hospitality is a central concept (ibid.: 82).

In *Towards Perpetual Peace* Kant formulates, in the shape of a peace treaty, one of his theses as follows: "Cosmopolitan right shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality" with the limitation that the stranger can be turned away if it can be done without causing his death (ibid.: 82). If Kant's cosmopolitan right is understood as his cosmopolitanism, this is a very narrow definition. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, this definition

has been strongly in focus in recent years, with the refugee situation becoming an urgent global topic. However, cosmopolitanism is, from Kant's point of view, much larger than the concept of hospitality. Rather, it should be recognised as a part of an implicit utopia.

In the thesis from *Perpetual Peace*, mentioned above, Kant concludes:

> The growing prevalence of a (narrower or wider) community among the peoples of the earth has now reached a point where the violation of right at any *one* place on the earth is felt in *all* places. For this reason the idea of cosmopolitan right is no fantastic or exaggerated conception of right. Rather it is a necessary supplement to the unwritten code of constitutional and international right, for public human right in general, and hence for perpetual peace. Only under this condition can one flatter oneself to be continually progressing toward perpetual peace. (Kant 2006 [1795]: 84f.)

In this passage, the strictly defined cosmopolitan right opens up for a "community among all the peoples of the earth" which is attached to an idea of development towards fulfilment of the final goal, or of the full development of human capacity. As noted above, Kant's cosmopolitanism is an important part of the implicit utopia that is sketched within his philosophical system. This utopia has been analysed in different ways in different periods. For example, in times when Kant was interpreted as an analytic philosopher, as in the Anglo-Saxon tradition in the twentieth century, it is dismissed as a minor speculation. Manuel and Manuel's (1979) description of Kant's "Idea for a World History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" [1784] provides an example of such a reading:

> The argument has none of the rigor of his thinking in other fields of philosophy. It is not at all formidable, this polite essay on the purpose and meaning of history as an introduction to euchronia, and it has an emotional quality that the professional bachelor of Königsberg hardly ever allowed to intrude into his writings. (Manuel and Manuel 1979: 519)

Nonetheless, only about a decade later, this part of Kant's philosophy was judged differently. After the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989/1991), Kant's *Towards Perpetual Peace* once again gained a position at the core of the academic debate. His ideas of a world peace and the way he suggested it to develop became a source for inspiration in the imagined new political landscape. That the work reached its

bicentennial in 1995 did not decrease its popularity, and several conferences as well as publications were launched to celebrate his ideas.

However, even if Kant's *Perpetual Peace* is difficult to understand in full, it is not hard to see the relevance of Arendt's critique that Kant's late writings on history and politics do not compare in quality and depth with Kant's other writings and that a fourth critique was never written (Arendt 1992 [1970]: 7). The way in which Kant proposes states' internal organisation or his perception of the federation or the possible "state of peoples" (Kant 2006 [1795]: 81) has been in focus for long debates among philosophers (Cavallar 1999; Kleingeld 2011). Allen Wood (1998) argues, quite opposite to Arendt's position, that it is possible to consider the issues of *Perpetual Peace* as central in Kant's architectonic philosophical system, if we read the whole critical philosophy with a historical sensibility and as something that addresses a specific situation within the development of human history. With a sophisticated argumentation, Wood describes what I suggest is cosmopolitanism as utopia. He exemplifies how previous ideas that seemed utopian has been unexpectedly realised. One such idea is the peace project of Abbé de Saint-Pierre, a peace negotiator (1713), he called by him the European Union, which actually was realised a couple of centuries later. Wood suggests that some further utopian projects based on Kantian philosophy might be realised in the future, even though that does not seem feasible in our lifetime (Wood 1998: 73).

Cosmopolitanism as Utopia?

What do we talk about when we talk about cosmopolitanism? There are countless definitions, and the concept has been given dozens of attributes only over the past decades (Delanty ; Skrbiš and Woodward 2013: 4–5). As cosmopolitanism has the rhetoric form of an ism, this contributes to the false assumption that it more or less always refers to the same set of ideas. There have appeared several classifications of cosmopolitanisms at least since the end of the eighteenth century, some of which have been mentioned here. From other standpoints, the concept has been considered not useful for theorising on social and political challenges. Still, cosmopolitanism seems to maintain its attraction and keeps re-emerging, even though its effective history is so rich and contributes to several challenges for our understanding.

By the end of the Cold War, it was argued that this historical situation was the end of history as such (Fukuyama 1992). Of course, history cannot

have an end; neither should utopia be conceived as a final end, but rather as a method for imagining a future whose central principle is expected to be equality and that is in dialogue with each particular time and space.

Levitas' theory of utopia as a reflexive method for imagining a better future seems appropriate for cosmopolitanism and its future. Kant's hope for a free human being in a peaceful world has been food for imagination for a long time. This implicit utopia, and not least its cosmopolitanism, consists of several embedded fragments that could serve as ideas for reconstruction according to the archaeological mode suggested by Levitas. Concerning the ontological mode in Levitas' method, it would problematise the view of the human being and show how the ideals are situated in time and space. As suggested in this chapter, the whole idea of cosmopolitanism does not need to be dismissed on the ground of racism or dismissal of women as citizens as has been done in some of the previous works referred to (Bernasconi 2001, 2011). It would include that cosmopolitanism does not have to be elitist and excluding. Such a reinvented cosmopolitanism could perhaps be a utopia in Levitas' sense and constitute a crucial tool in the making of the future (Levitas 2013: 220). Other theorists argue in a similar way and suggest that cosmopolitanism could serve as a toolkit which helps us to labour on the cosmopolitan project (Skrbiš and Woodward 2013: 52).

Utopia as a reflexive method for better futures might contain too much of nothing but reflection and formulation of ideals without roots in lived life. The social imagination and hopes for a potential future are part of each specific situation. It is worth considering the performances and practices as suggested by Skrbiš and Woodward, as well as cosmopolitics. In this respect, the utopian method would be in dialogue with its own time and space, which also implies that it must be reconsidered depending on the situation. If we consider cosmopolitanism just as a value in itself we neglect the personal, social and political relations within a society, which demonstrates the necessity of anchoring of cosmopolitanism in a practical idea of the human being (Pendenza 2017: 13).

I have suggested that cosmopolitanism is far wider than hospitality or the rights of refugees—it could be elaborated into a utopia of a better world for everyone, a utopia formulated in a specific time and space, which could then serve as an inspiration for action and organisation, just as Kant (2006 [1795]: 84) writes that a "violation of right at any *one* place on earth is felt in *all* places". A utopia has the potential to lead to a will for change and thereby also action and mobilisation. According to Levitas, utopia must be continually reinvented as one of the tools of making the future. To

consider cosmopolitanism as utopia is an invitation for imagination for a better future, even if it may not be a solution in itself.

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