Cosmopolitanism and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense

Proceedings of the International Workshop, organized at the New Europe College, Bucharest on 21-22 October, 2011

Edited by Áron Telegdi-Csetri and Viorela Ducu
COSMOPOLITANISM AS A PARADIGM IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Ciprian NIŢU*

Introduction

Contemporary cosmopolitanism in political theory subscribes a series of themes and perspectives, problems and advanced solutions to these problems, concepts and theories. A short review of contemporary cosmopolitanism in political theory reveals a great diversity behind one single concept, that of “cosmopolitanism”. Thomas Pogge, for example, distinguishes between the following types of cosmopolitanism: legal cosmopolitanism (which supports the idea of a political society that is opened to all human beings), social justice cosmopolitanism (which considers that the global institutional structure has to be so projected that all peoples enjoy equal liberties and opportunities, and social and economic inequalities at global level can be justified only if they optimize the situation of the poor), monist cosmopolitanism (which considers, on the other hand, that projecting just global institutions is not enough and that global justice needs coordination of all human agents in all areas of human activity from culture and private association to political organizations), and, finally,

* Ciprian Niţu, Ph.D. Candidate, is a Teaching Assistant at the West University of Timişoara, Romania. His fields of interest are: cosmopolitanism, international political institutions and organizations, democracy and democratization.
**ethical cosmopolitanism** (which highlights the duty of impartiality towards all human beings regardless their degree of “closeness” or “familiarity”).¹ This “cosmopolitan diversity” can be further extended if we take into account, for example, the several variants of global justice cosmopolitanism that Gillian Brock identifies, each being based on a distinct theoretical perspective: utilitarian, human rights, Kantian or contractualist.²

Such a state of affairs raises the following question: is there something common in all this diversity or the term “cosmopolitanism” is used in different cases to signify different things? For somebody familiar with the contemporary literature on cosmopolitanism in political theory the adequate answer will probably be: there should be definitely something common to all perspectives which call themselves “cosmopolitan”. So appears the task to explain in a quite unitary manner this heterogenic field of academic interest.

My hypothesis is that contemporary political cosmopolitanism can be described as a “paradigm.”³ “Paradigm” is the concept that brings together all varieties of cosmopolitanism and gives unity in the field. This hypothesis raises, however, further particular tasks. Firstly, to answer the question “is cosmopolitanism a paradigm in political theory?” it is necessary to see which the content of a paradigm in political theory would be. Secondly, supposing it is possible to offer a comprehensive description of paradigms in political theory, the question arises whether cosmopolitanism is a fully developed paradigm which has all the operationalised elements of a paradigm, or not?

In order to validate my hypothesis I will try to answer these two questions first.

**Why “paradigm”?**

Why the option for the concept of “paradigm” and not for another one, such as perspective, school of thought, traditions,
theory, ideology, etc? My assumption is that the concept of “paradigm” can be operationalized more profitable than the concepts listed above, and thus it allows the analysis of cosmopolitanism following the main elements of a paradigm as they are operationalized below. Furthermore, cosmopolitanism reflects a complex phenomenon that will be better accounted for by the concept of “paradigm” than other concepts. The concepts of “perspective” or “point of view” are inadequate for describing cosmopolitanism. “Perspective” refers to the context that determines the beliefs and experience of a particular theorist. This context may change and so do the beliefs and experience of that researcher. “Paradigm”, on the other hand, suggests a greater stability that fits better for cosmopolitanism as conceptual and theoretical complex. Next, the concept of “school of thought” refers to a group of thinkers that have common characteristics, whereas “cosmopolitanism” comprises theorists with quite different theoretical background. Afterwards, the term “research tradition” is quite attractive but I left it aside in favor of “paradigm” mainly because the latter concept, as we shall see, has a critical component that is not very well highlighted by the former one. Finally, the terms “theory” or “ideology”, as long as they apply to cosmopolitanism, reflect only a part of the elements constitutive of cosmopolitanism.

“Paradigm”, political theory, and cosmopolitanism

A paradigm is a remarkable theoretical achievement, a complex of conceptual, theoretical and methodological elements that permits varied particular research.

Even if some authors are skeptical about the existence of paradigms in other areas of research than natural science, I will contrary consider that the concept of “paradigm” may be useful in political theory but it needs to be properly conceptualised and operationalised in order to be relevant in this field.
Conceptualisation is required firstly because paradigms, as long as we agree that there are paradigms in political theory, cannot be of the kind of paradigms in natural sciences, where they are “hegemonic”, i.e. they compete with each other and as a result of such competition an old paradigm will be defeated and a new one will replace the former. Political theory is “multi-paradigmatic”, i.e. the paradigms in political theory coexist and tolerate each other. Furthermore, old traditions can be reactivated when social and political reality makes this necessary or useful. Secondly, conceptualisation is necessary because, in political sciences in general and in political theory in particular, paradigm does not offer a model for resolving “puzzle problems” or “problems that have standard solutions”: some problems in political theory are problems very likely to not have solutions, as in the case of global justice or lasting peace.

Operationalisation is necessary in order to identify and analyze those constitutive elements of a paradigm that will eventually allow us to consider cosmopolitanism to be a paradigm. Two aspects of a paradigm are essential: the communitarian aspect, i.e. the group of researchers that share a paradigm, and the “cognitive” aspect. An integrated community of researchers appears if there is a consensus on the relevant objects of investigations, the methods used, and the concepts and theories developed. So, I will concentrate mainly on this “cognitive” aspect of a paradigm. The cognitive aspect of a paradigm refers to three elements situated at different levels:

1. At the most abstract level, a paradigm consists of “fundamental presuppositions” (implicit philosophy and the principles that guide all the research activity).
2. At a less abstract level, paradigm refers to “disciplinary matrix” (symbolic generalizations such as ideas, concepts, hypotheses, definitions, theories, causal relations etc.)
3. In the most concrete sense, paradigm represents something “exemplar” (it can be equated with the concrete example, it proposes solutions to specific problems, it shows “how things have to be done”).

Thus, I am going to concentrate on these operationalised elements that allow the analysis of a paradigm on three distinct levels and test the following additional hypothesis.

At a first level, identifying the common fundamental presuppositions of various theories that call themselves cosmopolitan is a first element that will allow us to speak about a distinct “cosmopolitan paradigm” in political theory. Fundamental presuppositions are essential in describing competing paradigms and are rooted in philosophical theories on the object of study. A first hypothesis is that cosmopolitanism, at a fundamental level, is a distinct moral-political philosophy that makes possible the adoption of distinct principles (moral and political).

At a second level, we have an ensemble of questions, hypotheses, concepts, theories and methods which form the “disciplinary matrix” of a paradigm. For being able to speak about the “cosmopolitan paradigm” is necessary to identify the new concepts (or the new meanings of some old concepts), the network of variables, the hypotheses and the theories that paradigm makes possible, as well as the possibility to undertake orderly and specific research within the paradigm. Several hypotheses can be formulated: cosmopolitanism aims at reconstruction of fundamental concepts in political theory; cosmopolitanism issues new hypotheses and theories on governance and justice; methodological, cosmopolitanism represents a distinct approach.

At a third level, it can be underlined the capacity of the “cosmopolitan paradigm” to resolve the problems it confronts with. “Solutions” mean in this context the ability of cosmopolitanism to propose institutional and policy models
on one hand, and, on the other hand, a kind of seeing and approaching the problems it confronts with (Gestalt). So the following hypotheses can be advanced: cosmopolitanism provides new institutions and policies (or adaptation of old ones) in order to give an adequate response to the common problems the individuals and groups confront with; cosmopolitanism shows a kind of “optimism” regarding the possibility to resolve that problems and the feasibility of the proposed solutions that makes contemporary cosmopolitans to speak, with a rawlsian term, about cosmopolitanism as a “realistic” or “concrete” utopia.

An extensive research undertaken by me in the field of cosmopolitan global governance and justice – that cannot be fully reproduced here – seems to confirm the assumptions set out above. I am going to present below only a few, more important elements of this research.

**Cosmopolitanism as a distinct moral-political philosophy**

The cosmopolitans agree on the statement that all human beings are equal from a moral point of view. As Thomas Pogge observes,

> cosmopolitanism involves not merely views about how things are, but primarily views about how things ought to be. Cosmopolitan positions centrally include evaluative and normative views; they assess and prescribe. The central idea guiding these moral assessments and prescriptions is that of *including all human beings as equals*. This central idea can be understood and employed in diverse ways, and a variety of cosmopolitan positions can therefore be distinguished.⁸

This fundamental statement of cosmopolitanism means four types of normative engagements: individualism (individual human beings are the main units of moral concern, not states, nations or ethno-cultural groups), impartiality (every human
being is situated symmetrically in relation to all other persons), inclusivity (no human being can be excluded from the moral evaluation or political decisions) and generality (every human being is the object of all other people’s concern).9

This fundamental normative engagement of cosmopolitanism allows cosmopolitan political theorists to adopt a set of different political principles, which satisfy the criteria of normative individualism, impartiality, inclusivity and generality. I will refer briefly to some of them, namely the autonomy principle, the global difference principle, and the constitutionalization of international law principle.

The autonomy principle is at the center of cosmopolitan democracy project. Cosmopolitan democracy theorists consider that moral equality of humans is not enough protected inside national borders and claim for application of autonomy and equality principle beyond the borders of the nation-state. Individual autonomy, which is situated at the centre of the democratic project of modernity, represents the human beings capability to think, deliberate and act according with their beliefs and needs, not only in private life but also in the public life. But globalization alters the ability of democratic liberal states to realize the autonomy principle and so it is necessary a constitutional structure beyond nation-state in order to fully accomplish the application of this principle.10 This constitutional structure would be accepted by all human beings only if it is so build up that it respects the four principles of moral equality (normative individualism, impartiality, inclusivity and generality). A constitutional structure that generates systematic inequalities of life chances and political opportunities (such as slavery or racial segregation) does not pass the test of the four principles of moral equality and will not be accepted in a rational deliberative thought experiment.11
Next, the global difference principle is a redistributive principle according to which, in the first instance, every person has the right to get a part from the total (global) available resources but, similarly to Rawlsian difference principle, deviation from this initial standard can be justified if resulting inequality is for the greatest benefit of the poor. The resources redistribution principle functions inside international society as difference principle functions at domestic level. Global reformulation of the social justice principle is necessary because, Charles Beitz thinks, in the context of global political and economic interdependence we may conceive a global mechanism of social cooperation and

[...] we should not view national boundaries as having fundamental moral significance. Since boundaries are not coextensive with the scope of social cooperation, they do not mark the limits of social obligations. Thus the parties to the original position cannot be assumed to know that they are members of a particular national society, choosing principles of justice primarily for that society. The veil of ignorance must extend to all matters of national citizenship, and the principles chosen will therefore apply globally.¹²

The global difference principle applies to individuals or groups of individuals who are less-advantaged and who need improvement of their living conditions. But, it is not necessary that such a group membership to be coextensive with a nation state membership. Thus, global difference principle

does not necessarily require transfers from rich countries as such to poor countries as such. [...]If some reductions in inter-country distributive inequalities are required – N.T.], this would be because these inequalities are consequences of impermissible interpersonal inequalities.¹³
In this way global difference principle represents a warranty for persons in resources poor societies that they will be able to realize that economic condition sufficient for building up just social institutions and protecting human rights.\textsuperscript{14}

Finally, cosmopolitans draw attention to the gap between the formal promoting of human rights at international level and the fact that people do not enjoy a satisfactory level of fundamental rights protection. Although the number of people that live currently in liberty has increased, a significant part of the world population does not enjoy fundamental rights for several reasons, such as: the existence of authoritarian and autocratic rulers; the existence of an impunity system at international level; the spread of intolerance towards certain religious ideas and beliefs; the existence of ethnic, religious and political divisions and conflicts, and the lack of dialog for resolving them; the unequal distribution of wealth and systemic corruption.\textsuperscript{15} The principle of constitutionalization of international law insists on

resolving the split between human rights law and the gross violations of human rights [through] the construction of a rule of law in the international arena based on the principles of equal sovereignty, human rights and the authority of international law itself. It involves extending the scope of international law, increasing its range of authority and distancing it from the immediate consent of states. It declares that the norms of international law [should] function as a higher law vis-à-vis that of states; that they include prohibitions on torture, genocide, crimes against humanity, disappearances and other such activities.\textsuperscript{16}

Understood this way, the principle of constitutionalization of international law is a reflection of normative individualism.
New/distinct concepts, theories, and method of cosmopolitan political theory

At a second level of analysis, cosmopolitan approaches suggest the reconstruction of some basic concept in political theory. Concepts such as “sovereignty”, “social justice”, “civil society” or “risk” are subject of a process of extrapolation from the state level (national, internal) to the global level (international). For example, cosmopolitans speak about “vertical dispersion of sovereignty in the global system.” Such dispersion is possible and necessary because relevant political communities “no longer correspond in a simple and direct way with territorial borders.”18 Subnational and supranational political communities are becoming increasingly important nowadays. Political theory has to ask again which the relevant political community is, and answer question such as: which the nature of the electoral body is, which the meaning of political representation is, which the adequate form of political participation is?19 Then, the concept of “social justice”, as we have already seen above, is so conceptualized as it gets significance not only inside the nation-states but also at international or global level in relation to the most disadvantaged in the international system. Similarly, the concept of public sphere or civil society is reconceptualized at international level. John Dryzek, for example, is interested in the role of transnational civil society to control current international system of governance. That control can be realized only through creation of a genuine transnational public sphere based on the principles of non-domination, participation, deliberation and the right to free speech of those whose interests are affected.20 Membership of a community depends primarily on the nature of affected interests and not on the belonging to a clearly circumscribed, territorial or cultural space. Heikki Patomäki, on the other hand, is concerned about party politics at transnational level (as it exists in the form of national parties’
networks and federations, such as Socialist International or, more recently, transnational federations associated with the activity of European Parliament) and the chances of expanding and consolidating this party activity and the spaces associated with it.21

Around these concepts, cosmopolitan theorists formulate normative, prescriptive and critical theories of global governance and justice, such as global democracy theory, global social justice theory or cosmopolitan international law theory. Let us take the first theory. “Global governance”, as Robert Keohane defines this concept,

refers to rule-making and power-exercise at a global scale, but not necessarily by entities authorized by general agreement to act. Global governance can be exercised by states, religious organizations, and business corporations, as well as by intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Since there is no global government, global governance involves strategic interactions among entities that are not arranged in formal hierarchies. Since there is no global constitution, the entities that wield power and make rules are often not authorized to do so by general agreement. Therefore their actions are often not regarded as legitimate by those who are affected by them.22

Taking into account this state of affairs, cosmopolitans relaunched at the beginning of the 90’s the debate on the international democracy, that appears in the works of David Held and Daniele Archibugi who introduce the term of “cosmopolitan democracy”23 or in the work of William E. Connolly and R.B.J. Walker who criticize the territorial (circumscribed) approach of the conventional theories of democracy.24 Later, the problem of cosmopolitan democracy appeared at Jürgen Habermas (who is interested in the post-national politics)25 or Molly Cochran and Heikki Patomäki (who
are interested in the possibility of bottom-up reforms necessary for the realization of cosmopolitan democracy). Cosmopolitan democracy has as its first aim democratization of the existent systems of global governance as a means to protect the moral equality of individuals.

Cosmopolitans also formulate fertile hypotheses that give shape to a distinct approach. Cosmopolitan political theorists highlight the fact that humanity entered an era of global interdependence that is insufficiently described by the conventional approaches in political theory. The state boundaries are no longer the single relevant “unit of governance”. So, the theory of cosmopolitan democracy considers that democratization means not only democratizations inside states but also democratization of relations between states; the theories of global justice formulate the hypothesis that a more fair global governance is a condition of realizing global justice on the one hand, and that progress in achieving global justice is possible and desirable, on the other hand; also, the theory of cosmopolitan law formulates the hypothesis that humanitarian foreign intervention is desirable in order to stop the crimes against humanity and so advocates the constitutionalization of international law.

In terms of methods, cosmopolitanism advocates on the one hand for redrawing the boundaries between national and international in the study of politics (imposed by “methodological nationalism”), and on the other hand for redrawing the boundaries between normative and empirical approaches (it is more profitable as the two approaches do not remain isolated, but a permanent exchange between them exists). Methodologically, cosmopolitanism seems to be very well described by the words of Jack Snyder who, evaluating the empirical aspects of normative research, says:
instead of separating empirical research from normative issues, more scholars are now carrying out research at the nexus of normative political theory and international relations that seeks to show how the ‘ought’ becomes the ‘is’.  

Cosmopolitan theories say not only how things should stay in national and international politics, but they are also interested in the conditions of practical achievement of the principles they promote. Their approach is as follows: observation of real facts (empirical) → critical assessment of these facts (critical) → prescription of solutions in accordance with certain principles and values (normative) → return to facts (empirical). The cosmopolitan theories do not remain in an area of pure normativity (ideal world), but continuously oscillates between ideal and non-ideal, constantly putting the problem of feasibility of the proposed solutions. So, cosmopolitans frequently use the thought experiment as a means to elaborate the principles which underline the adoption – in particular areas of political action – of sets of criteria that are used to see if these areas have to be reformed or not, and how they have to be reformed. Some cosmopolitan theories also open the way of empirical research (for example, how does global risk society influence the social classes or the formation of political parties). They refuse to limit “cosmopolitanism” to traditional field of normative political theory (established by Leibniz, Wolf, or Kant), but try to underlie its potential as analytical concept for empirical political science or empirical analysis of global politics.

**Institutional and policy reforms of cosmopolitan political theory**

As a final level of analysis, I am going to refer to the proposed solutions to the problems of global governance and justice, which cosmopolitans provide in the form of “institutional and
policy reforms”. Cosmopolitans find that some of the problems currently faced by individuals and groups cannot be solved only through the institutions and policies traditionally associated with the nation-state. Cosmopolitan solutions envisage new institutions and policies (or adaptation of the old ones) in order that the common current problems to receive an adequate response.

Institutionally, cosmopolitan governance combines representation (more responsible and more democratic international institutions) with participation (the role of transnational civil society). A possible extended framework of democratic regulation appears from this combination, a framework in which the nation-state is no longer the exclusive centre of power within its boundaries and which can be understood as having different levels that are not hierarchically linked, but functionally. At the same time, cosmopolitans stress not only the importance of the new formal democratic institutions, but also the need to identify new broad ways of participation in decision making at regional and global level. Among the institutional components of cosmopolitan democracy the following ones are proposed: the creation of regional parliaments, the institutionalization of general referenda at the nation-state level, the democratization of the intergovernmental organizations through the creation of elected supervisory councils, the extension and inclusion of the civil, political, economical or social rights and duties not only in the state constitutions, but also in the official documents of the associations of civil and economic spheres, the creation in the long run of a global parliament and so on.

As policy solutions, the supporters of global justice envisage, for example, setting up an “international tax regime” for financing the providing of global public goods. Through building up international or regional tax institutions with
the power to apply – in a democratic and responsible way – an international tax regime will be obtained the resources necessary for improving the condition of the global poor.\textsuperscript{38} Global justice proponents sometimes envisage a type of institutions that have to adopt and apply international codes regarding labour conditions and international recruiting of workforce.\textsuperscript{39} Other cosmopolitans provide the opening of the state’s borders\textsuperscript{40} or the creation of some “cities of refuge”\textsuperscript{41} that will enable the most disadvantaged individuals in the global system to get the chance for a decent life. Others propose the model of “transnational orientated ecological states” that will protect global environmental interests through their adopted policies.\textsuperscript{42} As we have also seen, the cosmopolitan theory of international law does not preclude the use of military force and the tool of humanitarian intervention in order to avoid situations of grave violations of human rights under an international system in which power and legitimacy do not always overlap. Cosmopolitans try to establish “through what institutions such interventions are to be authorised and by what means such interventions are to be conducted.” \textsuperscript{43} Criteria according to which intervention has to be conduct are as follows: military action is justified only in the case of “a major humanitarian emercency” (such as “crimes against humanity”), intervention has not to produce more suffering (proportionality), it has to be more like a police action rather than a species of war, and it must have a series of restriction regarding combatants, civilians and public property.\textsuperscript{44}

**Conclusion**

The presence of the above analyzed elements of cosmopolitanism overlapping the operationalized elements of a paradigm provides the reason to talk about a “cosmopolitan paradigm” in political theory.
NOTES


3 I use de concept of “paradigm” in a quite narrow sense comparative, let’s say, with the meaning Kuhn gives to it. Essentially, I understand by “paradigm” a set of theories, concepts, methods and solutions, as I will show bellow.


5 In contemporary political theory, Steven Jay Gold identifies four major coexistent and competing paradigms: liberalism, Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism (Steven Jay GOLD, Paradigms in political theory, Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1993).


7 As a doctoral research programme.

8 Thomas POGGE, op. cit., p. 312.

9 Ibidem, p. 316.


11 David HELD, op. cit., p. 206.


14 Ibidem, p. 141.

Cosmopolitanism and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense

19 Ibidem, p. 28.
27 Robert FINE, op. cit., p. 2.
28 See, for example, David HELD, Democraţia...cit.
29 See, for example, Gillian BROCKE, op. cit., pp. 86-9, and also pp. 117-8.
30 Jürgen Habermas, for example, considers that “unauthorized action [of a state or a group of states] must not become the general rule”, but extremely serious humanitarian cases (such as Kosovo) make military


32 See, for example, Gillian BROCKE, op. cit., especially p. 111.

33 See, for example, Edgar GRANDE, “Cosmopolitan political science”, The British Journal of Sociology, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 87-111.

34 David HELD, Democraţia...cit.; David HELD, „The changing...cit.

35 Daniele ARCHIBUGI, The Global...cit., p. 89.

36 David HELD, Modele ale democraţiei, Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 2000, p.372.

37 See David HELD, Modele ...cit., David HELD, Democraţia...cit.; Daniele ARCHIBUGI, David HELD (eds), op. it; Daniele ARCHIBUGI, The global...cit.; Heikki PATOMÄKI şi Teivo TEIVAINEN, A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions, Zed Books, London and New York, 2004.


43 Robert FINE, op. cit., p. 81.

44 Ibidem, p. 85.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


