Cosmopolitanism, Modernity and Political Community

Feyzi Baban

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COSMOPOLITANISM, MODERNITY AND POLITICAL COMMUNITY

It is ironic that cosmopolitanism has been generating a lively debate in various social science disciplines at a time when we have never been so far from imagining relations among states as that which is based on a sense of community governed by accepted rules. However, we need to read this lively debate as a promising sign indicating a refusal to accept that relations among states be defined as complete anarchy and a power game. Rather, it indicates that desire to imagine a community beyond the borders of nation states is still alive. This article starts with the belief that cosmopolitan thinking contains possibilities of providing us with new ways of relating ourselves to others and of allowing us to imagine new solutions to complex problems emerging from globalization processes. Yet, it proceeds with the caution that cosmopolitan thinking has a long history of being associated with imperialist thinking and this association is not accidental but finds its roots in normative assumptions of cosmopolitan ideas as articulated in modern times. This, of course, does not mean that we should abandon the cosmopolitan ideal altogether. After all, cosmopolitanism in essence means to be open to otherness, to accept difference and to live with plurality. We should, however, critically reflect on the cosmopolitan ideal in order to strip it from its problematic past.

Nussbaum defines the cosmopolitan act as follows: “we should recognize humanity wherever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance and respect”. Nussbaum, like many cosmopolitans before her, points out that the essence of cosmopolitanism is to go beyond one’s own immediate community and give allegiance to humanity. In fact, leaving one’s own house to meet with others is one of the fundamental premises of cosmopolitan thinking not only in modern times but since the time of the Stoics in ancient Greece. This sense of no cultural attachment in cosmopolitanism seems to be unacceptable to many who believe that living in the world, making sense of it and understanding oneself is embedded in one’s own cultural framework that is defined by national community. I argue that leaving one’s own house to meet with others and acknowledging the fact that leaving the house is also accepting that one may become someone else in the process is the fundamental aspect of the cosmopolitan act. Put differently, cosmopolitanism is not necessarily to become
rootless or to deny one’s own cultural belonging but to be constantly aware that there is nothing innate in cultural belonging and to be open to the idea that one’s sense of culture and belonging can be transformed in the process of meeting with others. Even though this very notion of leaving one’s own house is a central tenet of the cosmopolitan act, the historical record shows that this has been far from realized. Instead, very often cosmopolitan thinking has been associated with abstract universality which was supposed to resolve differences and act as a unifier. While the cosmopolitan act has the potential to facilitate moving beyond one’s cultural framework and negotiating differences, this desire to find a single common medium by which differences would be resolved constitutes the central problematic in cosmopolitan thinking which prevents it fulfilling its potential. The question we now face is how to rethink the cosmopolitan act in a globalized world where distances are short and encounters with difference and otherness, a daily reality. As a result, realizing the potential of cosmopolitan thinking in present times rests on the willingness to accept that the cosmopolitan act should not be about erasing differences but about finding ways to live with them. In this article I argue that reimagining cosmopolitan thinking along the lines of living with difference can be realized on three levels. First, cosmopolitanism should not be a form of cultural imposition but should be identified with democratic governance and pluralism on a global level. Second, cosmopolitanism should lead to new forms of relationships between universality and particularity in which moral universalism and cultural relativism are not acceptable options. Finally, in order to realize this new relationship between universality and particularity, cosmopolitanism should be imagined and read within the context of margins, local experiences and cultures. In the following sections of the paper I will concentrate on the growing literature on institutional cosmopolitanism to further explore the possibilities of reconfiguring cosmopolitan thinking along the lines of the three principles mentioned above. I will argue that strict adherence to the Kantian universal framework in the literature that discusses the possibilities of institutional cosmopolitanism fails to pay attention to the question of difference and plurality and runs the risk of producing another universal discourse which situates itself against particular experiences of local cultures.
Cosmopolitan Political Community: Cosmopolitanism as a Political Project

Recent theorizing on cosmopolitanism aims to respond to neo-liberal globalization and attempts to propose a framework where market forces are regulated on a global level and where there is also a rule-based order to which states adhere. Some have even suggested that cosmopolitanism is a “new politics of the left, embodying middle-path alternatives between ethnocentric nationalism and particularistic multiculturalism”. The horrors of Rwanda and former Yugoslavia certainly created an urgency to find a middle way between universalistic nationalism and particularistic identity positions and cosmopolitan thinking encourages us to rethink how sameness and difference is dealt with in a highly complex globalized world. In a series of well articulated books and articles, Held and Archibugi have been defining the blueprint for a world polity which needs to be reimagined outside the scope of state sovereignty. Central to these and other works explaining the “cosmopolitan condition” is the need to redefine world politics that cannot be managed by states alone. Held articulates such a need as follows:

[T]he regulation of trade, the management of financial instability, exploding inequalities, the protection of the environment, and the defense of the genetic basis of humankind – are not issues which can any longer be solved by states or a people acting alone. Most modern political theory presupposes the idea of a self-determining people that can set its own fate. Today, we’re in a world of “overlapping communities of fate”, where the fate of different peoples is interconnected, set either by powerful states or by processes – from financial markets to the environment… [w]e can either leave it, as it were, to markets and states to try to sort out the problems…Or we can argue that we have to create new forms of transparency and accountability, new forms of democracy and more effective regulation which can subject these processes to greater political control and management.

Held’s explanation of why we need to reorder world politics answers the question of why the existing international system, based on the principles of Westphalian order with state sovereignty as its organizing principle, is no longer adequate to deal with the challenges of globalization. Rather, complex interdependency arising from globalization requires a multi-layered form of governance, in which states constitute only one level. Thus, cosmopolitanism constitutes both a critical reflection of the new state of world affairs in which traditional forms of politics are no
longer adequate and a political project that aims to turn this critical reflection into coherent political action. Central to this political action is the need to validate the assumption that the biggest obstacle preventing a cosmopolitan world order is the ordering logic of the international system in which the realm of the international is clearly and sharply demarcated from the realm of the domestic. The neat inside/outside logic of international relations is based on the assumption that the arena of international politics does not exist for bettering the human condition or fostering a greater sense of belonging among human beings but for states to maximize their interests for their respective populations. Therefore realists of the international system believe that relations among states have a rather specific and limited function of facilitating interaction among states but that such interaction is not geared towards establishing a political community beyond the borders of nation states. Proponents of cosmopolitan theory remind us that this mainstream assumption of international politics is neither sustainable nor ethical. Instead, we need to reimagine a political community that is not bounded by borders, one that would include all human beings as its members and adopt democracy as a cosmopolitan ideal implemented on a global level. This cosmopolitan democratic ideal requires a paradigm shift in international relations and should base itself, not on international law, but on cosmopolitan law which “would guarantee the fundamental rights of every individual human being whether or not such rights were respected by their ‘own’ nation-states”. This shift entails removing nation-states from their privileged status in international politics and extends the concepts of sovereignty to individuals who would be the legitimate agents of the international domain. Enabling individuals to exist in the international domain as sovereign agents with rights is essential to the cosmopolitan ideal and its institutional implementation as it allows individuals to develop loyalties other than their nationalities and makes it possible to implement an institutional framework that can operate both on national and global levels. This new form of politics requires not only an institutional framework but a new moral imperative that would constitute the backbone of a cosmopolitan order. It is no accident that the debate on cosmopolitanism gained momentum in the second half of the nineties while a good part of the early nineties witnessed an intense discussion on globalization and its impact on human societies.

It is without a doubt that laying the ground for democratic global order is one of the main principal objectives of cosmopolitan theorizing. However, it is important to scrutinize the basic
assumptions of institutional cosmopolitanism to further assess whether this articulation of cosmopolitan order would lead to greater democratization and plurality on a global level. The central question here is the nature of political community in the cosmopolitan order and how this community comes into being and how it is organized. This is one of the central difficulties of institutional cosmopolitanism which argues for a world order that is governed by multiple institutions that are based on cosmopolitan law. Proponents of cosmopolitan institutionalism recognize that nation states are not going to disappear in the foreseeable future and any cosmopolitan world order should take the presence of states as given. This immediately raises doubts about the viability of any cosmopolitan order as nation states usually act to further their own interest in the international realm. Immanuel Kant was one of the first modern cosmopolitans who recognized the dilemma of establishing a cosmopolitan political community in a world in which states jealously guard their sovereignty and do not necessarily act out of altruistic motives. Even though he remarked that a world republic would provide a much needed peace among nations, the most realistic alternative would be a “peaceable federation” among independent republican states. While Kant’s pragmatism is quite obvious in his acknowledgement of the role of states in a cosmopolitan order, he is also specific about the kind of states that are the legitimate participants of such a cosmopolitan community. Liberal democratic republics are the ones who would converge around an institutional framework that is supported by cosmopolitan law. It should be mentioned here that Kant’s principal aim was not to create a homogeneous world community in which all cultural differences are erased. In fact, on more than one occasion he pointed out that human beings have the right to choose whatever is best for them including the way they organized their societies. Later on I will discuss more about the inherent contradiction in Kant’s cosmopolitanism where, on the one hand, he recognizes the differences among human societies, while, on the other, he establishes a clear hierarchy among them. It is, however, important to note that Kant’s cosmopolitanism, similar to current institutional cosmopolitanism, was geared towards providing a peace among nations. In this respect, his cosmopolitan community was not supposed to be the replica of nation states on a global level but rather a loosely formed federation of liberal democratic republics. It is only the liberal democratic republics, however, that could be the meaningful participants of the cosmopolitan order since they not only respected the individual autonomy and rights of their nationals but also had the natural tendency to enter into peaceful co-existence with others.
According to Kant, this federation of states would form a cosmopolitan community, not on the basis of cultural affinity or shared history or even common moral principles, but on the basis of adherence to the cosmopolitan law.

In Kant’s formulation, cosmopolitan law is clearly different than international law as the latter is oriented towards protecting rights and relations among states while the former aims to protect the rights of individuals as world citizens. Kant tries to reconcile the rights of individuals with the rights of states by emphasizing that cosmopolitan law “would guarantee the fundamental rights of every individual human being whether or not such rights were respected by their ‘own’ nation-states”. Held argues that the emphasis on cosmopolitan law in Kant’s formulation is a “necessary compliment” to the “unwritten code of existing national and international law, and a means of transforming the latter into a public law of humanity”. Hence, while keeping the basic tenets of international law and respecting the state’s role in international politics, Kant establishes a new legal layer that supercedes international law by making individual rights the principal focus of cosmopolitan order. As opposed to the thick and embedded nature of national communities, Kantian cosmopolitan community is based on the moral principle of universal human dignity and rights associated with it. The Kantian compromise between state sovereignty and individual rights may seem a workable one as the cosmopolitan political community neither aspires to be a culturally homogeneous one nor tries to manifest itself in a world republic. Instead, it acknowledges the autonomous nature of human societies and their right to govern themselves as long as they agree to observe the basic moral principle of universal human dignity. This Kantian framework finds strong resonance in the recent literature on institutional cosmopolitanism. Held remarks that

[a] commitment to this form of cosmopolitanism entails a duty to work toward the establishment of an international community of democratic states and societies committed to upholding democratic public law both within and across their own boundaries : a cosmopolitan democratic community.

Similar to Kant, Held is also clear that the basis of cosmopolitan democratic society would not be cultural homogeneity or the disappearance of nation states, but “democratic public law” upheld by nation states both within and outside the boundaries of nation states. It is obvious that
cosmopolitan public law, with individual human rights at its centre, would constitute the unitary core of the cosmopolitan order. As the unitary core, cosmopolitan law is believed to be universal and applicable to any situation despite cultural differences. If cosmopolitan law is to be the unitary core of the cosmopolitan order, what would make it universal beyond existing cultural differences? Or asked differently: what would enable cosmopolitan law to go beyond a particular law that has emerged from a certain context? Habermas draws attention to Kant’s explanation of cosmopolitan law as a social contract among states. Similar to a Hobbesian state of nature, the realm of international relations is a site of individual freedom in which participants exercise their natural right to achieve whatever is desirable for themselves. Again similar to Hobbes, Kant also observes that this state of nature with unlimited individual freedom is unstable and prone to endless conflict which in turn destroys its own participants. Participants in this state of nature eventually trade their ultimate freedom for a legally sanctioned order in which individuals have the legal guarantee of freedom and are prohibited from destroying one another to further their own interests. Habermas draws on Kant’s own explanation of why such a contract would be appealing to nation states:

If a state says: ‘There shall be no war between myself and other states even though I do not recognize any supreme legislative power which could secure my rights and whose rights I should in turn secure’, it is impossible to understand what justification I can have for placing any trust in my rights, unless I can rely on some substitute for the union of civil society, namely, on the free federation. If the concept of a law of peoples is to have any significance, reason must connect it with a federation of this kind.

This lengthy quote from Kant gives us a clear idea as to how cosmopolitan law would become a unitary principle of a federation of states. First of all, states would enter into a social contract not because they have a moral obligation or normative belief in a cosmopolitan world order, but because entering into such contract is clearly in their interest. Again similar to the Hobbesian universe, the basis of cosmopolitan order would not be necessitated by a strong desire to form a community or to live with others, but would be informed by a strong desire to protect the state’s own well-being and survival. Immediately following this is that the desire to enter into a contract to secure the safety and well-being of states, which would in turn provide world peace, is driven by the use of reason. Especially, in Kant’s framework, it is only logical for democratic
republics to enter into this contract, leaving the anarchical state of nature behind, and extending the legally guaranteed individual freedom to the international realm. This not only helps achieve world peace but it also eliminates the artificial boundary between inside and outside or the domestic and national. Kant’s reliance on reason as the basis of cosmopolitan order allows cosmopolitan law to avoid conflict with the particularistic cultures of nation states. Nation states may have their individual cultures and particular legal frameworks, but reason would rise above those particularities and provide the universal framework upon which the rule-based cosmopolitan order can be constructed. There is, in fact, a very strong teleological promise in Kant’s cosmopolitan ideal in that reason appears to be free from cultural elements and not locally produced but as part of the predetermined and natural destiny of the human mind. Of course, Kant is not the first cosmopolitan to ascribe a privileged role to reason as the unfolding logic of cosmopolitan order. The Stoics also believed that reason was the universal quality that is found in each and every human being and it was only natural that reason should be the medium through which human beings would converge around similar moral values. Kant is quite clear in his belief in reason as the guiding principle of a cosmopolitan order and precisely because of this, reason becomes the moral basis itself that guides the direction of historical progress.\textsuperscript{19}

Even though the recent discussion on institutional cosmopolitanism does not say much about the constitutive logic of cosmopolitanism and concentrates on how the international order can be reorganized to utilize cosmopolitan law, the role of reason as the inevitable engine of the cosmopolitan order is implicit. Habermas points out that

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[e]stablishing a cosmopolitan order means that violations of human rights are no longer condemned and fought from the moral point of view in an unmediated way, but are rather prosecuted as criminal actions within the framework of a state-organized legal order according to institutionalized legal procedures. Precisely such a juridification of the state of nature among states would protect us from a moral de-differentiation of law and would guarantee to the accused full legal protection, even in the case of war crimes and crimes of humanity. Even such cases are protected from unmediated moral discrimination.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

In an attempt to strip the cosmopolitan order from moral controversies, Habermas portrays it as a legal order and a procedural framework that is free from moral and cultural particularism. In other words, the cool and logical orientation of a legal-procedural process makes it possible to
bridge the gap between particularistic national cultures and a universal cosmopolitan order. Yet, we are still left with the question of what guides and what constitutes the basis of this legal-procedural order. Habermas reminds us that lessons learned from the disasters of the twentieth century made Kant’s cosmopolitan ideal more plausible than ever before and “the World Spirit, as Hegel would have put it, has jerked unsteadily forward”. He further points out that the emergence of globalization and global civil society necessitates such a cosmopolitan order that is based on a legal-procedural framework. It is ironic that Kant’s original cosmopolitan idea that is based on the natural unifying tendency of reason and its recent manifestation in institutional cosmopolitanism brings us back to the question of whether the rational voice of a legal-procedural framework can resolve the gap between an universal cosmopolitan order and particular national cultures. In a similar attempt, Habermas put forward the idea of constitutional patriotism to strip national solidarity from its ethnic roots and to suggest that the legal framework of constitutionalism should provide the base for national unity. In both cases Habermas tries to maintain the public realm as the site of a rational legal framework while particularistic cultural attachments are located in the private. In his later works Habermas acknowledges the importance of cultural attachments and different value systems and even suggests that concerns of private life may find themselves manifest in the public life. However, the messy world of particular identities and different value systems are still outside the focus of the public realm and the cosmopolitan world order proposes the same solution to the question of particularity. Habermas admits that constitutional patriotism with its legalistic framework has a clear disadvantage when it comes to mobilizing loyalty. It does not arouse the same emotions and devotion as national narratives. After all, nobody wants to die for a legal document. This is probably not a terribly bad quality but it still leaves us with the question of how to imagine a political community. I would argue that the cosmopolitan order that is based on an institutional and legal-procedural framework which is derived from Kantian rationality will neither help us to save this cosmopolitan ideal from its problematic past; nor will it allow for a pluralistic and democratic global order. The real question here is not whether we need a rule-based cosmopolitan order that would protect the dignity and rights of individuals despite the particular legal frameworks of their respective nation states. The problem, rather, is how such order and its unifying medium would be acceptable to nation states. Furthermore, the cosmopolitan order that is based on Kantian rationality poses two fundamental problems in terms of imagining a
cosmopolitan political community: an immediate hierarchy between those nation states who conform to the dominant logic of cosmopolitan order and those who do not, and failing to deal with the manifestation and acceptance of differences as part of the cosmopolitan ideal.

The first problem presents us with the potential danger of turning cosmopolitan political community into a hegemonic system in which several powerful states would define the boundaries and content of such a cosmopolitan order. The Kantian cosmopolitan order is not a pluralistic order and would ultimately reproduce marginality and otherness, defined by who is part of the accepted norms of the cosmopolitan rationality and who is not. Proponents of institutional cosmopolitanism do not appear to be flexible in promoting the idea of negotiating the boundaries of the cosmopolitan community. While, the cosmopolitan order is said to be defined by democracy and individual rights, the very application of those ideals without participation and negotiation of all members of the cosmopolitan community would simply reproduce the civilized/uncivilized divide in which some would need to be civilized and brought up to the level of cosmopolitan rationality. It would be unfair to suggest that this is what is advocated by institutional cosmopolitanism. In fact, both Held and Archibugi are quite clear in expressing that the cosmopolitan democratic order would not be a coercive one but rather that participation is voluntary and states would join at their own pace. Yet, the fact that cosmopolitan order is voluntary does not resolve the fundamental question of who defines this cosmopolitan order. States are free to join to the cosmopolitan order at their choosing but they are not free to participate in deciding how the cosmopolitan order is going to be defined. Furthermore, what would happen to states who are not part of the cosmopolitan community and violate its core principles of human rights? Some already suggest that it should be the duty of Western democratic states to intervene in such cases and protect the individuals from their oppressive governments. Therefore, in cases where there are genocidal regimes and clear violations of human rights, voluntary participation does not apply. It is hard to argue against the position which stresses the need to protect human dignity and rights. Yet, this compelling argument should not prevent us from identifying fundamental weaknesses of institutional cosmopolitanism. What makes such a compelling argument a highly problematic and potentially a hegemonic one is the lack of attention to plurality within the assumed cosmopolitan community. In other words, we are faced with a paradox: democratic cosmopolitan order is
built on a highly undemocratic cosmopolitan society in which the legal-procedural and institutional framework is already decided by powerful states and others have the option of joining this community but do not have the opportunity to intervene, change or negotiate the very principles of the cosmopolitan order. If we are going to celebrate the humanitarian intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo as the signs of an emerging cosmopolitan order, do we also celebrate the invasion of Iraq as another indication of this same cosmopolitan order? Lack of democratic participation makes the line between the idealistic voice of institutional cosmopolitanism and the employment of cosmopolitan ideal for imperialistic reasons dangerously thin.

Before September 11, prospects for cosmopolitan thinking looked good. There were strong signs that emerging global civil society was creating new political realities that would challenge the privileged position of states in international relations and connect individuals around issues that bypassed national affiliations and solidarities. Not only was the anti-globalization movement able to cut across national lines and connect diverse groups around issues related to individual lives, but it was also able to raise consciousness as to how global flows connect human lives and impact groups and communities beyond their immediate borders. Furthermore, nation-states were giving indications that they were ready to share their jealously guarded sovereignty with other players such as international institutions or global civil society groups. The Westphalian international system privileged the sanctity of state borders in such a way that even the most heinous crimes committed by states against their own people were considered to be non-intervention zones by other states. All that started to change with the horrors of the Rwandan, Bosnian and Kosovo crises that supported the cosmopolitan argument that such situations cannot be tolerated by hiding behind the accepted norms of the international system and the inviolability of state sovereignty. Some, for example, argued that NATO’s intervention in Kosovo was the sign of a coming cosmopolitan order in which the integrity of human life would come before the cherished principle of state sovereignty. Others suggested that Western democratic nations have the necessary resources and “culture” to support and lead the new cosmopolitan order. It was even argued that “new wars” would be waged to protect human rights and that it would be justified to violate state sovereignty in order to achieve the objectives of rescuing individuals from their own governments. That the new cosmopolitan order should be based on western democratic institutions and culture not only reinforces the civilizational
divide but it also establishes categories and hierarchies according to which human societies are judged and deemed to be worthy of participating in the cosmopolitan order. This portrayal of the cosmopolitan order not only uncritically accepts the civilizational approach, but reverts back to the national model of international politics by assuming that there are “civilized” and “democratic” states who are the leading forces of the cosmopolitan order and others needing to be saved, disciplined and possibly punished. Who would want to argue against saving Bosnians and Kosavars from ethnic cleansing and bringing those who are responsible for such barbaric acts to justice?

If the apparent western orientation of the cosmopolitan order was problematic from the beginning, the whole matter of how a cosmopolitan order should be defined and implemented has become that much more complicated after the US led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Whatever the real reasons were, the US administration used the discourse of achieving peaceful international order and helping people living under tyranny as the main basis of their onslaught in Afghanistan and Iraq. Over and over again the Bush administration reminded critics of the war on Iraq that the war resulted in removing the brutal dictator from power and in bringing Iraqi people their much deserved freedom. I would not suggest that proponents of cosmopolitan theory and the Bush administration share the same worldview. In fact, the cosmopolitan theorists are clear that their main preoccupation is to imagine a world order in which no single power can wage wars to pursue and further its own interests. Nevertheless, there is something deeply disturbing that some of the arguments in support of a cosmopolitan world order can find such rhetorical presence in the Bush administration which is highly adversarial and fails to share anything remotely cosmopolitan. Nor is it sufficient to point out that the use of humanitarian language in the Bush administration’s everyday language is nothing but shameless opportunism. In recent months the American administration decided to promote greater democracy and cultural reform in the Middle East under the banner of a “Greater Middle East Initiative” with the intent of bringing the Middle Eastern nations into peaceful relations with others.30 If the cosmopolitan order, as suggested by some of the supporters of institutional cosmopolitanism, is going to be defined by Western democracies and others are going to be integrated into such an order without choice, how would we evaluate the policies of the Bush administration’s intent that it wants to establish democracy and freedom in the Middle East. We are facing a real possibility
that George Bush and his foreign policy advisers are accidental cosmopolitans. I believe that the post September 11 world made some of the problematic aspects of the recent cosmopolitan arguments more visible. I also believe that the disturbing similarity between the Bush administrations’ banal humanitarian arguments and some of the recent cosmopolitan theorizing is not accidental but rooted in the basic assumptions of the theory which emphasize the need to create a world order in which the institutions and moral framework of the participants converge around the same universal values.

This lack of democratic engagement in the cosmopolitan order is also related to the second problem I mentioned earlier: the failure of acknowledging difference and multiplicity as part of the cosmopolitan ideal. What is common to all works discussing cosmopolitan order is the acknowledgement that the world is much more complicated place in terms of human interaction which is increasingly identified with the greater presence of difference in both the national and international realms. Not only are national narratives under increasing scrutiny from previously marginalized groups and identities, but there is also a greater presence of cultural differences on a global level. The crucial question we need to ask here is whether a cosmopolitan order that is based on Kantian ideals is well-equipped to provide us with a cosmopolitan ideal that is open to difference and comfortable living with conflicting and competing value systems. I have argued that the Kantian cosmopolitan universe does not permit us to imagine a democratic cosmopolitan political community due to its strict adherence on reason as the unifying principle of the cosmopolitan order. I would also argue that the failure to deal and live with difference is another aspect of the Kantian universe which seriously curtails the possibility of achieving a truly cosmopolitan order. In the next section I will concentrate on why we need to go beyond a Kantian universe to imagine a truly cosmopolitan order in which difference and multiplicity are an integral part.

**Universality and Particularity in the Cosmopolitan Order**
When there is human interaction, there is an awareness of difference whose existence constitutes the very basics of who rules, who has power and who represents whom. This is why Aristotle described human beings as political animals who become individuals as a result of communicating and interacting with others. This process of becoming individuals and developing as social beings has a strong cultural context in that individuals develop their sense of identity in relation to immediate others. Within the process they develop cultural affinities, forms of interaction and a sense of belonging and particularity. The cosmopolitan ideal goes against this framework. It invites individuals to leave their immediate social environment and particularistic affinities with ethnic and national identities and develop a sense of belonging that goes beyond geographically limited cultural communities. Since the beginning, cosmopolitan thinking has had to overcome the persistence of thick identities that are embedded into local cultural practices and whose very meaning are reproduced by these cultural practices on a daily basis. This is a difficult task and assumes that it is possible to develop loyalties beyond one’s immediate cultural context. Nussbaum rightly argues that in order to develop an affinity with larger humanity one does not need to leave his/her local loyalties.\(^{31}\) In fact, the Stoics argued that individuals are surrounded by concentric circles which start with the extended family and move to neighbors, city-dwellers, nationals and finally humanity.\(^{32}\) Nussbaum points out that the stoics were right in arguing that the cosmopolitan ideal does not necessarily require one to give up local belongings but requires a conscious attempt to “draw the circles somehow toward the center”.\(^{33}\) Even though having a cosmopolitan outlook does not require one to give up local identities and loyalties, it is still a great challenge to reconcile local identifications with concerns about a larger humanity. What is the medium through which one keeps his/her local identification, while at the same time develops an affinity with a larger humanity? What happens when there is a conflict between one’s own local identification and concerns about larger humanity? Even more importantly, what is the process that leads to the imagination of political community beyond an individual’s local communities? We know that national narratives have been very successful at imagining and creating national communities that are deeply rooted in constructed histories, consolidated languages, made-up myths and legends, as well as very real institutions that nurture and link these identities. Cosmopolitan political community, on the other hand, does not have the same arsenal to create such belongings and attachments.
Difference and multiplicity have always been problematic aspects of cosmopolitan thinking simply because the cosmopolitan ideal invests a great deal of energy in finding a common medium that would allow individuals to go beyond their particularistic attachments. In other words, reconciling the need to allow differences, whether they are national, ethnic, cultural or religious, to manifest themselves with the need to unite individuals around a common framework has never been an easy task and the history of cosmopolitan thinking does not exhibit a great deal of achievement on this issue. As a result, there emerges a sharp dichotomy between the universal and the particular which cannot be resolved and eventually results in the representation of differences among human beings as detrimental to the achievement of the cosmopolitan ideal. Even though the idea of leaving one’s own home to find a greater hospitality in a larger humanity represents a noble ideal, in reality finding a common home where everyone feels at home has never been easy. Instead, many have left home only to find themselves in someone else’s home which has not always been hospitable. The Stoics, for instance, believed that reason would be the common ground where everyone would feel at home despite their cultural and ethnic differences. Even though we are divided by our religious, ethnic and cultural differences, reason would allow us to go beyond those differences and enable us to discover what is common in all of us. The same belief in reason provided the Enlightenment thinking with the teleological idea that humanity would finally leave divisions behind and unite around the common purpose. One of the main significant thinkers of the Enlightenment, Condorcet, declared that

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\text{[t]he time will therefore come when the sun will shine only on free men who know no other master but their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical instruments will exist only in the works of history and on the stage; and when we shall think of them only to pity their victims and their dupes; to maintain ourselves in a state of vigilance by thinking on their excesses; and to learn how to recognize and so to destroy, by force of reason, the first seeds of tyranny and superstition should they ever dare to reappear amongst us.}\]

These strong words not only manifest an unconditional trust in reason as the engine of human progress but also represent it as the only force of human progress. Sooner or later all humanity would discover the enlightening voice of reason which is a natural faculty that exist in each and
every human being. The cosmopolitan ideal in enlightenment thought owes a great deal to the unifying voice of reason. The historical record, however, tells us that the unifying voice of reason has not always been so charitable to those who were not quick to discover its promise. After all, this unifying voice of reason developed its civilizing mission with a history of colonialism that is replete with attempts to civilize those who were not capable of using their reason, declaring them as incapable of governing themselves, and governing them on their behalf until they reached the level of maturity to use their own reason.

Some may argue that it is too far-fetched and also unfair to link colonialism with cosmopolitan ideal. It is true that Kant was a vocal critic of colonialism and argued that “a right to visit is not a right to conquer or a right to settle”. The following quote demonstrates Kant’s unequivocal objection to colonialism:

If one compares with this [the idea of cosmopolitan right] the inhospitable behaviour of civilized, especially commercial, states in our part of the world, the injustice they show in visiting foreign lands and peoples... goes to horrifying lengths. When America, the Negro countries, the Spice Islands, the Cape, and so forth were discovered, they were, to them, countries belonging to no one..., since they counted the inhabitants as nothing. In the East Indies (Hindustan), they brought in foreign soldiers under the pretext of merely proposing to set up trading posts, but them [came] oppression of the inhabitants, incitement of the various Indian states to widespread wars, famine, rebellions, treachery, and the whole litany of troubles that oppress the human race.

Yet, Harvey calls our attention to Kant’s very little known geographical writings in which he engages in an extensive discussion about different human societies. In it, Kant remarks that “humanity achieves its greatest perfection with the white race” and “the yellow Indians have somewhat less talent. The negroes are much inferior and some of the peoples of the Americas are well below them”. He also mentions that inhabitants of hot climates are lazy and surprisingly enough his geographical writings go into great detail about distant lands and people and he does not have any positive remarks for them. Furthermore, Kant also says that “colonization may sometimes be justified in terms of ‘bringing culture to uncivilized peoples’ and purging the home country of ‘depraved characters’”. In his approach to other cultures and peoples Kant does not sound like a real cosmopolitan. How should we explain this apparent
contradiction in Kant’s thinking? On the one hand, we have a cosmopolitan thinker who condemns colonialism, calls for universal hospitality and advocates a world peace, while, on the other, he establishes clear hierarchies among human societies and accepts colonization if it results in bringing civilization to uncivilized people. Nussbaum suggests that, like the Stoics, Kant has some blind spots but does not think that these blind spots diminish the cosmopolitan ideal of promoting the happiness of others.\(^{40}\) I would argue that this contradiction in Kant is not simply a blind spot but indicates a fatal shortcoming in his cosmopolitan thinking. The privileged and ahistorical, as well as disembedded, articulation of reason as the engine of human progress in Kant’s theorizing in particular and in the Enlightenment thought in general has a devastating impact on the understanding of difference and marginality. Again, this rather ahistorical and teleological representation of reason has resulted in a universal/particular dichotomy in which the relationship between the universal and the particular is nothing but conflictual. The natural outcome of this uncompromising position is that difference and marginality are something that go against the natural development of human progress and therefore need to be controlled, governed and assimilated. This is why Kant was a cosmopolitan who did not want to leave his house to meet with others. Instead, his cosmopolitanism invited others to join his home as the universal meeting point and has indeed the illusion of imagining that his particular home would be the home for all humanity. I believe this conception of cosmopolitanism is not a true cosmopolitanism. Moreover, it is extremely dangerous to imagine a cosmopolitan order based on Kantian principles in a global world in which there is not only increased awareness of difference but also intense and immediate interaction between human societies. Diminished distance among human societies, close contact between different cultures and constant interaction with others requires a new way of imagining the relationship between universality and particularity in which moral universalism and cultural particularism are not real options. In the final section of this article I will discuss alternative ways of imagining cosmopolitan thinking that would get us out the strict dichotomy between universality and particularity.

**Conclusion: Cosmopolitanism and Local Forms of Modernity**
So far I have reflected on recent discussions of cosmopolitanism and some of the problems associated with them. In the final section I will concentrate on possible ways of rethinking cosmopolitanism to allow for a greater manifestation of plurality and difference both within nation states and on a global level. I believe that cosmopolitanism can not simply be based on a disembedded institutional-legal framework. Before anything, cosmopolitanism should be an attitude which requires an acceptance of otherness, living with it and being open to the possibility of being transformed with it. In that sense it is a real act of leaving one’s own house to meet with others in possible places that cannot be predetermined. This is why any cosmopolitan theorizing needs to reflect on the traditional dichotomy between the universal and the particular in which the particular is represented as marginal and difference is treated as a deviation. In other words, the cosmopolitan ideal in the contemporary global world needs to be found on a new understanding of the relationship between the universal and the particular. That it is the very core of the cosmopolitan ideal to find a common ground among human beings should not result in rejecting differences. Instead, living and interacting with difference should be an integral part of any cosmopolitan ideal that tries to find common ways of imagining a cosmopolitan society. The current phase of globalization with its attendant risks and hazards presents us with some opportunities to reimagine the relationship between the universal and the particular in cosmopolitan thinking.

One of the most significant outcomes of the current phase of globalization is the localization of modernity and the emergence of multiple modernities. Cosmopolitan thinking, whether in the Enlightenment ideal or in modernization theory, and more recently in neo-liberal globalization, has operated on the assumption that modernity is an unidimensional process that can be (or should be) produced in different locales and cultures. Very often modernity was used interchangeable with Westernization, implying that the modern experience was alien to places and cultures outside the West. This is why the implementation of modernity in non-Western locales has been a tension-ridden process, always identified with antagonism, placing itself against local cultures and traditions. Modernization has not only placed itself against local cultures and traditions but has also always been represented as hegemonic and superior to local experiences. As a result, local cultures and traditional forms of existence are expected to dissolve within the universal framework of modernity which was all encompassing. This
ahistorical representation of modernity and its articulation in non-Western places constantly reproduces a logic of marginalization based on the fact that indigenous economic, cultural and political formations are believed to be in constant and unresolvable conflict with modern ways of being. The complex and multidimensional relationship between global and local forces has significantly altered the representation of modernity as an external force. Instead, modernity in its political, cultural and economic forms are reproduced in distant locales on a daily bases. The circulation of goods, constant innovation of new technologies, increased connectivity among human societies, ease of travel, mobility of human beings in various forms, reorganization and linking of distant territories to meet the demands of flexible capital have not produced the global nirvana promised by the advocates of neo-liberal globalization. Instead, along with new inequalities and redistributive problems as well as disorganized and uneven global governance, it fragmented the representation of modernity as unidimensional and completely western phenomenon and has opened up new possibilities of modern interpretation in each and every locale. In the current phase of globalization, the universal as the defining characteristic of modernity is no longer a closed and predetermined universe with a teleological logic, but is open to interpretation and remaking in distant geographies. I should be clear in emphasizing that this new condition of modernity may not necessarily indicate a pluralistic social order, nor does it imply that the outcome of every local articulation of modernity leads to a better distributive mechanism that would remedy some of the excesses of the current globalization process. Yet, it reminds us that the condition of universality and particularity is now radically different in that modernity as a unique western phenomenon no longer applies. This new condition of modernity provides us with new possibilities to imagine a cosmopolitan ideal open to difference and multiplicity. Let me elaborate on three important dimensions of globalization processes that lead to multiple forms of modernity in distant locales and explain how these dimensions may contribute to a pluralistic cosmopolitan ideal.

First, as a result of constant interaction between human societies, mobility of people and shrinking distances caused by circulation of information and rapid travel, modern forms of life are no longer foreign and distant but local and present. Furthermore, economic and cultural globalization introduces new actors and conditions to the local political structures while local actors constantly interpret and subvert global forces to imagine new political strategies and forms
of social co-existence. This appropriation of modern forms by local actors is not new and has been an integral part of modern experience in non-western geographies. However, what is new is that modern experience, whether it is cultural, economic or political, is no longer accepted as given, as something that is absorbed and internalized by local actors. Instead, local groups and actors actively engage with modern experience introduced by various global forces, interact with it, interpret it and rework it according to their objectives. In Turkey, for instance, islamist groups engage with modernity on various levels such as life style and capital accumulation and rather than rejecting modernity outright, they create their own version of it. In Latin America and Asia a similar trend is particularly visible in urban centres where the local and global are in constant interaction. In each instance, the outcome is not the traditional antagonism between the modern and traditional or universal and particular or a rejection of the universal or its complete acceptance but an intervention by the particular in the very content of the universal forcing it to adopt local conditions. This is why people who adopt an islamist life style in Turkey have special vacation spots catering to their needs. These vacation spots have all the amenities and luxuries of five star hotels while excluding alcohol and providing separate beaches for men and women. This example indicates a selective modernization, an appropriation of modern life style while rejecting parts that do not conform with an islamist life style. Similarly, islamist groups in Turkey, for instance, engage in capital accumulation and actively participate in international trade but also try to create practices which conform to their Islamic sense of community in which the employer has a responsibility for the employee and the economic enterprise should take the well-being of community into consideration. Some of the same key concepts of institutional cosmopolitanism, such as individual autonomy and human rights, are part of the everyday language of islamists but not necessarily in the same way they are used in a western liberal context. Headscarved female university students in Turkey, for example, protest the ban on headscarves on campuses and other public places by using the language of human rights and human dignity and even use international forums such as the European Court of Justice as part of their political campaign. However, their use of human rights and individual autonomy is not limited to the Western notion of an abstract individual but instead grounded in the situatedness of individuals in communities and value systems. These examples of local forms of modernity reveal a central weakness in institutional cosmopolitanism: lack of attention to local experiences of cosmopolitanism. In other words, these examples of local modernity
suggest that cosmopolitanism is experienced on a local level and meaningful imagining of a cosmopolitan ideal has to take these divergent examples and practices into consideration. Of course, not every local articulation of modern experience leads to a cosmopolitan understanding; in fact the same process may result in closure and inward-orientation. Yet, the outcome of the relationship between global modernity and local experience is never predetermined. More importantly, the content of the relationship between global modern experiences and local cultures is the location from which a cosmopolitan ideal should be imagined. Mignolo suggests that cosmopolitanism should be reconceived from the perspective of coloniality.  

Cosmopolitanism, according to Mignolo, should be reconceived from the perspective of coloniality because the experience of colonial discourse contains what Kant misses: the ability to read the cosmopolitan experience critically from outside. I would add that cosmopolitanism should also be read from the perspective of locality, because locality is where the modern experience is lived, where individuals engage with others and develop forms of co-existence. Furthermore, the local appears to be the site where the impact of global modernity is fully felt, and therefore contains the possibility to read cosmopolitan experience from the outside.

Advocates of neo-liberal globalization suggest that global capital has the ability to connect locales and overcome differences among human beings, and try to convince us that traveling “businessmen” are the agents and writers of a new cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism read from the margin, however, tells us a different story. An experience of female worker in a maquiladora, a child worker in a textile factory, a farmer who has been pushed out of his/her field by a multinational company, software engineer in Indian high tech industrial park or a downsized factory worker in up state New York, or in Manchester enable us to see cosmopolitan experience both from inside and outside, to narrate a cosmopolitan experience that can not be narrated by a cosmopolitan business class. This is why any cosmopolitan imagination in the contemporary global world has to engage with complex and contradictory experiences of locality.

Second, the fragmentation of modernity and its reproduction in distant locales is one of the contributing factors of nation states’ inability to sustain national identities as hegemonic and privileged agents of the public sphere. Instead, there is now a greater demand for representation and recognition of identities long marginalized by the unitary voice of national narratives. In
addition, there is also an increasing awareness that identity does not have to be singular and one can have divided loyalties and conflicting sense of belongings. Multiple forms of modernity in various locales allow individuals to realize that national identity is no longer the privileged form of subjectivity, let alone the home in which one finds a safe harbour. This is both good and bad news for the cosmopolitan ideal. It is bad news for the traditional cosmopolitan position in which the cosmopolitan individual is free from local attachments and appears to be rootless; rootless enough to be everywhere but belong nowhere. Nussbaum admits that cosmopolitan belonging does not have the same passion and color as local and particular identities do. Yet, the multiplication of identity positions and divided subjectivities in multiple locations of modernity is good news for the cosmopolitan ideal because we do not have to make a choice between colorful and passionate particular identities and a rootless cosmopolitan subjectivity. If cosmopolitanism is leaving one’s own house to be with others and is accepting the possibility that leaving one’s own house means that one has become someone else in the process, then multiple belongings and conflicting subjectivities provide the perfect background for an embedded cosmopolitanism. In this form of cosmopolitanism, one’s sense of subjectivity is embedded into social and cultural practices of surrounding communities, while at the same time it is never totally fixed to develop an inhibiting rigidity prevents one from engaging with others. To avoid misunderstanding, I should caution that I am not suggesting that we now live in a social environment of hybridity and cultural mélange of constantly transforming identities. We are far from that. However, I am simply arguing that if our task is to revive the cosmopolitan ideal and save it from its problematic past, then we need to look at the possibilities that would allow us to go beyond seeing and experiencing subjectivity as a fixed and unchanging experience. It may legitimately be argued that there are no guarantees that multiple identity positions would result in the anticipated relaxation of what is believed to be fixed identities. Furthermore, the emphasis on particularity and rootedness of identities would eventually lead to a situation where it may not be possible to engage with others and such emphasis on particularity may result in isolated individuals that are not able to communicate with each other.

This brings us to the third and final dimension of multiple forms of modernization. Out of the fragmentation of modern experience, and the inability of nation states to reproduce national narratives, emerge new forms of territoriality in which different locales are connected to each
other in ways other than the strict boundaries of state sovereignty. Individual identities are no longer produced within the confines of national borders but are the product of several national narratives. In fact, transnational communities within the borders of nation states are constant reminders of the respective national narratives that the very content of national identity is linked to places outside those borders. Turkish-German, or Algerian-French or Pakistani-British communities are constantly challenging national narratives both in home and adopted countries and forging links that cut across the lines of state sovereignty.\footnote{Furthermore, the hazards of a global economy and the risks of environmental degradation as well as the awareness that global and local solidarities are not mutually exclusive do not leave much choice for us but to become cosmopolitans in the true sense of the word.}

1 In a recent trip to Munich the US defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld was asked whether the US is bound by international rules or legal framework. His answer was that “I honestly believe that every country ought to do what it wants to do … It either is proud of himself afterwards, or it is less proud of itself.” Jonathan Freedland, "This War Is Not yet Over," Guardian Weekly, February 19-25 2004, 13.


14 Fine and Cohen, "Four Cosmopolitanism Moments," 140.
16 Ibid., 244-45.
20 Habermas, "Two Hundred Years' Hindsight," 140.
21 Ibid., 126.
26 Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*. 
Beck, "Sociology in the Second Age of Modernity," 61. Beck in the same article argues that [Nato] is a military organization of post-sovereign, post-national nation-states. In light of what happened after September 11 and Afghanistan and Iraq wars it would not be wrong to argue that it was rather premature to declare Nato as an organization of “post-sovereign” and “post-national” states.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Muthu, "Justice and Foreigners: Kant's Cosmopolitan Right," 37.


Fine and Cohen, "Four Cosmopolitanism Moments," 143.


Ackbar Abbas, "Cosmopolitan De-Scriptions: Shangai and Hong Kong," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000), Beck, "Sociology in the Second Age of Modernity."


Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism."

Ayse Caglar, "German Turks in Berlin: Social Exclusion and Strategies for Social Mobility," *New Community* 21, no. 3 (1995), Daniel Hiebert, "Cosmopolitanism at the Local Level: The