Cosmopolitanism and the Enlightenment

Joan-Pau Rubiés and Neil Safier, eds
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023 [paperback 2025])
DOI: 10.1017/9781009305372
[ISBN 9781009305327]

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Originating in a 2013 conference, this volume brings together an all-star team to honour the work of Anthony Pagden, by addressing the recent reemergence of cosmopolitanism as an important theme on the contemporary global public scene in a historical perspective. Acknowledging the origins of cosmopolitanism as an idea in ancient Stoicism and its resurgence in Renaissance and early modern Europe, the focus is on the Enlightenment, which has often been too unproblematically associated with cosmopolitanism. The ambition of this volume is to contribute to the further clarification of this relationship, by throwing light on the flexibility and plurality of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, and thus to a new general history of cosmopolitanism that is 'nonlinear, multiversal and polycentric' (as recently urged by Jürgen Osterhammel).

The volume has seen a relatively long gestation, and thus a careful editorial process, also yielding several 'paratexts'—a preface and an introduction by the editors, and an afterword by the honouree—establishing different contexts for the nine chapters. The Preface sets the scene and offers a brief overview of the chapters and their thematic coherence, while the Introduction provides a critical assessment of the scholarly landscape on cosmopolitanism and the Enlightenment, highlighting the difficulties posed by various definitions, and emphasising the need to take a plural and global view of both of them. Accordingly, while the contributions of the volume do not eschew the concept of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism as resting on the notion of a global community of rational human beings with shared moral values and universal rights, they interrogate this concept by raising the question 'who defines these values in a world of inequalities and from where' (xix). The answers to questions such as these point to hierarchies defined by space (within Europe as well as between Europe and colonial societies), race, gender, and other descriptors in the construction and outlook of cosmopolitanism. It is also important to note that, while forms of accommodation and imperial universalism fall within the scope of such a collection—much as multiculturalism would in a modern context—they should not be conflated with cosmopolitan ideals and ideology, whose stress on universal rights remains entangled with Eurocentric bias and sits uneasily alongside cultural relativism.

Cromohs (Cyber Review of Modern Historiography), ISSN 1123-7023, 29/2026

DOI: 10.36253/cromohs-16967

Thus, a central thread in the editors' Introduction and, in diverse ways, in each of the chapters, is the tensions, discontents, and dilemmas inherent in or raised by cosmopolitanism when studied from the connected angles of the history of ideas, the new cultural history of empire and encounters, and global politics. First, while acknowledging that the defence of philosophical freedom and the critique of fanaticism and superstition were central to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism—and the latter's close ties to the universalist pretensions and cultural practices of the Republic of Letters—the volume stresses its ideological plurality and resist reducing it to a single tradition. Like the Enlightenment more broadly, cosmopolitanism was a field of ongoing debates rather than a coherent body of propositions.

Second, the volume calls attention to the problems arising from the rejection of intolerance and similar dispositions in the name of civilised humanity (the 'historicization of human rationality') on the one hand, and the positive attitude to cultural diversity on the other hand: the extent to which conceiving European conventions as the acceptable expression of natural law represented a kind of 'parochial universalism' (14). The case is not unlike European natural history, sometimes addressing a superficial desire for epistemic mastery rather than offering a truly universal body of knowledge. Next, recognising the new levels to which transcultural mobility was brought by travel, commerce, and information exchange in the Enlightenment, they point to long-existing, relevant forms of engagement in various world regions which shared with European cosmopolitanism the rejection of exclusively local cultural horizons, a curiosity for new types of learning, and a capacity to transcend political and confessional boundaries. This is a very constructive move, though at points contributors seem to conflate such positions with cosmopolitanism, which risks diluting the concept. Finally, in the context of coming to terms with the imperial dimension of cosmopolitanism, they emphasise the possibility for not only metropolitan but also colonial agents to imagine themselves as members of a global human community, within the parameters of the very colonial system whose injustice they expose and against which they rebel.

The chapters cover a broad spectrum of figures, from canonical thinkers to lesser-known voices, inhabiting or moving across wide spaces and addressing diverse themes in the history of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, but these threads bring all of them into meaningful dialogue. The first two chapters are dedicated to some antecedents and lineages. Daniel Carey explores the imbrication of the themes of diversity, natural law, and reason in Locke's thought, with an emphasis on the considerable extent to which his relevant views drew on his profound familiarity with travel literature, itself an instrument of combating provincialism. Locke's position, stressing the irreducible divergences which lay the ground for toleration without leading to a cosmopolitan expression of general human solidarity, is presented as a reminder of the difficulties of reconciling sceptical and universalist philosophical agendas. Also focusing on the connectedness of moral philosophy and travel writing, Joan-Pau Rubiés takes a *longue durée* view on 'the paradox of cosmopolitanism', which

from the Renaissance onward assumed the form of the question whether the association of *humanitas* with global commerce and Christian peace also implies the defence of empire in the name of universal religion and civility. The entwining of post-Erasmian Christian humanism with the (sceptical) philosophical impact of trans-oceanic navigation was also the context of the beginning of the transition from static to dynamic cosmopolitanism: the recognition that belonging to a rational global moral community is not a given, but constructed thanks to human perfectibility. This transition, richly illustrated in Rubiés's chapter with references to a welter of early modern authors, culminated in an Enlightenment legacy that grounded cosmopolitan identity not in the normative idea of natural law shared by all mankind, but in the global dissemination of a kind of enlightened civilisation seen as unique to Europe. In doing so, it left unresolved the question of how to negotiate the boundary between universal principles and the acceptable degree of local diversity.

Discussions of outstanding eighteenth-century authors and works from unusual angles follow. In Chapter 3, Girolamo Imbruglia looks at Diderot's contribution to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism by way of conjectural history from the vantage point of the crucial part played by irrationality or 'the monstrous': the idea that besides the history of uniform human nature and its regularities, deviations should also be considered and interpreted through the same philosophical language of reason and experience. Monstrosity—which according to Diderot, was manifested in the wickedness of conquerors, the superstition of missionaries, despotism, and the greed of merchants (the counterpart of military barbarism, rather than a force that 'sweetens' empire through commerce)—has serious political consequences. Its antidote is a form of republican politics capable of nurturing the moral impulse which natural pity alone is insufficient to sustain. Neil Safier then constructs 'geographies of cosmopolitanism' through case studies of cartography, natural history, and ethnographic description in the long eighteenth century, when it became possible to explore distinctive natures, similarities, and entanglements of world regions by situating these fields in a global context. South America and the Pacific, in particular, are presented as privileged sites for thinking about the globe, which figures like Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, Alexander von Humboldt, and Georg Forster sought to understand as cosmopolitans: combining intellectual force and stringent principles of interpretation with pragmatic on-the-spot observation—as it were, in a kind of conjectural geography—somewhat ambivalent towards local sources of knowledge, but still working wittingly or unwittingly against imperial projects. The characterisation of the Pacific as a space connected in a wider social world of moving items and ideas before and irrespective of the arrival of Europeans is incisive, though it is not entirely convincing that for this reason it is also helpful to describe it as a home to 'cosmopolitanism *avant la lettre*' (126). The chapter illuminates how men of science forged ideas about peoples and lands at a time when the modern world was coming to understand its potential and deficiencies as a system of mutually dependent entities, with profound implications for cosmopolitanism in the Enlightenment.

The next four chapters, in one way or another, occupy a marginal vantage point, with a focus on agents and/or spaces of cosmopolitanism outside the range of the politically and socially dominant, and/or the intellectual mainstream. José Cañizares-Esguerra highlights the cosmopolitan dimensions of non-elite scribal cultures—such as the religious 'republics' (brotherhoods) assembled by slaves and free Blacks; female mystics; practices of petitioning and litigation—in the early-modern Iberian Atlantic. In the condescending gaze of European cosmopolitanism, these cultures represented phenomena associated with backwardness that they were to be cured of, before their integration into global society was possible. Cañizares-Esguerra's exploration of the relationship between popular literacy among 'subaltern' communities of the New World and cosmopolitanism poses a challenge to established definitions, claiming Kantian cosmopolitanism to be a 'situated form of local knowledge' specific to Western Europe (148). This is a potentially highly fruitful approach, and the chapter opens up a whole world of horizontal, trans-oceanic and Pan-American networks of literate communication and self-assertion obscured in a historiography working within the categories of the European Republic of Letters. At the same time, it is helpful to keep in mind that a cosmopolitan philosophy conceived in Königsberg itself related to 'the West' in complex ways. The categorisation of the connections explored so forcefully in the chapter as 'world citizenship' may also need further support. In Chapter 6, Silvia Sebastiani studies the representation of women in the Scottish Enlightenment science of man as a conduit for the gendering of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism was the political expression of the unity of the human species that the science of man was developed as a tool to describe and underpin. While humanity was shown by it to have been the product of history and culture, 'man' was discussed in the 'history of mankind' in terms of universalism, but woman in that of specificity—as witnessed by the plural in the name of the emerging genre of 'history of women'. In certain respects thus excluded, females were still included in a crucial role in the historical vision of the science of man, their status representing a key measurement of the progress from savagery to civilisation. Humanisation was, in effect, feminisation: in this discourse, society becomes civil as it abandons war and violence for the sake of commerce and connectedness, sociability, gentleness and emulation—values associated with the female character while also making civilisation cosmopolitan, though at the same time raising the spectre of effeminacy and decadence. It is also important to notice that the gendered cosmopolitanism of the science of man was also anchored in an unequal geography of progress, conceived as potentially universal, though historically specific to Europe, thus assimilating cosmopolitanism and Eurocentrism.

After studies on cosmopolitanism and socially marginal agents—colonial subjects and women—Melissa Calaresu investigates how patriotic identities and critical responses from the spatial 'periphery' to cosmopolitan pretensions could emerge from cosmopolitan networks. Her case study focuses on the playwright, critic and historian Pietro Napoli Signorelli, whose life and career spanned the intellectual and political

world of two connected European peripheries (Italy and Spain) and one of the centres (France). Calaresu's meticulous reconstruction of Napoli Signorelli's trajectory, together with her rich contextualisation of his publishing activities, throws light on how his cosmopolitan intellectual outlook—shaped by wide-ranging engagements and associations—combined with his attachment to Neoclassical ideals and national traditions, including popular and religious ones. This led him to adopt a distinctly patriotic agenda and to encourage the creation of a patriotic literary canon. While one of the key figures discussed in Sankar Muthu's contribution to the volume could hardly be more mainstream to the history of both cosmopolitanism and the Enlightenment, addressing the theme of resistance against global domination still invokes a somewhat marginal vantage point. Muthu approaches responses to the global interconnectedness of the late eighteenth century—seen as both corrosive to our shared humanity and essential for resisting the domineering tendency fundamental to the civilised condition—through the writings of Immanuel Kant and the formerly enslaved Afro-British political thinker Quobna Ottobah Cugoano. Acknowledging the unsocial grounds of sociability, Kant still urged its cultivation as a striving for equal worth and countering domination, as against asserting greater worth and resulting in hierarchy, injustice and exploitation; he deemed resistance to the latter as permanent as the human condition of approximating mutual equity, but regarded the attainment of ideal institutions that would make resistance redundant as illusory. In a similar fashion, merging profound theoretical inquiry with masterful empirical analysis of the post-1490s modern world and practical urgency in the most radical anti-slavery work of the times, Cugoano portrayed global unsocial sociability as both a curse and a catalyst of resistance to the oppression it often enabled, and conjured a vision of global unsocial sociability without domination as a goal towards which humans should incessantly strive.

In the final chapter, David Armitage addresses Enlightenment cosmopolitanism in conjunction with civil war, which at first sight may seem strange bedfellows. But as Armitage argues, the alleged elective affinity between cosmopolitanism and pacifism is recent: Kant's cosmopolitanism, for instance, was conflictual, arising from unsocial sociability, and the cosmopolis of the Enlightenment is altogether hardly conceivable without the intellectual challenges posed by the worldwide wars of the era. With the growth of the *civitas*—ideally a site of civility, but often that of deadly strife—to imperial, Mediterranean, European, and then global scales, the world not only approached the cosmopolitan ideal of universal humanity, but international war also became more 'intimate' in the sense of not being waged among strangers: the trope of European and then global civil war as an unexpected and unintended consequence of enlightened cosmopolitanism could assume meaningful sense and explanatory value, with consequences into our own days. The volume ends with a tour de force by Anthony Pagden, revisiting in his Afterword some of the central themes that put the preceding essays into dialogue with one another, emphasising the malleability, the antinomies, as well as the lasting legacies of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism.

This volume is a very timely and valuable addition to the literature on both of its central themes. It mostly achieves what it proposes by way of a string of innovative studies invariably marked by a high level of scholarship firmly anchored in careful and wide-ranging research, as well as intellectual risk-taking. If there is a lingering sense of deficit, it arises from what may be regarded as one of the collection's chief merits: its commitment not 'to limit the topic to the critical analysis of the contribution of the great thinkers of eighteenth-century Europe' (31), and its consistent adoption of a global perspective that requires and enables the pursuit of cosmopolitanism beyond the confines of the European Republic of Letters. However, the Europe whose 'centricity' comes under so much well-deserved criticism, looks exclusively North-Western (Atlantic) and Mediterranean, with a vast and rich crescent stretching from the Norwegian to the Black Sea (and the Aegean, for that matter) left in a limbo between the West and the now discovered rest. It is both ironic and symptomatic of the state of the art in the current international mainstream of Enlightenment studies that the two names mentioned in this volume hailing from these regions (both in Pagden's Afterword) belong to Viktor Orbán (292, 304) and Andrzej Duda (304), both of them on account of their uneasiness (to say the least) with the values whose history is the subject of this volume. Naturally, the deficit is not merely one of coverage for its own sake. Scandinavia, Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe represent terrains inscribing which into such histories promises yet further depth and sophistication to their understanding. To mention but one obvious, potentially relevant Scandinavian theme among many, the travels of the 'Linnéan apostles', characteristically originating from lands without much competitive edge in the colonial space, under the sails of the Western great powers, certainly generated peculiar blends of cosmopolitanism and patriotism on their part. Furthermore, among most peoples of Europe's 'contiguous' empires (Habsburg, Romanov, Ottoman), the Enlightenment often merged with processes of 'national awakening'. This was driven by a host of key local figures torn between, on the one hand, embracing the cosmopolitan ideals and civilisation of the European 'centre', and, on the other hand, resenting the same centre's complacence and condescension, manifest in the construction of 'Eastern Europe'. The result was the emergence of patriotic responses, including ones marked by a degree of defiant self-Orientalisation. The Greek case is a special one, as here a similar ambivalence was intensified by the fact that the engagement with the Enlightenment and its cosmopolitanism in their Western guise went hand in hand with a proud re-association of modern men of letters and citizens with ancient Greece—the first European civilisation to leave a substantial civil and philosophical legacy.

Aspects of the experience of the European peripheries such as these present opportunities for further expanding on the outstanding achievements of this volume.