3

Cultural cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism concerning culture and self

In suggesting a classification of the various forms of contemporary cosmopolitanism, Samuel Scheffler discerns two principal types which can more or less contain all the others: cosmopolitanism as a doctrine concerning justice, and cosmopolitanism as a doctrine concerning culture and self. Although not mutually exclusive, they differ in what they are opposed to: the first type is opposed to the views that impose restrictions in principle on the scope of a conception of justice, that is, that consider that the rules of justice are to be applied in the first instance within well-defined territorial groups; the second, on the contrary, is opposed to the idea that 'individuals' well-being or their identity or their capacity for effective human agency normally depends on their membership in a determinate cultural group whose boundaries are reasonably clear and whose stability and cohesion are reasonably secure' (2001: 150). Cosmopolitans attribute this second view to a mistaken conception of individual identity, agency and well-being, to which they oppose the alternative view of cultures in which they are conceived of as being mobile and subjected to constant change, like the peoples that express them and the individuals of which they are composed.

Cosmopolitanism sets the individual in the centre as the ultimate unit of moral concern and, for this reason, is often accused of not attributing sufficient importance to history and culture in the life of individuals. Against this background, the expression 'cultural cosmopolitism' might appear to be an oxymoron. Cosmopolitanism certainly attaches an indirect value to culture, that is, not a value per se, but insofar as it has an influence on individuals in conditioning their identity and lives; it is equally true that cosmopolitans place limits on the legitimacy of culture and traditions to make room for individual rights. While it is true that cosmopolitanism assigns an indirect value to culture, it is equally true that one of its objectives consists precisely in suggesting an ethical-political solution to the problem of how it is possible, as Kant wrote, to live in a world in which peoples and culture exist 'unavoidably

side by side', and it is also for this reason that it has been described as a view capable of offering 'a mode of managing cultural and political multiplicities' (Vertovec and Cohen 2002: 4).[1] As far as the problem of culture and identity is concerned, the champions of cosmopolitanism use as their starting point the changes that the processes of globalization have produced, and emphasize the fact that it is necessary to come to terms with a new situation in which new conceptual instruments are required to understand it and to address the challenges it sets up. They point out that nation-states, far from containing homogeneous communities, as some communitarians claim, are becoming increasingly multiethnic and multinational; that individuals are characterized by forms of multiple membership which often transcend the limits of national boundaries; that ultimately both collective and individual cultures are anything but static and fixed. Starting from these changes and from more elastic concepts of self and culture, they are opposed to communitarianism and certain claims made by the supporters of cultural difference policies. Jeremy Waldron,[2] for instance, adopts a stance against the demands made by minority cultures to receive public funding to defend their specific way of life. He does not deny the role of culture in the constitution of human life but, unlike Kymlicka, for whom culture is a primary asset for the self-constitution of the lives of individuals, he believes that although 'we need cultural meanings', 'we do not need homogenous cultural frameworks' (1992: 785); individual certainly needs culture, but not necessarily 'cultural integrity' (786). Rather than the communitarian or multiculturalist conception of the individual, he prefers that of the cosmopolitan, one who has interiorized pluralism, who 'refuses to think of himself as defined by his location or his ancestry or his citizenship or his language', who is 'conscious of living in a mixed-up world and having a mixed-up self' (754). According to Waldron, the only appropriate response to the modern contemporary world actually consists of the hybrid lifestyle of the cosmopolitans, of those whose 'primary allegiance is to some international agency – who are genuinely and effectively citizens of the world – rather than those who pride themselves on their local acculturation and on the narrow parochialism of their understanding' (776).[3] Another author who prefers cosmopolitanism to certain aspects of multiculturalism is Anthony K. Appiah. In *Ethics of Identity*, this philosopher sets out 'to explore the ethics of identity in our personal and political lives; . . . in an account that takes seriously Mill's notion of individuality' (2005: XIV). The challenge consists in separating the discourse on identity from communitarian theories by providing a way of conceptualizing it inside liberal cosmopolitan thought. He reinterprets liberal autonomy as the freedom to choose one's life plan and to decide not so much *what* one wants as *who* one wants to be. Through this conception of individuality, defined as self-development, in which (social) identity is placed at the focus of human life, Appiah distances himself both from the essentialist

view for which an authentic self exists, which is distinctively 'proper', and from the constructivist stance which allows any self one chooses to be constructed. Appiah considers that identity is built up from a set of options made available by one's own culture and one's own society and that to ignore this fact means to ignore the constitutive importance of what Charles Taylor called the 'webs of interlocution', that is to say, not to recognize the dialogical construction of the self and thus to be entrapped in a kind of 'monological' fallacy (107).

Multiculturalism and the policies supporting it, on the assumption of a static cultural identity, are not suitable for understanding the processes by means of which identities, both individual and collective, actually develop. Furthermore, multiculturalism, by merging the discourse on identity with that of culture, ends up by assigning to cultures per se a higher value than that of individuals, to the extent of acknowledging that cultures have the right to be protected not only from external threats, but also from the choices made by their members. In this interpretation of multiculturalism the philosopher perceives a threat to individuality: in the effort to preserve and protect (minority) cultures, cultural difference policies ultimately bring about a kind of 'Medusa syndrome' (110) in which cultures are essentialized and consequently petrified, shut off from change, even from that proposed or urged by the choices made by their own members. And so, in view of the fact that very often 'upholding differences among groups may entail imposing uniformity within them' (151), these policies are liable to upset the delicate balance between agency, individual autonomy and the context in which individuality is allowed to flourish, and ultimately no longer guarantee their own members precisely that right to diversity in the name of which several (minority) cultural groups demand and endorse identitary policies. Appiah is nevertheless well aware of the fact that while cosmopolitanism acts as a challenge to partiality, the existence of a sentiment of belonging then represents a challenge for cosmopolitanism. He considers cosmopolitanism, defined as the strict negation of partiality, as the elimination of all local loyalties, as untenable, as something that may impress the intellect but that 'has little grip upon our hearts' (221).

A cosmopolitanism that hopes to have a future must be a rooted cosmopolitanism, a partial or rooted cosmopolitanism, that takes seriously not only the value of human life in general but also the value of *particular* human lives, of those lives that persons have themselves created *within* the communities that contribute to giving such lives a meaning. The challenge therefore consists in accepting that individuals have multiple memberships and divided loyalties and coexist with individuals, both within and outside national borders, who belong to different cultures, likewise characterized by divided loyalties and multiple identities. For a number of cosmopolitan authors this challenge calls for the creation of institutional arrangements in which the multiple memberships of individuals are recognized and the various cultures

to which individuals belong are protected. David Held, for instance, starts off from the following considerations: (1) individuals are influenced and shaped both by their national communities and international communities; identity is therefore becoming increasingly more global; (2) citizenship defined as the enjoyment of rights and duties appears to be practised and protected more by the global community than within states; (3) the regime of human rights has not only led to individuals being acknowledged as the bearers of universal rights insofar as they are human beings but has also allowed the acceptance of global responsibility to progress; (4) lastly, the development of a global civil society has encouraged interculturalism. The cosmopolitan democracy project is the political project that more than any other is capable of satisfying the need to guarantee the harmonious living together of individuals having complex identities in a world characterized by huge cultural diversity. Promotion of the rule of law, of equal rights and the practice of democracy are actually perceived as conditions that allow persons of different cultures, ethnic groups, religions and national identities to forge common bonds and to live peacefully within a framework of common law and equal rights. It should be noted that in Held's view, the institutional arrangements of the cosmopolitan democracy project are not designed solely to promote individual identity but also to ensure autonomy and recognition of the many cultures and communities to which individuals belong. By defending multiple governance levels where each level is viewed as a legitimate authority, cosmopolitan institutional arrangements more satisfactorily than others, can ensure the protection of the various communities and cultures. This objective is explained by Held when he expresses the hope that cosmopolitanism, in addition to the moral, political and legal dimension, can also develop a cultural dimension, pointing out that cultural cosmopolitanism 'is not at loggerheads with national culture; it does not deny cultural difference or the enduring significance of national tradition. It is not against cultural diversity . . . Rather, cultural cosmopolitanism should be understood as the capacity to mediate between national cultures, communities of fate and alternative styles of life' (Held 2002b: 57).

Cultural cosmopolitanism underlines the 'fluidity of individual identity', as well as people's capacity 'to forge new identities using materials from diverse cultural sources, and to flourish while so doing' (Scheffler 2001: 151);[4] it celebrates what Rushdie describes as 'hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs' (Waldron 1992: 751); it also promotes development of the capacity 'to stand outside of a singular location (the location of one's birth, land, upbringing, conversion)', to mediate between different traditions and to distance oneself from one's own. For cultural cosmopolitanism to establish itself three conditions must be satisfied (Held 2002b: 58):

1   Recognition of the increasing interconnectedness of political communities in diverse domains including the social, economic and environmental.

2   Development of an understanding of overlapping 'collective fortunes' which require collective solutions – locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

3   The celebration of difference, diversity and hybridity while learning how to reason from the point of view of others and mediate traditions.

Held's theory 'builds on principles that all could assent to' (2010: 313), but the interpretation of these ideals must be left to individual local communities. The institutional arrangements envisaged in the cosmopolitan democracy project offer local communities opportunities and institutional resources to protect their cultures and preserve their way of life, or at least to have their points of view represented. In addition, a society based on equal citizenship and democratic practice, by encouraging the participation of all its citizens in the governance and decision-making process, allows a sense of community to be constructed and also a common agenda to be created among persons of different cultures. For Held, as also for Archibugi, the exercise of democracy is precisely the best antidote against homologation and for the defence of individual and cultural differences.

Cultural cosmopolitanism from below

I place in the category of cultural cosmopolitanism from below authors who occupy a wide range of positions running from postcolonial to neo-Marxist theories which usually contain a *pars destruens* and a *pars construens*. On the one hand, these authors make several criticisms of contemporary cosmopolitanism such as that of being contaminated by abstract universalism, of expressing western values and ideals – including an idea of progress and unilateral and one-dimensional modernity – of ignoring relations of social and political power that this presupposes and the new forms of exclusion that it produces, as well, finally, as of being elitist. On the other, they strive to offer a version of cosmopolitanism viewed from the peripheries, the margins, combining apparently mutually contradictory aspects and concepts – cosmopolitan patriotism, rooted cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan ethnicity, working-class cosmopolitanism – in an attempt to 'come to terms with the conjunctural elements of postcolonial and precolonial intercultural and political encounters, while probing the conceptual boundaries of cosmopolitanism and its usefulness as an analytic concept' (Werbner 2011: 109). Those who reflect

on the meaning of the cosmopolitical experience and condition in a postcolonial perspective include some who reject cosmopolitanism and interpret the attempts to 'recosmopolitanize postcolonial studies' as a form of assimilation to neocolonialism (Cheah 2006: 89); others again who seek to develop a new version as a form of resistance to neocolonialism and as a possible counter to the antitheses alleged to be typical of western thinking between universal-particular; modern-non-modern; global-local. We thus go from authors who equate cosmopolitanism with the process of Americanization of the world to those who propose a critical cosmopolitanism, a new form of cosmopolitanism pruned of all the vices and defects believed to taint traditional cosmopolitanism, which developed along the cultural axis running from the cynical philosophers and Graeco-Roman Stoics as far as the Enlightenment philosophers and Immanuel Kant.[5] Tim Brennan, for instance, in *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997) points out that cosmopolitanism, which embodies a critical view of all forms of blind nationalism and cultural chauvinism, and which refuses to give priority to any single position or community, is merely a form of localism, expressing the values and ideals of the American empire. It is deemed to be a product of the Americanization of the world and of a growing global economy, of a condition that he concisely sums up as follows: 'not only does the sun never set on the American empire, [but] there is no place it shines that is not America' (1997: 4). The consensus received by cosmopolitanism insofar as it is universalist in scope shows that the American location has become systematic, pervading all aspects of material, social and cultural life in the world. Anthony Appiah criticizes cosmopolitanism which denies the importance of affiliations and of particular loyalties, but in doing so, puts forward a variant of cosmopolitanism. This variant, that he defines by means of expressions such as 'cosmopolitan patriotism', 'partial cosmopolitanism', 'rooted cosmopolitanism', is a situated form of cosmopolitanism capable of reconciling universalism and particularism. He believes that a cosmopolitanism with some hope of being established and spreading must acknowledge and admit the moral and emotional importance that the membership of a significant community (family, ethnic group, nation) has for an individual. And it must also be able to reconcile particular identities and affiliations with the demand that these must not be used as alibis to dodge one's moral responsibilities vis-à-vis other strangers and must not stand in the way of the interaction among individuals of different cultures. The credo of rooted cosmopolitanism is summarized by Appiah (2002: 22) as follows:

> The cosmopolitan patriot can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence

of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people. The cosmopolitan also imagines that in such a world not every one will find it best to stay in their natal patria, so that the circulation of people between different localities will involve not only cultural tourism (which the cosmopolitan admits to enjoying) but migration, nomadism, diaspora.

Homi Bhabha coined the expression 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Bhabha 2001; Werbner 2006) to denote precisely a cosmopolitanism that observes from the outskirts of the centres of power and global wealth and that adopts the outlook of the 'marginal' cosmopolitans. He criticizes the image proposed by Martha Nussbaum (2002a) of a *self* situated at the centre of a series of concentric circles in which universal liberal values occupy a privileged position compared with those of the nation, the ethnic group and the family. The idea of a borderless community strikes him as being inadequate for representing the condition of millions of refugees and migrants who flee violence and poverty and, whether they like it or not, often find themselves experiencing a cosmopolitan condition. Bhabha adopts the point of view of those people and describes the various forms they have produced, that is, the hybrid culture that is established in the frontier zone of cultural difference and that produces a 'cosmopolitan community envisaged in marginality' (2001: 42).[6] Bhabha also criticizes the concept of modernity assumed by European cosmopolitanism, distancing himself from Schmuel N. Eisenstadt's multiple modernity paradigm. The latter is based on the critique of the theories of modernization and their common assumption: the idea of modernization as a uni-linear path. This idea implies that, in order to become modernized, other cultures must line up with the western model and consequently calls for a convergence of local histories and ultimately results in global homogenization. Conversely, Eisenstadt's idea is that distinct societies actually process the features of modernity in partially different ways according to the characteristics of their own original civilizations. What we are witnessing is therefore not a straightforward spread of modernity but rather the development of a range of different – multiple – modernities (Eisenstadt 2000). According to Bhabha, in order to avoid modernization coinciding with a process of theoretical and practical westernization it is necessary to proceed beyond the multiple modernity paradigm. European cosmopolitans must understand that those subjected to a cosmopolitan situation that is not of their choosing are a product of European modernity and that it is not possible to understand modernity without having realized this. The colonial past must be borne in mind as 'The values of so many so-called "western" ideals of government and community are themselves derived from the colonial and postcolonial experience' (2001: 49) which is part and parcel of European modernity.[7] On the premise that cosmopolitanism is not just an ideal but also a set of practices, Bhabha defines as vernacular cosmopolitanism

the cosmopolitan practices contained in local situations that, among other things, show how cosmopolitanism is 'neither a western invention, nor a western privilege' (Cheah and Robbins 1998: 259). Bruce Robbins also asserts that, side by side with cosmopolitanism *d'élite* there are non-elite modes and sites of cosmopolitanism; even though the qualities of cosmopolitanism are to be found among comparatively privileged persons, they can also make their appearance in other social contexts, and be embodied in other social groups such as 'North Atlantic merchant sailors, Caribbean au pairs in the United States, Egyptian guest workers in Iraq, Japanese women who take gaijin lovers' (1998: 1).

Over the years there has been growing awareness that different cosmopolitan practices exist side by side with their own historicity and with their own distinct world views. This has led to the exploration of marginal cosmopolitanism, of non-elite forms of cosmopolitanism[8] of which the book *Cosmopolitanism* (Breckenridge *et al.* 2002) is a priceless example. The introduction to this publication amounts to a kind of manifesto of cosmopolitanism from below, or vernacular cosmopolitanism, in which the theoretical premises underlying the collected articles are stated explicitly. These articles come from different branches of learning – such as literary studies, art history, South Asian studies and anthropology – which reappraise new records, propose fresh formulations of the concept of cosmopolitanism, and illustrate new and diverse cosmopolitan practices developed outside the European area, for instance, in South Asia, China, and Africa. What emerges above all from this heterogeneous panorama is cosmopolitanism as action rather than as idea, as something people do rather than just declare, as practices rather than as propositions (Pollock 2002: 16), exemplifying a cosmopolitanism that nevertheless is always 'yet to come, something awaiting realization' (Breckenridge *et al.* 2002: 1).[9]

The *pars destruens* of the manifesto is expressed firstly in the criticism of the 'neoliberal emphasis . . . on individualist aspirations and universalist norms' (Breckenridge *et al.* 2002: 4–5) which is believed to be shared by contemporary cosmopolitan theories. This is because, on the one hand, 'neoliberal cosmopolitan thought is founded on a conformist sense of what it means to be a "person" as an abstract unit of cultural exchange'; and on the other because the thirst for equality as a universal norm is bound up with a 'tenacious ethnocentric provincialism in matters of cultural judgement and recognition' (5). Secondly, the theorists of cosmopolitanism from above are accused of misconstruing the fact that contemporary cosmopolitanism does not spring from the virtues of Rationality, Universality and Progress, of Enlightenment origin, since 'Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility'. The cosmopolitans are the refugees, the peoples of the diaspora, the migrants, who only too often are viewed by the western countries as a problem in that liberal cultural pluralism

is capable of recognizing difference 'only as long as the general category of people is understood in the national frame' (6). Instead it is necessary to change one's vantage point and acknowledge the critique of modernity that minoritarian cosmopolitans embody through their experience.

This gives rise to the *pars costruens* of the manifesto which the various contributions of the publication exemplify in several different ways. The manifesto is an invitation to adopt the minoritarian modernity point of view as a source of cosmopolitan thought by means of which to provincialize Europe and seek cosmopolitical genealogies outside of it. The expression 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' alludes among other things to the demand that European cosmopolitanism should be vernacularized, that is, provincialized. Bhambra points out that in academic literature on cosmopolitanism, ' "being cosmopolitan" (as a practice) is associated with being *in* the West and cosmopolitanism (as an idea) is seen as being *of* the West' (2011: 314). For instance, he cites a work by Anthony Pagden in which the latter claims that cosmopolitanism is 'a distinctively European concept', the success of which has long been bound up with the history of European universalism. Even though Pagden deems it an oversimplification to identify, as Brennan does, cosmopolitanism 'as merely imperialism under another guise', where the rules of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the various NGOs, well-intentioned but often ineffective, replace rules and intentions of priests and conquerors, he stresses how difficult it is to separate cosmopolitanism 'from the history of European civilization, or the history of European philosophy' and that 'it is an error to hope that we can ever achieve a truly cosmopolitan vision of the cosmopolis' (Pagden 2000: 20): in other words it has always been and will continue to be a European vision of the cosmopolis.[10] Bhambra points out that this is an example of parochial interpretation of cosmopolitanism which betrays the very ideals expressed by the concept. Indeed, in asserting that cosmopolitanism is the product of European civilization, he is paradoxically saying that it cannot be truly cosmopolitan and that, at the same time, however, it can only be European. In other words, Pagden is considered to have accepted European particularism, which is presented as universal, without accepting that this calls for some comment or justification. Pagden refuses to acknowledge that there have been any cosmopolitan practices and the development of cosmopolitan ideas in other parts of the world having no contact with Europe, does not see how the European domination of the rest of the world represented the negation of the cosmopolitan ideal and denies that here there are currently any cosmopolitan practices worth studying.[11] In order to avoid any provincial interpretations of cosmopolitanism it is necessary to 'provincialize' cosmopolitanism, to achieve which it 'would require both a decentring of dominant understandings of cosmopolitanism as well as an acknowledgement of understandings of cosmopolitanism outside of the

otherwise canonical frame of reference exemplified by European thought and practice' (Bhambra 2011: 325). This could entrain an understanding of cosmopolitanism as being not just a simple addition to what already exists and has been developed, but as a challenge to the legitimacy and the validity of the parameters – both historical and ethical – that were accepted a priori and that will have an authentic transformative potential: 'The provincializing of cosmopolitanism is not just a different interpretation of the *same* ideas, but the bringing into being of *new* understandings' (Bhambra 2011: 323).

As Judith Butler remarks, in performing a translation from one culture to another, abstract universalism, combined with a conception of modernity as unique and linear, ends up reducing 'every cultural instance to a presupposed universality'. Consequently, the translation coincides with the imposition of a universal claim to a culture that resists it. Or else it happens that the champions of universalism 'will domesticate the challenge posed by alterity by invoking that very cultural claim as an example of its own nascent universality' (2002: 51) in order to prove that this universality has already to some extent been achieved. For Butler, therefore, 'to claim that a Kantian may be found in every culture' (52) is a form of cultural imposition, as is any attempt to seek traces of cosmopolitanism in non-European cultures by performing a translation of the other cultures in terms of one's own culture.

The question of whether it is possible to speak of cosmopolitanism outside of western culture presupposes the use as reference parameter of the concept of European cosmopolitanism and that the other cultures are evaluated in terms of the extent to which they have approached or are approaching this ideal. In order to avoid this process of cultural imposition/assimilation the authors of *Cosmopolitanism* adopt another strategy, starting from the following proposal: 'Let's simply look at the world across time and space and see how people have thought and acted beyond the local' (Breckenridge *et al.* 2002: 10). On the basis of this proposal they offer a wide range of experiences. In doing this they show how the history of cosmopolitanism may be rewritten and how the number and scope of practices allow new alternative theorizations of cosmopolitanism, offering a first illuminating example of what is meant by a 'different archive of knowledge' (Featherstone and Venn 2006: 4). The book *Cosmopolitanism* describes practices that range, for example, from the circulation of Sanskrit literature in precolonial Asia (Pollock) to the architectural style of Shanghai which reconstructs the entire world in the city's streets (Abbas), to the transformation in contemporary photography in Senegal of nudity in an image that is both domesticated and irremediably exoticized. These practices all represent examples of living 'at home abroad or abroad at home – a way of inhabiting multiple places at once, of being different beings simultaneously, of seeing the larger picture stereoscopically with the smaller' (Breckenridge *et al.* 2002: 11).

In the introduction the authors of the manifesto also question the European prejudice against the nation-state without actually embracing nationalism. They criticize the fact that western cosmopolitanism lauds the advent of a post-national era and that, linking to the idea of nation its nationalistic degenerations and the conflicts it has produced, it is visibly much prejudiced against what is national, particular and local. They point out that, for several countries, the national conscience has represented an instrument of emancipation from colonialistic subjection. Therefore, while in Europe the appeal of the nation may have conservative and traditionalist overtones, for India or Ethiopia, for example, 'it is not at all clear whether "nation" belongs on the side of tradition or on that of developing cosmopolitanism' (Calhoun 2002: 92).[12] While drawing attention to the importance of the national conscience, Bhabha states that he is interested in the 'many circles that are narrower than the human horizon' (Appiah 2002: 29), in that narrower space of the human horizon 'that somehow stops short (not falls short) of the transcendent human universal, and for that very reason provides an ethical entitlement to, and enactment of, the sense of community' (Bhabha 2001: 42). For cosmopolitanism from below, cosmopolitanism and nation (or national conscience), global and local are not necessarily mutually antithetical.

Contributions to the publication include also that of Walter Mignolo who, in his essay 'The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism', offers a new reconstruction of the cosmopolitan paradigm over history and puts forward a fresh theorization of cosmopolitanism – 'critical cosmopolitanism'. He offers a historical reconstruction of the idea of cosmopolitanism and of political projects associated with it which, rather than in Greece, has its origin in the rise of the Atlantic trade circuit of the sixteenth century, in which the Spanish crown, the Genoese capitalists, the Christian missions, the American Indian elites and the African slave trade are all linked together. In Mignolo's interpretative model, the global designs of the Spanish and Portuguese empires of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries correspond to the Christian mission cosmopolitanism, that is, cosmopolitanism viewed as the evangelization and Christianization of the pagans. The French and English imperial designs of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries correspond to the civilizing cosmopolitan mission, that is, to cosmopolitanism as an instrument for civilizing the savages. The imperial, global and neocolonial designs of the United States in the twentieth century correspond to the cosmopolitan mission of modernization, namely of cosmopolitanism interpreted as the modernization or globalization of the premodern traditions. Throughout western history, cosmopolitanism is thus believed to be embodied in three projects (missionizing, civilizing and modernizing) that have explicitly or implicitly condoned and justified colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism. Mignolo admits that against these projects and their underlying ideology what he

defines as 'emancipatory cosmopolitanism' arose, which nevertheless has the limitation of offering a critical view of the global designs without however contravening the logic imposed by the global designs themselves. Instead of emancipatory cosmopolitanism the author proposes 'critical cosmopolitanism'. While the former is carried on inside modernity, the latter takes place outside modernity, that is, outside coloniality; it is open to other opinions and to the others and, to do this, distances itself from the logic of inclusion. In emancipatory cosmopolitanism the problems of rights, justice and fairness are conceived of under the banner of benevolent recognition (Taylor 1992) or of the humanitarian plea for inclusion (Habermas 1998) (Mignolo 2002: 160). However, as Mignolo remarks (174),

> inclusion doesn't seem to be the solution to cosmopolitanism any longer, insofar as it presupposes that the agency that establishes the inclusion is itself beyond inclusion: "he" being already within the frame from which it is possible to think "inclusion". Today, silenced and marginalized voices are bringing themselves into the conversation of cosmopolitan projects, rather than waiting to be included. Inclusion is always a reformative project. Bringing themselves into the conversation is a transformative project that takes the form of border thinking or border epistemology – that is, the alternative to separatism is border thinking, the recognition and transformation of the hegemonic imaginary from the perspectives of people in subaltern positions. Border thinking then becomes a "tool" of the project of critical cosmopolitanism.

The task of critical cosmopolitanism is to rescue, salvage and render audible and visible the voices of those local histories that have been subordinated and silenced by the imperialist ethos. As Mignolo aptly emphasizes, 'critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism as a regulative principle demands yielding generously ('convivially' said Vitoria; 'friendly' said Kant) toward diversity as a universal and cosmopolitan project in which everyone participates instead of "being participated" '. This does not mean including others in our conversations but recognizing that they are *already* participating if only we listened to them. Critical cosmopolitanism is turned towards a form of universality that he denotes as 'diversality', a combination of diversity and universality: 'diversality should be the relentless practice of critical and dialogical cosmopolitanism rather than the blueprint of a future and ideal society projected from a single point of view (that of abstract universality)' (2002: 182). Critical cosmopolitanism is consistent with its critical instance when it adopts the locus of enunciation of the subaltern, when it adopts the standpoints of those local histories that have been involved in global designs. This perspective does not imply inferiority but rather 'awareness of a subaltern position in a current geopolitical distribution

of epistem power'. Mignolo has this cosmopolitanism, which is conscious of its own standpoint and that of the others, correspond to diversality as a universal (cosmopolitical) project, a project that 'connects the diverse subaltern satellites appropriating and transforming Western global designs' (183).

The essay by Akbar Abbas not only illustrates 'the cosmopolitan' via the history of two Asiatic cities – Shanghai and Hong Kong – and the urban culture they have developed, but is also an example of another of the criticisms directed towards cosmopolitanism from above, that of being elitist. According to Abbas, cosmopolitanism cannot be viewed simply as the ability to transcend particular affiliations and ethnocentric prejudice, or as a sympathetic attitude towards 'Other'. The ideal of cosmopolitanism as 'an orientation, a willingness to engage with Other . . . an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences' (Hannerz 1990: 239), although admirable, can be sustained only in metropolitan centres where movement and travel are easy and when the encounter with other cultures is a matter of free choice, negotiated on favourable terms. What can we say about a situation in which these conditions are not forthcoming? A situation in which divergent cultural experiences are not freely chosen? He suggests looking at the problem areas of the big cities, nodal points of transnational spaces produced by global capitalism, where people, the 'new cosmopolitans', are acting out what he calls 'arbitrage', which means 'everyday strategies for negotiating the disequilibria and dislocations that globalism has created' (Abbas 2002: 227) The cosmopolitan today will include, he states, 'not only the privileged transnational, at home in different places and cultures, as an Olympian arbiter of value. Such a figure, it could be argued, has too many imperialistic associations'; this category today must include 'at least some of the less privileged men and women placed or displaced in the trans-national space of the city and who are trying to make sense of its spatial and temporal contradictions'. In the global age the cosmopolitan is no more or not only 'a universalist arbiter of value', but 'an arbitrageur/arbitrageuse' (226). The criticism that cosmopolitanism defined as a lifestyle is elitist and expresses an aesthetic view of life based on non-membership and on non-involvement is already present in Robert Pinski (2002: 87–88) who, in his reply to Nussbaum, pointed out that cosmopolitanism was for the privileged few and that the cosmopolis was simply 'the village of the liberal managerial class':

I have the impression that some of the fiercest nationalisms and ethnocentrisms of the world are fueled in part by resentment toward people like ourselves: happily situated members of large, powerful nations, prosperous and mobile individuals, able to serve on UN commissions, who participate in symposia, who plan the fates of other peoples while flying around the world and staying in splendid hotels.

Richard Shweder (2000: 170) also offers a provocative representation of the liberal world that, in his view, is two-tiered:

> this system would be two tiered and operating at two levels, global and local. I imagine its personnel will belong to two 'castes'. There will be the cosmopolitan liberals, who are trained to appreciate value neutrality and cultural diversity and who run the global institutions of the world system. And there will be the local non-liberals, who are dedicated to one form or another of thick ethnicity and are inclined to separate themselves from 'others,' thereby guaranteeing that there is enough diversity remaining in the world for the cosmopolitan liberals to appreciate. The global élite (those who are cosmopolitan and liberal) will, of course, come from all nationalities. In the new universal cosmopolitan culture of the global tier of the world system, your ancestry and skin color will be far less important than your education, your values, and your travel plans.

Ulf Hannerz argues that one is not cosmopolitan simply because he travels, emigrates, lives in multicultural contexts or transnational areas; in answer to the question 'Who can be a cosmopolitan?' he states that cosmopolitans are those who *consciously* identify themselves as cosmopolitans and that such an attitude demands an education and sufficient material resources to allow a knowledge of the diversity of cultural forms to be acquired. As Hannerz (2007: 74) remarks:

> In an increasingly mobile world . . . not all sheer physical mobility automatically entails cosmopolitanism. Going abroad and encountering otherness might involve not affirmative openness, but a rejection of what is alien, or a narrow, controlled selection from it. Some tourists seek out the particular qualities of a distant place (such as sunshine) rather than embracing it as a whole; others want the distant place to be as much like home as possible. Business travelers may find it convenient and comforting if all the hotels in major chains stretching across the world look and feel much the same. Exiles, having had a foreign haven more or less forced upon them, may prefer to encapsulate themselves as much as possible with other exiles from their homeland. Labor migrants may be in a distant place struggling to earn a living, not for the sake of interesting experiences. Cosmopolitan attitudes can grow under circumstances such as these, but they are hardly inevitable.

Not all those who move, travel and live in places outside their own country can legitimately be called cosmopolitans. Hannerz proposes a distinction between cosmopolitans, those 'willing to engage with unfamiliar cultures and places'

(1990: 239), locals who 'perpetuate local cultures and live out their lives in local places' and transnationals 'occupational élite travelers who create new professional cultures' (1992: 252). The difference is between those who wittingly adopt a cosmopolitan attitude and lifestyle and those who instead are forced to and are not even aware of doing so or who consider involvement with other cultures as a kind of 'necessary cost' (1992: 248).

Some have attempted to respond to Hannerz by denouncing the elitism of cosmopolitanism defined as an 'ethos of worldliness' (Kurasawa 2011: 279), a way to feel at home in the world, of appreciating cultural pluralism, which implies the capacity to adopt different viewpoints and to move in different sociocultural environments. Fuyuki Kurasawa, for instance, points out that to treat the world as 'home' is an attitude that can be adopted only by members of the ruling classes, whose symbolic and material power enables the planet to be considered as an open, unbounded space in which to realize one's hopes and one's self-educational projects. Being cosmopolitan becomes a strategy of distinction thanks to which the members of the richer classes establish their superiority vis-à-vis the weaker groups: the position in the hierarchy is determined on the basis of the capacity to be or become cosmopolitan. In this conception of cosmopolitanism, worldliness is reduced 'to the ability to travel to distant lands, to be at the cutting edge of global trends, and to consume non-local, "exotic" goods and services – activities that are misrecognized by those partaking in them as choices available to all participants in a field and as indicators of cultural sophistication rather than socio-economic dominance' (Kurasawa 2011: 281). According to this conception the majority of the world population is doomed to a 'perpetual non-cosmopolitan status' viewed as the result of a deliberate decision rather than as 'an effect of the severe restriction in the range of options available to those suffering from socio-economic deprivation'. Viewed close up, this kind of cosmopolitanism appears simply a form of thin multiculturalism rather than an actual capacity to accept diversity as it is ultimately limited to what is easy and domesticated, to consumeristic forms of interaction with unfamiliar sociocultural expressions such as food, clothes and music. It seems to be functional to the needs of the market and finance: it is no coincidence that this kind of 'multicultural capitalist ideology', consistent with liberal tolerance, is considered by Kurasawa to be taught in business schools and in global management programmes as a social broker in transnational trade and financial relations. As opposed to this cosmopolitanism, critical cosmopolitanism acknowledges the existence of 'a worldly sensibility from below, grounded in ordinary ways of thinking and acting' (2011: 281).

For many human beings, excluded by the elitarian form of cosmopolitanism, worldliness is a daily reality, feeding on globalization processes: interculturally expansive social imagination shaped by the transnational migration of persons,

ideas and images (Appadurai 1996), and facilitated by the internet and mobile technology; worldly processes of cultural translation and interpretation required in order to make sense of the globalized manifestations of popular culture (e.g. Bollywood films or Brazilian telenovelas overseas); social interactions performed in a variety of languages among inhabitants of global cities involving persons from different sociocultural backgrounds. The article by Hannerz has aroused different reactions and has been accused of eurocentrism and elitarianism; it has nevertherless the merit of having raised issues that are still open[13]:

> in what sense does cosmopolitanism need to be grounded in an open, experimental, inclusive, normative consciousness of the cultural other? Such a consciousness would need to include elements of self-doubt and reflexive self-distantiation, an awareness of the existence and equal validity of other cultures, other values, and other mores. Is travel without such an inclusive consciousness cosmopolitan? Does travel inevitably lead to such openness and reflexivity?
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> WERBNER 2012: 157

Anthony Kwame Appiah: rooted cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan conversation

Partial (or rooted) cosmopolitanism

The philosopher Anthony Kwame Appiah has developed a liberal version of cosmopolitanism which is expressed more fully in the famous phrase pronounced by Cremete '*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*' than in the austere Roman Stoicism of a Seneca or a Marcus Aurelius.[14] This is the version of cosmopolitanism known as '*partial* cosmopolitanism' or '*rooted* cosmopolitanism' which he develops more systematically in his books *The Ethics of Identity* (2005) and *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006).[15]

In *The Ethics of Identity* his starting point is that the size of modern nations makes one-on-one relations with all their citizens impossible and so 'relations between citizens must, of necessity, be relations between strangers' (217). This circumstance therefore raises the question of understanding what can justify the fact that a line of demarcation is drawn between the strangers that are our fellow citizens and 'political strangers', namely those who are not members of our community. The cosmopolitan, that is, he who considers the

whole world as a homeland shared with others, cannot dodge the issue of the moral status of the political stranger. Moreover, the history of mankind tells us that 'no island . . . is an island' (219), and that therefore the question of outsiders is not a contemporary sociopolitical anomaly but a reality with which we have always had to come to terms.

Disregarding the problem of national membership not only does not do justice to historical reality but also clashes with the two pillars of western liberal democracies, the universality of human rights embodied in the constitutions, and ethical individualism. If national communities were considered as ultimate units of concern as such, the distinction between members and non-members could be justified on the basis of the argument of whether members and non-members contribute or have contributed in a different way to the welfare of the nation. But if it is assumed that morality begins with persons and not with peoples, the distinction between one person and another will have to be justified as a function of what this distinction means for the individuals involved.

Appiah acknowledges that while cosmopolitan universalism represents a challenge to partiality, the existence of group feelings in its turn represents a challenge to cosmopolitanism. So before pointing to where the cosmopolitan ideal should lead us, he concerns himself with defining the kind of cosmopolitanism that is more congenial to the human psyche.

A 'sustainable' cosmopolitanism must take seriously not only the value of human life but also the value of particular human lives, the lives that persons have constructed and lead within their communities, which give meaning to those lives. A cosmopolitanism with the ambition to establish itself must be presented as a third way between extreme impartiality on the one hand and extreme partiality on the other, between the 'diversitarianism of the game warden, who ticks off the species in the park', and 'simple universalism' (222); in other words, it must be capable of reconciling 'a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality' (223).

But how can cosmopolitanism be reconciled with patriotism? The special obligations seem to be incompatible with the principle of moral equity since, as Samuel Scheffler (2001) pointed out, associative duties do not only allow priority to be assigned to the interests of the persons we are associated with but *demand* that this be so. Appiah works around this opposition between associative duties and moral equity by drawing attention to the fact that it is the states that must display equal respect towards all citizens and that it is mistaken to assume that individuals must also be subjected to the same constraint. Moral equality must be a regulatory ideal for political conduct, not for personal conduct.

So what kind of obligations are the special obligations? Appiah accepts the distinction made by Robert Dworkin between morality, which has to do with what we owe others, and ethics, which is related to the type of life that

we should lead, our personal projects, the type of person we would like to be. However, he points out that in the pursuit of rooted cosmopolitanism it is not always possible to distinguish between moral duties and ethical duties as it is 'a compositive project, a negotiation between disparate tasks' (Appiah 2005: 232), namely, between the political task of creating a well-ordered society on the one hand and the personal task of leading a good life on the other. Furthermore, he does not share the idea that moral obligations must be lexically satisfied before dedicating oneself to ethical obligations because, while it is true that moral obligations must govern the ethical ones, this does not mean that the obligations of universal morality must always take priority over ethical obligations in other people's or our own regard. Moreover he recommends not to think of the contrast between moral and ethical in terms of a contrast between what is compulsory and what is optional: although contingent and not chosen, the relations are no less binding for this reason. Indeed, we do not choose who our mother is but this does not mean we have no special responsibilities in her regard. He thus focuses attention on two characteristics of the special responsibilities: the first, they allow of a certain graduality; the second, they are inside our identity: 'Who you are is constituted, in part, by what you care about' (236). Ceasing to fulfil these obligations means no longer being the person we are. Since an ethical community is composed partly of the special responsibilities undertaken by its members, if no one feels they have any special responsibilities, such a community would therefore not exist. In the kingdom of the ethical, he points out, you can have an 'ought' only from an 'is'. He thus lays claim to the legitimacy and the value of partiality for the reason that, for human beings, relations are important, and many of them require partiality, a special care among those involved, and supply reasons for partiality, for an 'unequal treatment'. However, for Appiah, the defence of partiality does not necessarily imply the defence of national identity. Special relations can therefore have sense within true 'thick' relations (lovers, family, friends) but not within that imaginary brotherhood that one has with one's fellow nationals: 'Even if you accept that some ethical relations, some ethical communities, provide reasons for partiality, you could still wonder whether nations are among them' (237). In other words, the defence of partiality on the basis of the paradigm of friendship or the family cannot be invoked without modifications in defence of national partiality. This is because it is one thing to talk about partiality with reference to those who have a one-on-one relation, and another to talk about a relation such as one has with one's own fellow nationals, which is always 'a relation among strangers' (238).[16]

This does not mean that he shares Nussbaum's opinion that 'The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation' and consequently such a difference should not 'erect

barriers between us and our fellow human beings' (Nussbaum 2002a), because, he points out, the moral saliency of a fact is not dependent on it being metaphysically necessary. The fact that I am my mother's son is metaphysically contingent for her and metaphysically necessary for me, although this does not imply that a corresponding asymmetry exists in the special responsibilities contracted by us. In any case, if we were determined to follow Nussbaum's argument, we would have to consider the nation and not the state as being arbitrary:

> Since human beings live in political orders narrower than the species, and since it is within those political orders that the questions of public right and wrong are largely argued out and decided, the fact of being a fellow citizen – someone who is a member of the same order – is not, with respect to our normative commitments, arbitrary at all.
>
> (244)

The nation is arbitrary in that its importance is dependent on the will of individuals, although this is not the same as saying that it can be eliminated from our normative discussions. It is indeed important for individuals, namely for autonomous agents whose wishes we ought to recognize and take into consideration even if we do not always approve of them. States have an intrinsic moral value; they are important because they regulate our lives through forms of coercion that always demand a moral justification. These considerations lead us to conclude that cosmopolitans must not consider that the state be morally arbitrary in the same way as the nation. Moreover, the interest in the different forms of life and the celebration of cultural variety implicit in Appiah's cosmopolitan ideal are consistent with the existence of a plurality of states rather than with that of a single World State, which is not deemed to be a desirable political objective.[17] However, since for human beings the context at the local scale is important for self-development, a cosmopolitan ought also to acknowledge the *ethical* importance of nation-states vis-à-vis a hypothetical world state. In view of these premises:

> it is because humans live best on a smaller scale that liberal cosmopolitans should acknowledge the ethical salience of not just the state but the county, the town, the street, the business, the craft, the profession, the family as communities, as circles among many circles narrower than the human horizon that are appropriate spheres of moral concern. They should, in short, endorse the right of others to live in democratic states, with rich possibilities of association within and across their borders, states of which they can be patriotic citizens.
>
> (246)

And as cosmopolitans, indeed as 'partial cosmopolitans', they can claim this right also for themselves.

What do we owe foreigners on the strength of our common humanity?

In *Cosmopolitanism. Ethics in a World of Strangers* cosmopolitanism is presented as the union of two closely intertwined strands: in the first, we have 'obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship'; in the second, 'we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance' (Appiah 2006: xv). The first idea characterizing Appiah's cosmopolitanism refers to the commitment to recognize our responsibilities above and beyond the tight circle of our affiliations and memberships. No local loyalty, no identity, must act as a limit to the human capacity for compassion like a moral anaesthetic by means of which to rationalize the limitation of our responsibilities vis-à-vis others.

Cosmopolitans are accused of having an abstract interest in aliens, lacking the warmth and strength that stem from a common, shared identity: indeed Appiah admits that 'Humanity isn't, in the relevant sense, an identity at all' (98) capable of arousing feelings and interest. However, this criticism is the result of a misunderstanding regarding patriotism which, as we have seen, in the modern nation-states is always to be considered as a concern about aliens. It is also the result of a misunderstanding of cosmopolitan morality which does not compel us to feel for every individual what we feel for our real neighbours; or to display the same solidarity to each individual that we reserve for those who are closer and dearer to us. Cosmopolitanism must not impose demands that are psychologically impossible to satisfy. So what do these duties towards others *really* consist of? With regard to the question of whether we have responsibilities towards those who are globally more disadvantaged and what these responsibilities are, we have seen three main answers. Peter Singer proposed the following moral argument: there are some persons who are in conditions of extreme poverty and need and we can help them without having to make great sacrifices; if we can help them without making great sacrifices we ought to help them, regardless of whether or not we ourselves are responsible for their condition. We have seen how John Rawls defends the idea that we have a duty to aid poor societies and that we must help them until such time as they emerge from a condition of extreme poverty. Thomas Pogge asserts that the governments of the rich countries and their citizens are responsible for the poverty of the more disadvantaged countries and

they have the negative duty not to impose institutional configurations that generate or maintain it. Appiah discusses the position of the utilitarist Peter Unger, the author of the book with the provocative title *Living High and Letting Die* (1996), inspired by the article 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality' (1972) by Peter Singer, deemed to be the *locus classicus* of the first work on distributive global justice. Peter Unger pushes to the extreme the consequences of Singer's analogy of the child drowning in the pool and like him derives from it the following precept: 'If you can prevent something bad from happening at the cost of something less bad, you ought to do it'. Accordingly, it would be immoral not to send to organizations such as Unicef, Oxfam and the like practically all that one owns until the level is reached at which it would no longer be possible to lead a decent life. Instead of Singer's principle, which would entrain paradoxical empirical consequences and would impose demands that would be psychologically impossible to satisfy, Appiah proposes a so-called low profile but, in his opinion, more plausible principle, the *emergency principle*, according to which 'If you are the person in the best position to prevent something really awful, and it won't cost you much to do so, do it' (2006: 161). However, he commits himself to giving only lukewarm support to this principle which itself could lead to unexpected or paradoxical outcomes. The emergency principle tells us nothing about how to satisfy the fundamental needs of human beings in conditions of extreme poverty. To partially offset the negative nature of the principle, Appiah suggests three general indications. Far from proposing the creation of a global state, he insists on the importance of states as the main subjects in assuring the recognition and respect of human rights.[18] In his opinion, out of consistency, this entails shouldering a special responsibility for the life of one's own citizens and for justice in one's own country, but also the commitment to assuring that all states do the same. Cosmopolitans must accept the 'collective duty' of changing the situation of states that do not measure up to their responsibilities, and if this failure were to depend on the lack of resources, this collective duty could also entail actually providing such resources. Secondly, any plausible response to the question 'What do we owe others?' must take into account: (1) the fact that everyone has the duty to do one's fair share, but no more than this can be demanded; (2) that furthermore we can only be partial vis-à-vis those that are closest to us: 'Whatever my basic obligations are to the poor far away, they cannot be enough . . . to trump my concerns for my family, my friends, my country; nor can an argument that every life matters require me to be indifferent to the fact that one of those lives is mine' (165). Any plausible response to this question must also take into account: (3) the existence of a plurality of values and the different aspects that go to make up a human life. He very boldly asks: 'What would the world look like if people always spent their money to alleviate diarrhea in the Third World and never on a ticket to the

opera (or a donation to a local theater company, gallery, symphony orchestra, library, or what have you?)'. The critique of Singer's and Unger's utilitarianism, of the idea the maximum effort must be made to minimize evil in the world, induces Appiah to conclude with a provocative question: 'Would you really want to live in a world in which the only thing anyone had ever cared about was saving lives?' (166). In Appiah's view, a truly cosmopolitan answer to the problem of serious poverty lies in trying to understand the causes of such poverty. The duty to help others must be fulfilled by acting on the economic policies of western governments which block the development of the poor countries by imposing export tariffs and protectionist regimes, by promoting the development of democratic institutions and legislative and structural reforms (for instance, the land ownership system), which are of decisive importance in overcoming the backwardness and poverty of many African countries. Focusing attention exclusively on children's deaths would instead result in losing sight of the complexity of the problems raised by global poverty, acting via gut feeling rather than reason.

The second strand characterizing cosmopolitanism is, as we have seen, the importance ascribed 'not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance', which places at the top of the list a conception of cosmopolitanism that may be summed up in the formula 'universalism plus difference'. Unlike abstract universalism and homologating cosmopolitanism pursued by religious fanatics, Appiah's cosmopolitanism accepts a wide range of legitimate human difference. However, as he advocates a kind of cosmopolitanism in which the individual and personal autonomy are placed in the centre, he deems cultures important only because and to the extent to which they are such for individuals. When cultures are bad for individuals – for actual men, women and children – the cosmopolitan, he says, cannot tolerate them. Recognition as human beings and as possessors of unalienable rights takes priority over any claim to a specific cultural identity. Appiah (2005: 268) explains that:

> Cosmopolitanism values human variety for what it makes possible for human agency, and some kinds of cultural variety constrain more than they enable. The cosmopolitan's high appraisal of variety flows . . . from the human choices it enables, but variety is not something we value no matter what . . . the fundamental idea that every society should respect human dignity and personal autonomy is more basic than the cosmopolitan love for variety; indeed . . . it is the autonomy that variety enables that is its fundamental justification.

This means that cosmopolitans do not task other people to preserve their diversity by sacrificing their individual autonomy: 'We can't require others to

provide us with a cultural museum to tour through or to visit on satellite television's endless virtual safari . . .' (268).

Cosmopolitan conversation

One of the main tasks of partial cosmopolitanism, the only form deemed sustainable by Appiah, consists in 'debate and conversation across nations'. When we are not talking within but between political units we cannot rely on decrees and injunctions: 'we must rely on the ability to listen and to talk to people whose commitments, beliefs, and projects may seem distant from our own' (2005: 246). This cuts across the distinction normally made between moral and cultural cosmopolitanism wherein the first embodies the moral principles of universalism and impartialism and the second the values of the traveller, of those who enjoy conversing with the inhabitants of far-off countries, because: 'if we care *about* others who are not part of our political order – others who may have commitments and beliefs that are unlike our own – we must have a way *to* talk to them' (2005: 222). Appiah calls for a change in our conception of dialogue based on the idea that we must seek points of agreement at the level of principle; conversation per se must not lead to a consensus on something, and certainly not on values: 'it's enough that it helps people get used to one another' (Appiah 2006: 85). True intercultural dialogues, travel, stories, teach us that we can actually identify local and contingent points of agreement, that we can reach agreement at the level of judgement even if we do not agree with the framework within which these judgements are formulated. Relativists do not notice this discrepancy because they assume that debate within the West differs from that between West and non-West, and assume that shared western culture exists. But Appiah points out that the homogeneity of this so-called 'western culture' is a mere assumption. Indeed, he even questions the very use of the category of culture. To treat the difference between West and non-West as a special form of cultural difference is a typical modern error, a mere disciplinary product inherited from the anthropologists who are our main source of narratives on otherness.

After asserting these premises, Appiah explicitly declares that his intention is to defend a cosmopolitanism that is not just a name to denote 'a dialogue among static closed cultures, each of which is internally homogenous and different from all the others . . . a celebration of the beauty of a collection of closed boxes'. His aim is rather to give plausibility to 'a form of universalism that is sensitive to the ways in which historical context may shape the significance of a practice', and, at the same time, to expand and deepen the intuition that 'we often don't need robust theoretical agreement in order to

secure shared practices' (Appiah 2005: 256). Therefore what in Appiah's view makes the cosmopolitan experience possible is not the sharing of beliefs and values by virtue of our common reasoning capacity, but rather the capacity to grasp a narrative logic, a capacity that may be found in every people and that itself derives from the capacity to give our lives sense by interpreting our actions and experiences as part of a story. It is this basic capacity that we share with the others. Therefore, cosmopolitan dialogue insists on the idea that it is possible to agree on the details rather than on the universals, as well as on the role of narrative imagination, which represents our response to the sequence of details – two elements that are customarily ignored in explanations of how we respond to persons who are different from us. Emphasizing these two aspects obviously does not mean denying that occasionally agreement is reached also on the universals. Appiah is convinced that all human beings have the same mental apparatus for understanding the same world. Far from implying a necessarily intolerant attitude he perceives this as a condition facilitating cosmopolitan conversation: 'if there is one world only, then it is also possible that *they* might be right. We can learn from each other's stories only if we share both human capacities and a single world: relativism about either is a reason not to converse but to fall silent' (257).[19]

In investigating the reasons that led moral relativism to fail in its attempt to promote conversation with others, Appiah reveals how the relativism championed by its professional propagandists, the anthropologists, made the mistake of glorifying the differences and of encouraging the practice of tolerance based on the logic of the double standard. In other words, it is not allowed to do certain things 'here' but it is all right to do them 'there', in another culture. The close proximity with foreigners in the western countries, he also points out, has however deprived us of that 'there' and has rendered insufficient the use of a suspended judgement. Hence for Appiah the problem is not whether elsewhere some capacity or other exists to guess the truth but to determine exactly where the truth lies *now*. Lack of confidence that there is any possibility of a 'conversation among civilizations' may also be detected in that version of relativism that accepts the concept of cultural authenticity and that discounts all non-indigenous influences. Appiah praises cosmopolitan contamination in contrast with any claim to cultural purity. Cultures must be acknowledged as having the freedom to change. Cultural purity is an oxymoron, and in clear contrast with the life lived in the contemporary world but which has also partly characterized lives in the past. This position leads him to engage in the debate on the topic of cultural property and to criticize the requests for the return of objects that are no longer to be found in their place of origin. A cosmopolitan takes seriously the idea that these assets are a patrimony of humankind, as declared by UNESCO, and that therefore every country or people must consider itself the custodian of these treasures to the benefit of all.

Homi Bhabha: vernacular cosmopolitanism

Between emancipatory nationalism and homologating universalism

Together with Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha is considered one of the greatest thinkers in the field of postcolonial theory (Huddart 2006). In addressing the problem of what modernity is, Bhabha does not propose a version of the theory of multiple modernity in which one or more modernities are alternative to the known, existing, one. In a more radical fashion, he deems that an interpretation of modernity must imply a consideration of subaltern agency, that the paradigm of modernity is indeed questioned from the point of view of those Others that are usually marginalized if not completely excluded. These Others, constituted 'otherwise than modernity', are situated both in the South and the North of the planet (Bhabha 1994: 6), and embody a perspective that is absolutely central to our conceptual grasp of modernity. The Others, who have not been allowed to express themselves and be represented, become essential in the reconfiguring and recreation of present comprehensions adjusted for the past of which they are the bearers (7). One of these comprehensions is precisely cosmopolitanism, namely that – viewed both as theory and practice – which is reappraised by Bhabha precisely in the light of these theoretical premises. As far as an investigation of modernity is concerned, the individuals living in a cosmopolitan condition are considered as a community that is the product of modernity and, more specifically, of postcolonial history, which has given rise to the existence of economic immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, temporary workers, whose cosmopolitanism is essentially linked to the past, to the present, to the colonial future. Modernity has given rise to claims to universal citizenship based on the success of enlightenment as a pedagogic and political project. However, contemporary cosmopolitanism does not stem from the virtues of rationality, universality or progress: 'cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging. Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of cosmopolitical community' (Breckenridge *et al.* 2002: 6). Western cosmopolitanism must itself be acknowledged as the result of a history that was first colonial and then postcolonial, a history to which the Others have contributed willy-nilly.

Homi Bhabha (2001) levels direct criticism against several theoreticians of contemporary cosmopolitanism. As we have seen, Martha Nussbaum, in her essay 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism', developed a form of cosmopolitanism based on the idea of a *self* that is duty bound to expand the circle of its

affiliations to take into account the whole of humankind. The task of the citizen of the world consists in rendering human beings 'fellow city dwellers' and in basing its decisions on 'that interlocking commonality'. Bhabha reproaches Nussbaum for having subscribed to a profoundly provincial universalism, having taken for granted the givenness of a commonality focused on a particular image of self. The empathic self embodies universal liberal values, and giving them priority over the family, the ethnic group and the nation (Nussbaum 2002a), is capable of generating concentric cosmopolitan circles of equal size and commensurable value. If our 'fellow city dwellers' are examined concretely and not abstractly, Bhabha points out, the image of a *self* that is comparatively free of those feelings that allow for social identification and affiliation, it is found to be inadequate to represent the millions of refugees and immigrants fleeing violence and poverty, whose identity is the outcome of splits, injustice and contradictions (Bhabha 2001: 41). Also David Held, in proposing the creation of a civil sphere subject to democratic restraint and a common structure of action (1995) makes an assumption that in an age of global interconnectedness cannot be taken for granted, namely the existence at local community level of 'a *common, non contingent*, structure of action' (Bhabha 2001: 42). Accordingly Held sidesteps the problem of the 'culture' of a community which is the result of a transnational flow of cultures and people who, by their very presence, have broken down and fragmented the mechanism of the national imaginary. In general, western cosmopolitanism needs to be cured of two vices: prejudice against nationalism and homologating universalism. For the peoples who bore the brunt of European colonialism and suffered a violent physical and cultural uprooting, the emphasis on those ideas that link identity to the imagination of places (home, borders, territory, roots) was much needed to marshal resources and to unite peoples during the fight for liberation.[20] A conception of cosmopolitanism from the standpoint of the subaltern others must accord legitimacy to nationalism without for this reason accepting a type of nationalism linked to a retrograde ideology. Rather than on the idea of a global community opposed to national communities he prefers to focus, like Anthony Appiah whose proposal he appreciates, on a 'cosmopolitan community envisaged in a *marginality*'. This narrower area of the human horizon is a space that 'stops short (not falls short) of the transcendental human universal' and that for this very reason 'provides an ethical entitlement, and enactment of, the sense of community' (42). This space corresponds to the space occupied by 'vernacular cosmopolitanism'. The term 'vernacular' combines respect for the local and the desire for a post-universality dimension: it shares with 'domestic' an etymological root but is not just a simple being in a dialogical relation with the native or the domestic because 'to vernacularize is to "dialectize" as a process: . . . it is to be on the border, *in between*, introducing the global-cosmopolitan "action at a distance"

into the very grounds – now displaced – of the domestic' (48).[21] This is not an abstract process but one that is embodied in the immigrants daily routine: 'It is this double life of British minorities that makes them "vernacular cosmopolitans", translating between cultures, renegotiating traditions from a position where "locality" insists on its own terms, while entering into larger national and societal conversations' (Bhabha 2000: 139).

Post-universalist cosmopolitanism

In the introduction written by several authors to the book *Cosmopolitanism*, no definition is given of cosmopolitanism as this would be inconsistent with the open nature of cosmopolitanism, that is, of 'a project whose conceptual content and pragmatic character are not as yet unspecified but also must always escape positive and definite specification, precisely because specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do'. It is a project that 'is yet to come, something awaiting realization' (Breckeridge *et al.* 2002: 1). The condition that will allow it to be realized, and to be realized as an open project, is a process of vernacularization of Europe to occur, namely a decentring of Europe in our perception and one that opens the way to the acknowledgement of the contributions made by the others. In order to decentre the dominant comprehensions of cosmopolitanism and at the same time acknowledge comprehensions lying outside the canonical reference framework exemplified by European-style thinking and practice, it is necessary to investigate the global histories, the interrelated experiences, the cosmopolitan practices that have existed in history with a view to indicating how these new archives managed to make and still make a contribution to the analysis and definition of the new cosmopolitanism: 'For it is only through such procedures – adducing new empirical data on the variety of cosmopolitanisms and the new problematics that accompany them, decentering the conventional locus, and investigating from a wide range of scholarly perspectives – that the new and post-universalist cosmopolitanism . . . have the potential to come in being' (Breckeridge *et al.* 2002: 9–10). Cosmopolitan lessons must be sought in the various cultural contexts; the new archives, the new geographies and practices of different cosmopolitanisms can help us understand two things: that cosmopolitanism is not a circle created by a culture having radiated from a single centre but rather one whose 'centers are everywhere and circumferences nowhere', and that moreover 'cosmopolitanism is not just – or perhaps not at all – an idea. Cosmopolitanism is infinite ways of being' (12).