

Kant. The first cosmopolite

von Hippel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Agnes Miegel, and Hannah Arendt are also among the more renowned people with a connection to Königsberg. Despite the structure of the book, it is not a history of the lives and times of particular individuals. In the same way that people are, to put it mildly, necessary to the life of a city, Manthey contextualizes those he selects so that they rather constitute a background, or sounding board. One chapter highlights the Jewish community in Königsberg. Manthey believes that the preconditions for the creation of new ideas and the generation of new intellectual climates existed to a greater degree in Königsberg than in many other German cities. In the early 1800s, Frederick William IV of Prussia coined the expression the “Königsberger Oppositionsgeist”.

A FORM OF NOSTALGIA generally hovers over this kind of book, which hardly proves damaging in the case at hand. Not only the bright and exciting sides of the city’s history are included, but also the darker sides. But the basic idea that the city existed for 750 years, along with the dramatic description of its end, contribute to the sense that a heavy curtain comes down in 1946, or possibly slightly later. This is the story of the rise and fall of a city.

On subsequent visits to Kaliningrad, I have found that Königsberg, despite everything, still remains. History cannot be erased. Königsberg is everywhere. A popular activity among Kaliningrad residents is collecting objects from the German period, and they are also exhibited in local museums. The Russian Kant Society is based in Kaliningrad, and every day the chairman honors Kant with a jog around the island formerly known as Kneiphof. In the center of Kaliningrad, as well, it is possible to detect Königsberg – for those who are open to it. It is even more present in the city’s surroundings. But much is run down and in poor condition, extremely poor condition, and in urgent need of restoration. Other remnants seem to be beyond the possibility of restoration. The monster is no longer cement gray, but painted in light blue. But to be able to see Königsberg in Kaliningrad, it is really very helpful to have read Manthey’s book.

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Rebecka Lettevall & My Klockar Lidner (eds.)
The Idea of Kosmopolis: History, Philosophy and Politics of World Citizenship.

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THE IDEA OF cosmopolitanism is ancient, as the Greek origin of the term suggests. According to Diogenes Laertius, the historian of philosophy who lived in the second century A.D., the first person to use the term was the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope, today perhaps better known for his lifestyle than for his doctrines, given that he had chosen to dwell in a tub. When asked where he came from and what his native city-state was, Diogenes answered, provocatively, that he was “a citizen of the world” (*ho tou kosmou politês*). The Cynic’s provocation consisted precisely in the challenge posed to the prevailing classical ideal of the small city-state by the idea of world citizenship, and no doubt Diogenes and his cosmopolitanist stance were considered by his contemporaries as something extravagant and odd.

Nowadays, however, the idea of cosmopolitanism is taken more seriously; indeed, it has become more and more necessary to take this phenomenon into account. The change in the direction of a more positive reception began in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought, but cosmopolitanism has gained even more relevance in the times in which we now live – in the period which began after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The recent book *The Idea of Kosmopolis*, based on material from a symposium at Södertörn University, accurately reflects the changes that have taken place surrounding the concept. As the editors state in their preface, the relevance of the idea of *kosmopolis* to our times is intimately connected with the emergence of a new world order that started in the early 1990s.

THE PROFOUND CHANGES of the final decade of the 20th century in the international political system seemed to pave the way for an unrestricted expansion of the global free market economy, and (neo-)liberalist globalization was the only alternative form of social development after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. But the events of the next decade – the deepening awareness of ecological problems and the rise of militant Islamism, and now the financial crisis – which compelled a moderation of what at first were the almost utopian expectations of advocates of a global market, along with a retreat from the positions adopted in the early 1990s – have made it clear that economic globalization per se is not a sufficient strategy for a better future.

Lettevall and Linder point to an important conceptual distinction made by the well-known German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who considers economic globalization to be an empirical fact, while viewing cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, as the ability or will to act on the basis of globalization. In other words, the idea of *kosmopolis* is an attempt to get a grasp on seemingly spontaneous economic globalization processes. As such, it is actually indispensable, and one must in fact wonder why the problems of a cosmopolitan way of life have been discussed so little, especially when one surveys the mass of literature dedicated to economic globalization trends.

Of course, the present discourse on cosmopolitanism has not emerged in a vacuum. As Hans Ruin shows

in his erudite contribution, as early as in antiquity there were different interpretations of what cosmopolitanism might be, and the whole concept was somewhat ambiguous. It seems that the Stoics developed a naturalistic interpretation of cosmopolitanism, equating *kosmos* not only with the political order, but also with the general order of nature. Ruin cites a dictum from the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, where Marcus, starting from the assumption that reason is common to all men, concludes:

If this is the case, then we have also a common law. Supposing this, we are all citizens in a common state (*cosmopolites*); and again supposing this, the world (*cosmos*) as a whole can be looked upon as one state.

I find the aphorism from the *Meditations* remarkable, because it seems to foreshadow the modern ideas of *ius naturale* as a basis for general human rights. But the second advent of cosmopolis had to wait until the eighteenth century. It was, in fact, one of the key concepts of the Enlightenment, and as such it is the topic of several contributions in *The Idea of Kosmopolis*. Andreas Önnnerfors analyzes the multiple connotations of cosmopolitanism and freemasonry in Enlightenment culture, which leads into Christoph Martin Wieland’s vision of an invisible Order of the Cosmopolitanism, and Jessica Parland-von Essen takes a look at the ways in which the Swedish nobility tried to combine cosmopolitan ideals of *le Grand Monde* with patriotic values in its educational practice.

HOWEVER, THE 18TH CENTURY theoretician of cosmopolitanism *par excellence* was Immanuel Kant, whose ideas have had an immense impact on the subsequent discourse on cosmopolitanism and international relations. Kant’s masterpiece, *Zum ewiger Frieden* (Towards A Perpetual Peace) (1795), put forth the main tenets of modern cosmopolitanism. His argument – cited in extenso by Lettevall – is as follows:

The people of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and this has developed to the point where a violation of rights in one

part of the world is felt everywhere. The idea of a cosmopolitan right is therefore not fantastic or exaggerated; it is a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and international right, transforming it into a universal right of humanity. Only under this condition can we flatter ourselves that we are continually advancing towards a perpetual peace.



FORMULATED THUSLY, Kant’s idea of cosmopolitanism differs substantially from the more naive view, which was widespread during the Enlightenment and is still widespread today – that cosmopolitanism is simply a way of life which includes traveling around the world and having encounters with different peoples, countries, and customs. Kant’s cosmopolitanism has a more precise character: it focuses on human rights, and its boundaries are the same as those of humanity.

Carola Häntsch, too, concentrates on Kant in her study on Kant’s category of the *Weltbürger* (world citizen). Relying partly on Josef Simon’s semantic interpretation of Kant, as well as on a distinction between one’s own as opposed to alien reason, which Kant drew in some of his works, e. g. in *Träume eines Geistersehers* (1766), Häntsch defends the idea that we can only understand reason and human rationality in a communicative way. Thus, the universal moment in Kantian ethics, which makes

the cosmopolitan way of life possible, is nothing other than the “unlimited recognition of the alien individuality”. This kind of communicative rationality is just the counter-position of the world citizen against different modes of egoism. It should be borne in mind that this recognition of the alien individuality is not based on a philanthropic love of the Other, but has an impersonal, legal character. For anyone acquainted with the general traits of Kant’s ethics, this “formalism” should come as no surprise. According to Kant, a cosmopolitan community can be based only on international law:

The rational idea [...] of a peaceful (if not exactly amicable) international community of all those of the earth’s peoples who can enter into active relations with one another, is not a philanthropic principle of ethics, but a principle of right [...]. This right, in so far as it affords the prospect that all nations may unite for the purpose of creating certain universal laws to regulate the intercourse they may have with one another, may be termed *cosmopolitan (ius cosmopoliticum)*.

THAT THESE IDEAS OF KANT are still entirely relevant today, over two centuries after they were written down, is demonstrated by Peter Kemp in his essay, “The Cosmopolitan Foundation of International Law”. Although it is, according to Kemp, obvious that “the citizen of the world must be the ethico-political ideal for our new century”, it must at the same time be admitted that this cosmopolitan ideal has not yet been realized. For an empiricist or “political realist”, the recognition that an ideal is not fulfilled in the actual world we live in would amount to a capitulation in the face of harsh realities, and, at worst, a withdrawal into political and moral cynicism. But this is not the Kantian option, which instead stresses the importance of the obligation – the famous “ought”, *das Sollen* – which, for Kant, gives the ultimate foundation of the possibility of any morality.

The volume concludes with Lena Halldenius’s short article on the “cosmopolitan obligation”, which also presents critical comments on some points put forth by Kemp. She agrees with Kemp that ideas of international human rights and universality are a part of cosmopolitanism, but she points out that we nevertheless “need a more stable foundation for global obligation”. The obligation cannot be supported only by such “thin” ties that are, ultimately, merely formal or psychological. According to Halldenius, the foundation of global obligations of justice needs a material anchoring in “adequate institutions”, that is, in different international organizations which support the ideas of a shared humanity and universal morality. In this case, as well, the germ of the solution can be found in Kant, who, in *Perpetual Peace*, pointed to the civilizing influence of e.g. international trade, which much earlier had already forced people to grapple with global obligations.

IT IS OF COURSE NOT POSSIBLE to analyze or even mention all the aspects of such a multifaceted phenomenon as the *kosmopolis* in just one book. One thing, however, that I would like to have seen is an analysis of the “New Thinking” launched during Gorbachev’s *perestroika* in the late 1980s – not only that the *perestroika* process, by scrapping Cold War barriers, ultimately led to the changes in world politics that made the present discussion on cosmopolitanism possible, but, in addition, during *perestroika* many ideas were expressed which truly could be called cosmopolitan – e.g. when the Soviet leaders suddenly began to speak about the “values of the entirety of humanity” as a basis for every rational international policy, in contrast to the earlier stress on the “class approach”. That this “cosmopolitan opening”, as I would like to call it, got no adequate response from the West has undoubtedly contributed to a worsening of today’s global problems.

The overall tone of *Idea of Kosmopolis* is thus very Kantian. Although some articles (by Önnnerfors, Parland, and especially David Östlund and On-Kwok Lai) are rather specific case studies, one can say that the contributors follow in Kant’s footsteps regarding the ideas of cosmopolitanism, international law, human rights, and international institutions. This unanimity is telling: it shows that the status of Kant as the philosopher of modernity *par excellence* is indeed well-earned. But this is not the note that as the problems of cosmopolitanism have become more relevant, the reputation of Hegel in the “philosophic stock exchange” has sunk compared with that of Kant. It is well known that Hegel’s views on international affairs were penetrated by an acceptance of *Realpolitik*, which for him was the apex of dialectical wisdom in the philosophy of history. That Kant nowadays is held in higher esteem than Hegel is thus an expression of the widespread feeling that the present global problems cannot be solved by simple-minded “political realism”, but need an audacious and innovative approach – in other words, acknowledgement of obligations, a *Sollen* against the “realities”.

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