



Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:

Papastergiadis, N

Title:

Cosmos and nomos: cosmopolitanism in art and political philosophy

Date:

2021-01-01

Citation:

Papastergiadis, N. (2021). Cosmos and nomos: cosmopolitanism in art and political philosophy. *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 13 (1), <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2021.1980991>.

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/295804>

License:

[CC BY](#)



Cosmos and nomos: cosmopolitanism in art and political philosophy

Nikos Papastergiadis

To cite this article: Nikos Papastergiadis (2021) Cosmos and nomos: cosmopolitanism in art and political philosophy, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 13:1, 1980991, DOI: [10.1080/20004214.2021.1980991](https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2021.1980991)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/20004214.2021.1980991>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 19 Dec 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 52



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Cosmos and nomos: cosmopolitanism in art and political philosophy

Nikos Papastergiadis

Media and Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

In this article I address the tensions between normative political philosophy and aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida have been two of the most influential philosophers to engage with the political and ethical questions of cosmopolitanism. Habermas has drawn on the foundations established by Immanuel Kant and set out to define an institutional framework that could secure the rights of people in an age of mobility. Derrida's emphasis is more heavily slanted to ethical relations rather than geo-political structures. He reversed Kant's starting point, by placing the exposure to the other and the necessity of hospitality as the basis of freedom and truth. While both Habermas and Derrida have developed their political philosophy by working in close touch with Kant, the transcendental aspects of his thinking is now totally absent in the contemporary debates. As a general rule political philosophy has averted its gaze from the cosmos, and more generally it has to be noted that it has bracketed the founding philosophical concepts of aesthetics and physis. The focus is mostly on the terrain of anthropos, polis and the nomos. In short, the discussion begins and ends within the normative parameters of cosmopolitanism. By contrast, artists from the pioneering modernists like Malevich to contemporary figures such as Saraceno have never abandoned the quest for cosmogony. The ethical orientation of aesthetic cosmopolitanism appears to co-exist with a wider claim of belonging to the cosmos. In this article I contrast the orientation and scope of thinking between normative and aesthetic cosmopolitanism in order to reframe the spheres of connections in contemporary thought.

KEYWORDS

Cosmopolitanism; nomos; cosmos; art and philosophy

Cosmopolitanism has been one of the most enduring themes in the history of philosophy. However, contemporary political philosophy has struggled to accommodate the scope that was intrinsic to its original conception. In the Hellenistic era, the Stoic theory of cosmopolitanism was based on the integration of the spheres of ethics and logics as well as aesthetics and physics. The breadth of this spherical thought has never been matched in the subsequent iterations of cosmopolitanism. The central focus of this article is to evaluate the representation of cosmopolitanism in two of the most influential philosophers —Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida. In order to indicate the contraction of spherical thinking in philosophy, I will begin with an impressionistic account and end with a personal reflection on the reference to the cosmos in contemporary art. The survey is by no means definitive. The references from contemporary art are used as markers of the survival of spherical thinking. They declare a link between the cosmos and creation, but also assert the widest possible horizons for connection and belonging. These aesthetic claims are therefore also expressive of cosmological, political and ethical thought. My aim is neither to demonstrate the validity of these artistic truth claims, nor to interpret the representations of the cosmos in formal

terms. I simply appeal to these the artistic claims as a reminder that spherical thinking is still possible and as a reference point for grasping the limitations that political philosophy has inscribed into the cosmopolitan imaginary.

Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida have presented robust and affirmative theories of cosmopolitanism. Both philosophers drew on the seminal work of Immanuel Kant and also conceded that they were still caught in the grip of this foundational model. Kant's work was expressive of the focus gained by the modern mindset (Kant 1991). However, it was also the culmination of a long tradition in which philosophy was both grounded in the normative thought and untethered from cosmological speculation. In broader terms I will argue that the contemporary attempts to reclaim cosmopolitanism suffered from a pincer movement that disconnected itself from the cosmos and fastened onto a one-sided vision of the nomos. The overt focus on legal and ethical concepts and the absence of any artistic examples in Habermas's and Derrida's account of cosmopolitanism was not incidental. It was a powerful illustration of the load of nomos in the normative versions of cosmopolitanism. It was also expressive of the truncation of the modern mindset and the failure to imagine a form of

CONTACT Nikos Papastergiadis  n.papastergiadis@unimelb.edu.au  Media and Communication, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, 3010, Australia

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

cosmopolitanism that embeds human rights with aesthetic, ecological and cosmic connectedness. By contrast, artists have declared that the scope of aesthetic experimentation extends beyond formal innovation and encompasses everything from new models of social relations, instances of political intervention and visions of cosmological thought. I therefore now turn to a brief survey of aesthetic claims that provide a measure of spherical thinking.

Aesthetic Impressions of the Cosmos

In a documentary on the history of cinema, the gritty critic and director Mark Cousins connected a number of scenes from famous films like beads in a necklace. He began by noting that in: “Carol Reed’s film *Odd Man Out*: James Mason spills a drink, looks into its bubbles, and sees his troubles in them. Twenty years later, Jean-Luc Godard, who admired Reed, had a similar scene in his movie *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. Ten years after that Martin Scorsese had Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* stare into the bubbles of a drink” (Cousins 2011a). Scorsese is a fan of Reed and Godard, and small spheres it appears. In these sporadic effervescent filmic scenes, which portray the moment of contemplation, a point at which a person’s path may suddenly change, or a deep understanding that may finally come to the surface, Cousins also added a further plaintive comment in the voice over to his documentary: “a man with his troubles stares at bubbles and, somehow, the cosmos” (Cousins 2011b).

A similar narrative sequence can be assembled via examples from contemporary art. For instance, Robert Smithson complained about the sterility of the museum and situated art as part of a wider field. Beyond the sepulchral site of the museum there were the “hideouts for time” where the necessary clearing of consciousness was enabled by engendering a state of “oblivion” (Smithson 1996, 10). Takis experimented with magnets, lights and motors and his work was celebrated for expanding the frontiers between art and technology. However, his focus was more on the direction of the cosmonauts who were being launched into outer space, and he stressed that: “electromagnetism is an infinite, invisible thing that does not belong to the earth alone. It is cosmic: but it can be channeled” (Brett 2019, 34). Lucio Fontana created slits in the canvas because he wanted to “open up the space, to create a new dimension for Art, to tie it to the cosmos” (Brett 2000, 13) James Turrell made atmospheric installations in order to encourage people to stop looking at art, and to start “looking into” the objective manifestation of lightness and darkness (Adcock 1985, 36). David Medalla, artist and co-founder of the Signals Gallery in London, produced *Bubble Machine* (1961): using

soap and an oxygenator it spewed out columns of foam: millions of tiny translucent bubbles slowly rising, and then gently collapsing without trace (Medalla 2011). Mona Hatoum, living in exile and following on from Medalla’s footprints, created *Hot Spot* (2006) a sphere formed by a wire grid with an outline of all the continents of the globe in a burning red neon light. In Rosemarie Trockel’s retrospective exhibition at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid her own work was juxtaposed with artifacts from across the world—it was titled *A Cosmos* (2012).

Leaving the museum and into the spaces of the city is now a well-worn trope in contemporary art. Artists like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (*Vectorial Elevation* 2010) have opened up about the experience of public spectacles by incorporating complex digital communication systems, while others such as Lim Minouk (*New Ghost Town* 2005) have mixed the use of performance in public space with video installations in galleries to criticize the gentrification of urban culture. The forms of artistic critique on the transformations in public space are varied and global. In the fast-growing city of Guangzhou, the artist Lin Yilin performed an artwork called *Safely Maneuvering Across Lin He Road* (1995) in which he moved a temporary wall from one side of a traffic congested road to the other. Jasmeen Patheja, based in Bangalore, India, initiated a project called *Meet to Sleep* (2014-ongoing). The gesture of encouraging the right to sleep in public was aimed at exposing the vulnerability of women and it decried the absence of neutral spaces. Joy Murphy Wandin (Wurundjeri), Jonathon Jones (Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi) and Tom Nicholson (Celtic-Australian) in collaboration with the TarraWarra Museum of Art developed an artwork that marked seven points on the boundary of the station where a number of Indigenous communities were forcibly relocated (Tarrawarra 2020). Each marker appeared as a brick base with four historical plaques and buried inside the marker was an upturned flag. Reversing the direction of the flagpole struck an elegiac note on the record of colonial history. Whether the gaze looks down to the ground or up to the sky, these projects seek an escape from the master/slave dyad in the polis and provide a perspective that encompasses both the gaia and the cosmos (Povinelli 2018). In the words of the Indigenous artist Sandra Saunders: “when I die I will not go to your heaven above ... I will go to mother Earth” (Sanders 2012). It must be recalled that the citizen’s freedom in the polis was paired with the subjection of the slaves. In the utopian Stoic cosmopolis there were no slaves, only sages. There was no subordination in the cosmopolis as this would be discordant.

The outward orientation of art, is seemingly infinite: it heads from studio to museum to polis to the

world and then all the way to the cosmos. There is a struggle to find discursive categories that can keep pace with this cosmic trajectory. How do we classify artists who seek to not only challenge the boundaries within the polis but also extend their rights of connection all the way to the cosmos? Even at the founding moment of art history, Aby Warburg was aware of the traps in the available conceptual frameworks. He warned against the scholarly reliance on excessively materialistic and mystical methodologies that corralled art between the “schematisms of political history and doctrines of genius”. He saw these responses as retaining “petty territorial restrictions” and deflecting from the more important challenge of an “amplification of the thematic and geographic borders” in order for the discipline to permit a “panoramic view” (Warburg 1988, 252–3). A similar call for a spherical imagination could be found in Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “rhythmanalysis”. Lefebvre claimed that the modern city was so complex that it also needed an approach that was attuned to “cosmic cycles” (1996: 229). The recent discourse on the anthropocene has added a new level of urgency to the need to widen our frames of reference and explore the entanglements between different fields of study (Barad 2007). Hence, this article aims to offer both an indication of the way artistic claims to the cosmos are connected to the recent theoretical efforts to imagine the world from a pluriversal perspective and a supplement to the emergent theories of interspecies cosmopolitanism (Haraway 2008; Mendieta 2012). It is hoped that these prompts may also revitalize the connections between artistic and philosophical forms of spherical thinking.

The Loss of the Cosmos in Political Philosophy

It is difficult to find an outline of spherical thinking in the modern philosophical texts on cosmopolitanism. Kant’s moral universalism was designed to be top-down, but he also saw the role of the philosopher as an independent speaker in the expression of public reason. In a contemporary context, the relationship between the cosmos and political philosophy has been equally constrained. In this article I will address this impasse by exploring the tension between normative theories of cosmopolitanism in political philosophy and aesthetic claims of belonging to and connection with the cosmos. The field of philosophical ideas from which cosmopolitanism is derived is vast. In its foundation in Ancient Greece, the idea of cosmopolitanism was not only derived from ethics and politics, but also aesthetics and physics. The Stoics claimed that all people—irrespective of race, gender and class—had the right to the cosmopolis. This idea of radical equality was linked to complex theories about the order of the universe. They also

advanced theories on the existence of a cosmos as a fiery physical sphere that surrounded the earth and that the order of the cosmos was beautiful and just. However, from Saint Paul’s claim of universal brotherhood, to the Enlightenment’s vision of international cooperation, the idea of cosmopolitanism has been increasingly brought under restraint. In the post-modern conditions the scope of cosmopolitanism was further restricted as all transcendental claims were shorn away. Cosmopolitanism, without a transcendental cosmos, was both a more grounded and a narrower concept. It was disconnected from speculations about the order of the universe, and the imbrication of the cosmos as an aesthetic practice was uncoupled from both ethical relations and moral reasoning. In this truncated form, Kant proposed that cosmopolitanism was the ultimate destination for global peace and security (Kant 1991). By contrast, Carl Schmitt considered the cosmos as an embarrassing point of delusion—for him, the real focus for political philosophy lay in the *nomos* (Schmitt 2006).

In Ancient Greece *nomos* has a double-edged meaning. It refers to the spirit of the law that was derived from above. *Nomos* was part of the cosmos. However, *nomos* also referred to the action of appropriation, namely the taking and division of the earth in the form of lots. Through *nomos* the earth was seen as a divisible substance, with a myriad of allotments. The development of law and ideas of sovereignty were based on this primal claim to the divisibility of the earth. Over the ensuing centuries the classical ideals of the cosmopolis were scaled down and brought down to earth. At first, aspects of Stoic cosmopolitanism was adopted by the Romans to incorporate the different races in the empire as citizens under one rule, and finally under the influence of Christian theologians and humanists the rights of man surfaced as a check on sovereign impunity. As the field of law grew in sophistication, the cosmopolitan agenda was increasingly with the *nomos* of governance and law. The idea of cosmopolitanism was no longer interconnected with the celestial spheres and the beauty of perfect order. It was aligned with moral policing mechanisms that could at best hold back the primal clutch of territory and violent urges towards other people. *Nomos* was increasingly seen as primal, and everything else—from legal codes to social institutions—was just a secondary mechanism for regulating the appropriation and division of the earth.

Schmitt’s theory of *nomos* was the nemesis for Habermas. His philosophical agenda was defined in opposition to Schmitt’s justification of the *nomos* that was premised on the violent grabbing of territory. However, for all his attentiveness to the role of consensus and communication in the transformation of the

public sphere, Habermas never paused to reflect on the example of visual artists (Habermas 1987). Neither the avant gardist strategies of transgressing the confines of the bourgeois public sphere, nor the socially engaged practices in contemporary art that resist the colonization of public life have concerned him. Jacques Derrida also took a contrary stance to that of Schmitt. While he engaged with contemporary art at different points in his career, when he reflected on cosmopolitanism, the role of art was entirely absent.

Habermas situated his discussion on cosmopolitanism within what he called the “unfinished project of modernity”. His key starting points were found in the Enlightenment ideas that inspired the emancipatory goals of the French Revolution. He noted Kant’s reliance on reason to break free from the tutelage of theology. Habermas claimed that while Kant’s efforts were flawed, the underlying aim of using reason to restructure politics in an impartial and moral manner was the only way forward. Hence, the Enlightenment ideals of modernity were still vital and not to be thrown out with the bathwater of modern history.

Derrida was more critical of the Enlightenment’s ideas of subjectivity and cultural tolerance. Rather than consolidating the link between philosophy and civic gains, his emphasis was on reorienting the approach to the other and returning to the possibilities of unconditional hospitality. In particular, he questioned the binary that on one hand established the self as if it were a sovereign quarry of subjectivity, and on the other hand constructed the Other as an object that was, at best, tolerated and, at worst, extinguished. In their early work, Derrida and Habermas were famously at odds with each other over the future of the Enlightenment.¹ However, towards the end of Derrida’s life, they reconciled on the broad normative terrain of civic governance and international law. Both expressed a principled commitment to combating racialized structures of exclusion and extending the institutions of secular participatory democracy. At the center of both of their work was the question of communication and their relations with others. However, there are also significant differences in relation to the emphasis on the deliberative processes of liberal democracy and the capacity of tolerance to overcome the structural biases in political negotiation.

Constitutional Patriotism: Jurgen Habermas

Habermas was born in 1929. He was too young to serve in the Second World War, but old enough to witness the waste of war. His political consciousness was shaped by the legacy of the Nazi atrocities. Like Kant before him Habermas was repulsed by the spectrum of horrors in war—the violence to victims, devastation of property, plundering of land,

escalation of debts, deprivation of liberties, corruption of morals, debasement of governance, inducement of treachery and the seemingly endless cycle of dehumanization. Habermas was influenced by the development of critical theory and in 1956 he joined the Frankfurt School as Adorno’s assistant. He was critical of both the melancholic strains and extremist attitudes in post-war German philosophy. Habermas preferred to direct his thoughts and energy to emancipatory projects that could be realizable. Throughout his career he has also been a staunch critic of those who have tried to normalize the violence or diminish the responsibility of the German state in the Second World War. In Habermas’s reflections on Kant’s famous essays on cosmopolitanism begin by acknowledging the weight of the Thirty-Year War on Kant’s imagination, and ended with his own rebuttal of Carl Schmitt’s defence of the inviolability of Germany’s sovereign right to go to war (Habermas 1997). Habermas noted that Kant’s focus on the possibility of establishing cosmopolitan laws to sit alongside state and international laws was driven, neither by a diffuse aesthetic wonder in the cosmos, nor a fictive philosophical outline of a political constitution, but rather by the pursuit of a precise legal goal—cosmopolitan law as a “means of ending all wars” (Kant 1991, 187). War consciousness was heavy in both Kant and Habermas.

Habermas never doubted the validity of Kant’s goal. He agreed with Kant that the social contract—which was the basis of state law—could be extrapolated into a framework for cosmopolitan laws that could secure global peace. However, Habermas noted that Kant’s vision of a peaceful federation was contradicted by the ensuing political developments. Habermas was keenly aware of the contradictions in Kant’s consensual federation. Kant never explained how states would cede power to a voluntary and open-ended federation. Kant’s faith in the force of immanent reason was also supported by an appeal to the ascendance of three quasi-natural tendencies, but as Habermas noted these tendencies were unstable—namely, that democratic republics are no less likely to go to war, that unchecked international trade in its pursuit of profit spawns conflict rather stimulating equality, and finally the confinement of the public sphere to an elite gentlemen’s club was an inadequate means for achieving legitimacy (Habermas 1997, 120–124). For Kant the advancing power of moral principles in the public imagination was of such magnitude that it would be a sufficient means for overtaking territorial attachments, decoupling ideological divisions, and thereby delivering the realization of a peaceful federation. Habermas took a more sober view as he concluded that no political entity is sustainable without binding constitutional laws and an army that can enforce them (Habermas 1997, 127). In

more general terms, he also claimed that Kant's faith in the salvific delivery of reason through historical consciousness was misplaced. History seemed to lack the moral orientation that was driving Kant's vision of cosmopolitanism. The legacy of the Enlightenment was clearly damaged by the destructive forces unleashed in two world wars. However, it was also resuscitated by post-war efforts to rebalance individual freedom and civic responsibility. With the benefit of hindsight and in light of the specific advances in transnational institutions, Habermas reconfigured the mechanisms and framework for a cosmopolitan destiny. He had the confidence to assert that Kant's overall project could be reformed. His primary aim involved replacing metaphysical functions that were attributed to history with a more transparent and robust role in the public sphere.

This new aim for the Enlightenment project brought Habermas to consider whether a new model of "constitutional patriotism" could provide the midway point between the atavistic pitfalls of republican nationalism and the hollow abstractions of utopian cosmopolitanism. Like many scholars in the late 1980s Habermas recognized that globalization had rendered the world too complex for unilateralism. He also appreciated that the question of difference was neither a temporary nor a marginal issue in cultural identity. New global forces weakened the sovereignty of nation states and extended the processes of transnational interaction.

Constitutional patriotism was a model that Habermas first developed during the debates on the reunification of Germany in the 1990s. He argued that it encouraged people to prioritise their attachment to neutral legal norms over ethnically biased values. Habermas did not arrive at the idea of constitutional patriotism purely from a top-down process of political philosophy or from his observation of the moral tendencies within transnational institution building. The sources of this concept were drawn from his early work that investigated the role of democratic participation and communication in the public sphere (Habermas 1981, 1989). Unlike Kant he believed that ordinary people in everyday life were continuously and spontaneously involved in the conduct of reason. "It is quite simple: whenever we mean what we say, we raise the claim that what we said is true, or right, or truthful. With this claim, a small bit of ideality breaks into our everyday lives, because such validity claims can in the end only be resolved with arguments" (Habermas 1994, 102).

Habermas's faith in the capacity of reasoned argument in everyday communication thus provided the foundation of participatory democracy. It also led him to argue that rational agreement could be formed with strangers if dialogue was conducted on an equal footing and with reciprocal rights. Dialogue, he

insisted, was open only when the terms were mutual and the conditions were symmetrical. A genuine democratic process can never be one-sided or monological as: "nobody possesses the privilege of setting the boundaries of tolerance from the viewpoint of their own preferences and value-orientations" (Borradori 2003, 41). From this standpoint, Habermas claimed that both the modern formation of democratic procedures and the lifeworld in the public sphere were not the outcomes of lofty moral deliberation, but rather they emerged from the groundswell of individuals expressing their views and having to engage with the responses from others. The bottom-up and reflexive process of presenting dissenting views, negotiation and deliberation was fundamental to the liberties and obligations within liberal democratic constitutions, and for Habermas this constant exposure to critical debate and commitment to open deliberation should be sufficient to both overcome the harm caused by structural biases and secure new grounds for solidarity.

Given the prevalence of cultural diversity and the emergence of supranational formations such as the EU, Habermas argued that new forms of social consensus needed to be invented (Habermas 1998, 2001, 2007). It required people to lever their sense of belonging away from exclusionary forms of nationalism and open themselves to more inclusive forms of national unity. Feelings of belonging to a national community were therefore not seen as being in opposition to but rather the building blocks for grounding cosmopolitan relations. Solidarity that was once secured within a national framework could now be extended to a wider continental polity. Habermas was right to insist that there was no logical reason to prevent the establishment of global systems that ensure security, administer services and invent symbols that bound people around common sentiments. By being an active exponent of these arguments Habermas also played an influential role in the debates over the expansion of the European Union. Controversially he claimed that a genuine European notion of citizenship could not be formed unless Europe loosened its cultural ties to Christianity and tightened the political commitment to a welfare state (Habermas 2009). He also drew inspiration from the emergence of transnational structures like ASEAN and the UN, and regarded the institutions that were formed to address global issues ranging from defence (NATO), health (WHO), labour (ILO) and migration (UNHCR), as well as the establishment of international criminal courts as signs that pointed to the moral progress in modernity.

Habermas never renounced his faith in the capacity of ordinary citizens to make public use of their rationality. This in itself was a significant departure from Kant's own paternalistic approach towards

politics. Habermas was also prepared to confront the historical tendencies that contradicted Kant's plan. There were growing signs that not only indicated that Kant's outline of a consensual federation was impossible, but furthermore they pointed toward a more systemic crisis for the project of modernity. It was clear that many actors operate on the global stage with impunity. The world's regulatory institutions were often either too weak or selective in their execution of justice. UN peacekeepers got pushed to the side by vicious death squads, war criminals were unpunished, refugees were victimized, tech giants avoided tax, social media platforms operated in a fact-free sphere, and super-powers are shameless in bullying smaller countries. The same tools and discourses used by international institutions to meet the challenges of globality have been co-opted, usurped and inverted to stoke ambivalence, resentment and revolt against a cosmopolitan agenda. The absence of effective checks and balances, as well as the discrepancies between the rhetoric of global justice and the conduct of power politics not only undermined the credibility of the specific institutions but has also allowed the generalized discontent to fuel the fires of neo-nationalist ideologies.

Habermas claimed that Kant's reliance on history as the *deus ex machina* was fanciful. He recognised that there was still a lot of work to be done: "supporting structures are needed to institute permanent communication between geographically distant participants who simultaneously exchange contributions to the same themes with the same relevance. In this sense, there is not yet a global public sphere, not even the urgently needed European public sphere" (Habermas 1997, 125). Global civil society was, he argued still dependent on the state apparatus and at best in a transitional phase. However, his response to these challenges appeared to be circular: for all the signs of corruption and contradiction, he demanded even more transparency and openness in dialogue. He persisted with the belief that clarity in communication would flush out the flaws in the system. Habermas hung onto the idea that the "moral universalism that guided Kant's proposals remains the structuring normative intuition" of modernity (Habermas 1997, 135). In other words, the process of critical transformation and the orientation towards global dialogue that were central to the formation of modernity will also secure cosmopolitanism as its ultimate destination. Habermas never relinquished his faith in the role of the public sphere. After acknowledging that his original conception of the literary public sphere was too narrow, he responded by widening the range of actors and embracing hybrid elements in an expanded cultural public sphere (McGuigan 2005). In this context Habermas argued that constitutional patriotism could enable

people to reconcile their feelings of belonging to a national community with cosmopolitan institutions. He promoted the view that unity could be found without cancelling diversity, and that the self-critical process of modernity could accommodate both religious pluralism and secular rationality. From this perspective he repeatedly bolstered his commitment to reinvigorating what he called the "incomplete project" of modernity.

However, the solution is not so simple. Two problems persist in Habermas's cognitive approach towards modernity and faith in the neutrality of the public sphere. First, the abidance of secular rationalist universalism and the principle of unity in diversity requires all religious worldviews to abdicate their claim to universalism. For a person for whom religion was core to their identity, this response would appear to reassert the binary trap between amoral secularism and religious fundamentalism. For Habermas, it was assumed that all religious claims on universalism were parked in order to enter into a modern dialogue. This impasse has not been overcome by the bolstering of normative deliberation in liberal democracy, and there is the risk that it can degenerate into either the defensive ontologization of violence that were a feature of Sloterdijk's writing, or get caught in the traps in Mouffe's intransigent universalization of liberal democracy (Papastergiadis 2017).

The second problem in Habermas's model arises from his faith in the scope of modernity. Is the project of modernity big enough to carry a spherical vision of cosmopolitanism? Habermas replaced the fault in Kant's vision of nature guiding historical progress with a faith that liberal democracies would promote tolerance. He maintained the hope that constitutional patriotism would usher forth a higher order of solidarity. Although Habermas disagreed with Kant's solution he also argued for a reason-based form of cosmopolitanism. He stripped away the lead role of history as a transcendental force to deliver cosmopolitanism and placed his faith in the capacity for communicative reasoning in everyday life and the constitutionalisation of international law (Habermas 2008). Habermas found the seeds of his solution in Kant's blind spot. But in what sense are we any closer to arriving at our cosmopolitan destination? Ethnic wars have not diminished. The digitalization of the public sphere in contemporary society is inhabited as much if not more by a vortex of ambient fears and degenerate perversions than it is by a vehicle for solidarity and justice. It is not clear how such platforms can perform the role of cleansing shady policies, enhancing legitimacy, and mobilizing the public for the common good. The expanded public sphere all too often amplifies the contours of violence. Just as the supporting structures of

republican state and international commerce have not helped the Kantian vision of cosmopolitanism, it can also be said that the explosion of the gentlemanly public sphere into vociferous rivalrous spheres has not helped consolidate Habermas's theory. Habermas eventually acknowledged the importance of culture and affect, but there was also little doubt that he failed to open this aperture with sufficient width to encapsulate a more nuanced vision of cosmopolitanism.

Habermas had the perspicacity to note Kant's blind spot to the imbrication of class and culture. This blind spot blocked the recognition of the "continuum that a liberal political culture established between the prudent pursuit of one's interests, moral insight and custom" (Habermas 1997, 125). However, it was also clear that Habermas shared Kant's sympathy for dispassionate evaluation and predilection for courteous reasoning. There was a common expectation that particular rules of civic communication could be extrapolated into universal principles. Out of the revulsion of wars and from the ruins of conflict was born an optimistic will for consensus and cooperation. However, Habermas neglected to examine Kant's negative claim on human nature. For Kant the work of morality was fundamentally directed against our supposedly innate "asocial sociality". Habermas was silent on this foundational point. By bracketing the question of human nature—the proposed solution of a more transparent public sphere was left vulnerable. If human nature is as violent as Kant feared, and given that Habermas says nothing to dispel this fear; then, the contours of the public sphere, will inevitably be filled with the noise of the masses rather than the orchestrated signal of the elites. For it to be otherwise we need a different theory of human nature, cultural communication and cosmopolitan law.

Between Unconditional Hospitality and Open Hostility: Jacques Derrida

Jacques Derrida proudly described himself as a "citizen of the world" (2001:3). "I came from the southern coast of the Mediterranean ... a sort of over-aculturated, over-colonized European hybrid ... I am European ... I am not, nor do I feel European in every part ... I feel European among other things" (Derrida 1992, 7, 82, 83). In *The Other Heading* Derrida faced the crisis of identity in the European project unification, and he used this crisis to reflect on the possibility that cosmopolitanism begins in hospitality (1992). This book was based on a lecture delivered to a small group of philosophers in Turin, and it was first published in *Liber, Revue européenne des livres*. *Liber* was a newspaper that circulated between 1989 and

1998. It was a critical review that sought to denationalize our perspective on the arts and society. It was neither city-based, nor the voice of a nation. The newspaper was inserted as a supplement in other metropolitan outlets such as Frankfurt's *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Turin's *L'Indice*, Madrid's *El Pais*, and Paris's *Le Monde*. During the decade of its existence it was published in over a dozen languages and countries. Throughout his text Derrida addressed the identity of Europe as a cape, a headland, an orientation and an extremity that protrudes into water. He also stressed that the capital and strategic policies of Europe are not singular: instead it is part of a capillary network such as the Hanseatic harbour and Rhine river cities. Geography mattered in this early texts on cosmopolitanism, but it was expressed through the liquid metaphors of navigation rather than territorial tropes of bounded occupation (Derrida 1992, 14).

Derrida's most influential essays on hospitality and cosmopolitanism were written in the late 1990s. They were forged during the hardening of European laws on asylum and they also mark a turning point in France's self-image as a place of welcome for refugees.² The specific context in which they were written is equally significant. *Adieu* was delivered as a eulogy at the cemetery during the burial of the great philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. *A Word of Welcome* was a lecture at the Sorbonne in a symposium to honour Levinas. Throughout the lecture Derrida referred to the prescience of Levinas's treatise on hospitality and the urgency of committing further thought to this topic given the world-wide refugee crisis and the specific event of 300 *san-papier* immigrants taking refuge in the Parisian Church of St. Bernard. In August 231,996 French police stormed the church, arrested all the occupants, and deported most of the refugees. The symposium on Levinas was titled: "Face and Sinai". Derrida repeatedly referred to Sinai as a metonymy for the city of refuge, the border between the stranger and the citizen, and a call to think of the city as a site of openness.

The status of the polis—liquid or fortified—and quest for sanctuary also framed the question that Derrida faced in his address to the International Parliament of Writers in Strasbourg and which led to the publication *On Cosmopolitanism*. Derrida elevated the status of the city as a space of experimentation, as a zone in which belonging could be imagined beyond the matrix of deportation or integration, and thereby offer a wider orientation towards the world. He turned to the city because it had a richer repertoire of admission than the nation state, and also because he concluded that the state failed to rise to the challenges of globalization. On the issue of migration he concluded that the

nationalist perspectives had become trapped in a moribund spiral of punishment and violence (2000: 7).

While Derrida's approach on the question of cosmopolitanism was different from Habermas's—he saw the encounter with the stranger not as an accommodation problem, but as the existential site of identification—he was equally aware of the gap between the philosophical principles and the institutional deficits within the international order. For instance, after the catastrophic Second World War and the vicious break-up of Yugoslavia there had been the staging of trials against war crimes. The Italian philosopher of law Danilo Zolo had revealed how these worthy calls for justice were co-opted by the victors: prosecutors colluded with occupying forces, while tribunals focused only on the atrocities of the losers (1996, 2001). Humanitarian discourses had been weaponized by international legal institutions. The shaming of state violence and the exposure of the political expediency is now a familiar refrain among progressive intellectuals. Derrida professed solidarity with universal principles while also insisting that his critical “deconstructive” approach was not aimed at either diminishing or destroying their validity (Derrida 2001, 3). Rather than continuing to expose the gaps between virtuous principles and vicious realities, or the contradictions in national policies on citizenship and their selective attention to overarching commitments to human rights, Derrida reminded us of the even greater risks of living in a world without any form of global governance. By focusing on the role of hospitality in the governance of a new Europe or the adoption of cosmopolitan principles within international institutions, Derrida was also indirectly challenging the primacy of residentialist perspectives for understanding belonging and the dominance of fortress metaphors for the polis. However, in terms of philosophical heritage, Derrida was at the intersection of Levinas and Kant.

Derrida was deeply conscious of the Kant's legacy. He noted that, since Kant, the condition of hospitality had been framed through the balancing of two competing principles. Strangers had the human right to request refuge, and the host had the sovereign right to determine the terms of admission. In Kant's model the burden of duty was distributed in the favour of citizens—strangers had the right to be received without hostility, but also the obligation to conform to local laws was unquestionable. In short, strangers could hope to find temporary respite, and be expected to leave when it was safe to do so. If they were permitted to stay, then they must assimilate and become citizens. Derrida began his essay on cosmopolitanism by imagining a third space. He considered whether a stranger had the right to belong without having the expectation to either leave or become

a citizen. Hospitality, he suggested was no longer confined to either offering limited accommodation, or a process of converting strangers. It was also constituted as an opening of a space for difference to “open up new horizons of possibility previously undreamt of by international state law?” (2001: 8).³

By asserting the space for difference in the ethics of hospitality and the laws of cosmopolitanism, Derrida also made two bold claims on culture and identity. First, “hospitality is culture itself” (Derrida 2001: 16). The nationalist perspective on culture and hospitality would have it the other way around: culture was a process of identification and belonging that occurred within the boundaries and through the institutions of the nation. Culture begins and ends within the borders of the nation. From a nationalist perspective culture is affirmed by residence. Hospitality would thereby be a code or a ritual that was determined by the nation's culture. Derrida rejected this bounded framework and projected a series of axioms on culture and difference, asserting that: “culture never has a single origin” (Derrida 1992:10) and proposing that identity needs to be viewed from the “land of asylum or refuge” (Derrida 1999: 37). In short, he argued that if culture was constituted in and energized through the interplay of differences, then hospitality must come first.

Derrida's second bold claim was that identity was constituted through difference. Kant saw identity as a mineral that existed in an interior quarry. For Kant identity was situated deep inside human subjectivity, and he held the view that, if this raw identity was cultivated by moral reasoning; then, the capacity to give hospitality to strangers was also enhanced. However, there were explicit limits to Kant's engagement with strangers. If the stranger was too different, in terms of race and class, or if they made unbearable demands; then, it was presumed that this Otherness would also pose an unacceptable risk. Derrida rejected both the idea that identity was enclosed, and the restriction of the scope of identification by a racist hierarchy. It was by being open to difference, and therefore open to the infinite and unique form of the other that the self was creatively constituted. Hospitality was not derived *from* the depths of the individual's moral character, but rather it was generated *in* the encounter with the Other. By facing the other without pre-determining the conditions of the encounter or the prior knowledge of the contours of recognition, the individual was open to infinite possibilities of exchanges. By granting priority to openness it puts forward the ability to receive the Other without constraints and coercion, and it also frees the space for the constitution of identity.

Derrida's perspective on cosmopolitanism thus began from the apertures of hospitality. It was also influenced by the work of his close friend Emmanuel

Levinas. For Levinas the idea of hospitality preceded both the expression of personal ethics and exceeded the abidance to civic laws. It is the fundamental condition of being human, and he claimed that the experience of offering and receiving hospitality occurred in a mode that was prior to rational calculation or verbal articulation, it was an involuntary and embodied exchange whose source comes from on high (Levinas 1979). Thus the arrival of the stranger is always a shock. The stranger must be welcomed without either the pre-determining marks of identity or signs of utility. Their presence is not only a break from the normal routine, but also a decoupling of the condition of reception from the activity of identification. It also announces a form of radical equality akin to the Stoic conception of being open to all and admitting everyone as one's own. Levinas was a generation older than Derrida. On one of their walks through Paris, Levinas expressed that what most interested him in ethics was not the formulation of the rules of conduct, but its link to the "holy, the holiness of the holy" (Derrida 1999, 4). For Levinas, the ethics of hospitality was a glimpse into a connection that was more profound than the bonds of family and ethnos, let alone the attachments to things and places. Derrida recalled that Levinas pointed him towards this higher sign. However, it is also notable that in his subsequent elaboration on unconditional hospitality in the essay *On Cosmopolitanism* he averted his gaze from the fiery cosmos and focused more on the nomos of the polis. It must be stressed that for Derrida the focus on nomos was neither drawn from the primal action by which humans divide the earth (Schmitt 2006), nor derived from the sociological construction of a worldview (Berger 1967), but as the rule of law that came from hospitality.

Following on from Levinas, Derrida made another bold claim about the link between cosmopolitanism and hospitality. He announced that hospitality began in the utterance of an unquestioning welcome: "let's say yes to *who or what turns up*, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any *identification*" (Derrida 2000: 77). In an earlier essay on Levinas he already underscored the point that the primal Yes was an affirmation that preceded aesthetic wonder and ethical acceptance (Derrida 1999, 3). It was expressive of the indissoluble fellowship with all of humanity. Being human feels fellowship. Later he added that unconditional hospitality is above the rule of law, exceeds the compliance with personal ethics, and has no regard for economic benefit: "The principle (of hospitality) demands, it even creates the desire for, a welcome without reserve and without calculation, an exposure without limit to whoever arrives" (Derrida 2005, 6). At first brush, Derrida was challenging the Kantian assumption that the

host has the authority to determine the conditions of the encounter with the stranger. In Kant's vision of a cosmopolitan order the rights of the stranger never conflicted or undercut the sovereignty of the state, nor were they to be served up as a burden on the citizen. For Derrida, this was at best a patronizing relationship that reinforced the power of the host as master of the house, and at worst it is another instance in a long history of "perverse" acts that humble, humiliate and commit violence against the stranger (Brett 2000, 149; Derrida 2001, 17).

Levinas's lofty thoughts on hospitality were formative for Derrida. However, Derrida was also determined that his outline of cosmopolitan governance was not to be dismissed as a mere sentimental expression of altruism. Like Kant, he did not want to be regarded as either an impotent idealist or a dreaming pacifist. He also believed that philosophy, in the long run, will have a guiding hand in defining the axioms of international law and shaping cosmopolitics (Brett 2000, 8). But where does this urge to be within touching distance of realism take us? Derrida was equivocal on this front. Tolerance of strangers was not enough for Derrida. For it is assumed that the presence of the stranger was either temporary, or at most a partial interruption that could be eventually smoothed over. If the absolute form of hospitality was overtaken by pragmatic tolerance and instrumental accommodation, then, for Derrida, the very principle of hospitality collapsed. Hospitality was not fulfilled by tolerance alone, and he insisted that the rights of the stranger were not predicated on a duration or performance that simply suited the host. However, there are political consequences that follow from an open welcome.

Derrida conceded that the desire to welcome the stranger also presupposed a home. In his reflections on the possibility of inventing a new cultural identity for Europe, he both rejected that it should be governed from the point of a singular capital and monological story of origin, but he also stressed that a new model of cosmopolitan governance also requires that the capillary structure did not spill into boundless flows. He reinstated the injunction of a double bind: "neither monopoly nor dispersion" (Derrida 1992, 41).⁴ Cosmopolitanism is thus caught in the double bind of dependence and disavowal. Hospitality is dependent on the institutional support mechanisms of the state, but in turn, the state can ill afford to disavow the values of openness. Similarly, when working his way through Levinas's treatise on hospitality Derrida underscored the priority of the home. For the host to offer hospitality the host must also and already feel at home and have a home to offer shelter for the other. This capacity to offer a welcome established an asymmetry in the moment of encounter, but Levinas also stressed that the place of

encounter was in the primal state of human fellowship. The topology of hospitality began in its bond to one another, rather than the physical object of shelter. Hospitality for Levinas was neither a submission to an edict that descends from the divine, nor an internal expression of egocentric will. The enfolding logic of hospitality entangled the host and the guest and it dissolved the authority of the home into the infinite condition of openness: “the host is received in his home. He receives the hospitality that he offers *in* his home, he receives it *from* his own home—which in the end, does not belong to him” (Derrida 1999, 41). This topology is a radical departure from Kant’s emphasis on hospitality from the perspective of the host’s right to define the point and terms of entry. In Kant hospitality followed from the host’s decision, whereas in Levinas the host was beholden to the Other and hospitality enfolded both of them.

Derrida switched between the Levinasian and Kantian perspectives. By staying within the grip of Kant’s moral reasoning he, in effect, also put the condition of hospitality in a double bind. The “gift” of welcome cannot, he insisted suspend the conditions upon which it was issued. The home was a place of shelter for the Other, but its opening also reintroduced the laws of borders and reception (Derrida 2005,6). Derrida famously captured the tension between the hostility that comes from border politics and the gift of unconditional hospitality with the neologism “hostipality” (Derrida 2000a). In short, hospitality was caught between open-ended principles and laws with boundaries. Kant proposed that the stranger had the natural right to present his request for asylum, but the right to stay could only be conferred by the state. Derrida returned us to this double-binding between universal rights and state sovereignty. For Derrida, this conflict remained unresolved: one does not exist without the other, and to a large extent the state sovereignty continues to ring-fence universal rights. It was in a cautionary tone that Derrida concluded that the state that had priority, and every effort of recalling the principle of unconditional hospitality—as a step towards ameliorating the perversity of a conditional hospitality that is predetermined by the host, must also include the counter step that acknowledges that conditional hospitality is *a priori* to the arrival of the stranger. For Derrida there was no chance of wishing this condition away; otherwise, cosmopolitanism would not even qualify as a utopian ideal it would be a mere “pious and irresponsible desire” (Derrida 2001, 23).

At first glance, Derrida’s announcement on unconditional hospitality appeared to be both a supplement to both the Stoic and Kantian theories of cosmopolitanism. However, on closer inspection Levinas’s identification of the source of hospitality coming from “on high” also reminds us of the sacred

duty to *xenia*. In Homer’s *Odyssey* there was a portrayal of the complex series of rituals that defined the stranger—host, *xenos*—*xenia* encounter. A crucial feature was that the stranger was received in silence and with discretion. It was only after the cleansing of the body, partaking in prayer, and sharing of food, that the stranger announced himself and told his story. The conditions of hospitality began in the discrete silence of bodily nourishment and spiritual communion. The ritual of the stranger’s story telling only commenced after there was composure. In the Homeric epic, the stories invariably traversed the chaos of being away from home, and were loaded with the bathos of regaining a cosmos through the completion of the journey. The *Odyssey* also provided a startling catalogue of different kinds of hospitality; ranging from the Sirens and their seductive manipulation, to the bestial Cyclops who aimed to devour their guests. However, the key figure in Homer’s story of hospitality was Odysseus’s shepherd—Eumaeus, who reminded us that hospitality should be offered to anyone or *anything* because hospitality was a divine duty and the stranger in rags at your doorstep may be Zeus in disguise.

Derrida stressed that hospitality presupposed a home from which the master could offer refuge to the stranger. However, the figure that offers unconditional hospitality in the *Odyssey* is the lowly servant shepherd. He opened himself to the stranger. Sharing food, shelter and clothing. He received him without question and expressed it as a duty that bears no calculation. He accepted the stranger with neither moral judgment; nor expectation of any favour. His conduct was not based on any civic law, other than the divine law of *xenia* hospitality, which demanded that all strangers be treated as if they were Zeus. It was Eumaeus who gave and risked the most and thereby stood in contrast to the cannibalistic Cyclops, seductive Sirens and venal Princes. In Derrida’s double bind between hospitality and sovereignty, between cosmopolitanism and the state, he acknowledged over and over again that unconditional hospitality cannot be codified in law or regulated by politics, and he also stressed that it cannot be ignored: “Unconditional hospitality, which is neither juridical nor political, is nonetheless the condition of the political and the juridical” (Borradori 2003, 129). Derrida was clear eyed about this tension. He accepted that while lawmakers and political rulers may fall short of the idea of unconditional hospitality, this does not mean that the spectrum of the ideal should be reduced to conforming with practical exigencies. He held onto the need to keep open the horizons of meaning and the imperative to continuously experiment with the production of new meanings. Yet, when Derrida reached for examples of cosmopolitanism he consistently turned to the

developments in international law, the formation of international courts of justice, the deployment of new international military peacekeeping forces, the emergence of global media platforms, and even the International Monetary Fund (Borradori 2003, 115, 119, 125).

We saw that Eumaeus did not offer hospitality as an owner of the property or from the position of being a legislator. Why did not Derrida reach for examples of hospitality among the homeless and draw on artistic vision cosmopolitanism? In Homer, hospitality was not only a guise to lure strangers, an insurance policy among elites, a form of practical ethics towards fellow humans, but tellingly it was also a site for encounters with the divine. While Derrida accepted Levinas's claim that the essence of being human was the feeling of human fellowship, and he warmly recounted the principle of hospitality being from "on high"; nevertheless, he failed to give any examples, such as the one we saw in the *Odyssey*, where a lowly person either takes himself from under the rule of venal Princes, or steps away from their own material self-interest and finds a connection with the stranger which in effect comes from on high. Eumaeus did not offer hospitality because he recognised the stranger as a family member. When the Princes mocked him for bringing the ragged Odysseus to the Palace he remained steadfast. Eumaeus had a fundamental connection to the stranger that elevated both of them above other obligations. The bond of hospitality was thus set apart from all other duties—it radiated, as Levinas stressed, with holiness.

Derrida was born in El Biar, French Algeria. He was raised as a Sephardic Jew. Although he was a brilliant student he was expelled from high school in the French colonial period due to the imposition of a racial segregation law. Meditating on his own immigrant experience he asked: "In what language does one write memoirs when there is no authorised mother tongue?" (Derrida 1998, 31). The rush of cosmopolitanism neither comes from cosmic attunement as proposed by the Stoics, nor Kant's faith in the mystical unfolding of reason through the progress of history. Derrida's deconstruction of cosmopolitanism is a process of bringing it closer to the ground. When he described himself as "citizen of the world" to a fellow philosopher in New York, he expressed this in English using the word world and thereby linking it to the planetary sense of earth, rather than *monde* or *cosmos*.

For Levinas hospitality is the "infinite" fellowship with the Other. The Other is not an abstraction it is another human whose co-presence offers a glimpse into another world. For Derrida, this encounter with the Other opens the individual to the abyss of subjectivity and the realm of infinite belonging. Yet, the cosmos in Derrida's

cosmopolitanism is also marked by a series of closures. The post-modern condition from which Derrida defines his outlook was one in which metaphysical claims had lost their footings. Levinas's conception of holiness and Kant's view on the progress of historical reasoning were not part of his deconstructed ethical world making. Derrida remained equivocal on the balance between sovereignty and hospitality, because just as he granted the unconditional right of the stranger, he also accepted that war, hostility, even murder are "always manifest in this originary welcoming" (Derrida 1999, 90). The world that Derrida works from and the kind of world he imagines as possible, was therefore different from the worlds constructed by Levinas and Kant. In Levinas the world was open to the cosmos. In Kant the cosmos was held in awe but also separated from the worldly principles of moral engagement. Derrida appreciated the difference between these worlds but ultimately, he also leant closer to Kant's world.

For Kant the world started in a state of war. The natural state of the world was not peace. He also made explicit that peace would not be secured without cosmopolitan law. Peace was not part of nature, but it was nature's plan to deliver peace and security through the progression in the historical power of human reasoning. So at the end of history we would arrive at an unnatural state of peace. It was the force of law that was informed by moral reasoning that held humanity in check. According to Kant the achievement of peace was not the discovery of a latent quality, but a condition that was instituted by law. Peace was not already there in nature. On the contrary, it needed to be made. It was cultivated by reason and imposed by the rule of law. On the question of human nature Derrida oscillated between Kant and Levinas. The interplay between the bellicose and irenic dimensions in human nature were never resolved by Derrida. The double bind was a constant feature of Derrida's writing: one arm was tied to an irresistible force of motion and the other fastened to an unmoveable solid mass. Injunctions thrust us outward into the winds of infinite hospitality and also pulled us back into the four walls of the home. Derrida shuttled between the desire to be open and the need for closure. He committed himself to heading into the new experimental horizons of hospitality but also conceded to being captivated by the dark questions raised by Kant (Derrida 2001, 5, 22). Yet, as the political philosopher Etienne Balibar noted, the poetic push was no match for the pull of realism, and it was perhaps for this reason that he placed Derrida alongside Habermas as fellow Kantians in the "reactivation" of normative cosmopolitanism (Balibar 2012, 294).

Conclusion

The focus on Habermas and Derrida provided an opportunity to mark out the extensions in

cosmopolitan thought to political philosophy. However, it also revealed some underlying flaws and gaps in the theories. For Habermas the possibilities of a cosmopolitan future rested on the viability of transnational institutions. These new civil institutions in turn relied on a series of normative assumptions. Secularism, rationality and liberalism were taken as neutral and universal. Derrida recognised that the encounter with the other was a foundational condition of humanity. He built his ethical outlook on the grounds of human fellowship and unconditional hospitality. However, he also accepted that violence and destruction were intrinsic to all acts of welcoming. Habermas and Derrida never directly addressed the condition of human nature and failed to follow the lead of artists in the field of cosmopolitanism. They put their faith in the development of legal and political instruments. However, the unresolved question of what human nature has left the door open for the critics of cosmopolitanism. The bracketing of metaphysical claims and the ambivalence towards human nature, when combined with the stacking of the inventory of violence and destruction, has given critics from opposite ends of the political spectrum, such as Chantal Mouffe (2008) and Peter Sloterdijk (2013) the opportunity to seize on the fact that cosmopolitanism is at best an irenic ideal and at worst an ideological illusion that can be manipulated to gloss over the primacy of asociality in human nature, religious exclusivism and political hubris.

The tension between the normative and aesthetic perspectives on cosmopolitanism, and the imbrication of the topos of the imagination and the cosmos has never been resolved in the discourses on aesthetics and philosophy. During the late 1980s and 1990s I worked alongside Rasheed Araeen, the artist, curator and founding editor of the journal *Third Text*. Routinely, he would declare that the purpose of the institutions of art—journals, exhibitions, biennials, and museums, was to provide the setting for an artist's claim as an historical subject (Araeen 1984). Despite his trenchant critique of the Eurocentric bias in canonical art history, this did not diminish his conviction in the function of the artist as a participant in the evolution of a sweeping historical narrative. The ultimate aim for artists like Rasheed Araeen was not just to be collected by a museum, or be the focus of an art historical monograph, as they were not an end itself, but just the means to being *in* History. The artistic desire to be in history was therefore not confined to memorialization. It was connected to the teleological vision of the Enlightenment. To be *in* History was to be part of the force that changed the world.

Early in 2000 I had the opportunity to be on a panel with artists and philosophers. At that point of time, everyone was enthralled with the philosopher

Alain Badiou. The chair of the panel was seeking to validate the function of contemporary art by equating it with Badiou's account of ethics. As she spoke the artist to my left, Susan Hiller, was bristling with resistance. When it came to her time to speak, she pointed out that her ethical outlook did not control her artistic practice. She insisted that the condition of creation did not follow from an obligation toward, nor arise out of an interest in the other. Artists do not create art according to an ethical code or from their moral compass. Hiller was not against ethics, but she refused to accept that this limited her capacity for creation.

Where does the drive to make art come from? The ambition to be part of history, the freedom to explore in an unfettered manner, these propositions are not opposed to the critical function of art. Artists have been identified as agents in counter-hegemonic struggles that expose contradictions, unpack hidden assumptions and reassess the distribution of costs in social order, they have also been valourised for their capacity to form bridges across cultural differences, and organize spaces of conviviality (Mouffe 2013). However, the social, political and cultural work articulated by artists does not simply replicate or supplement the conduct of welfare agencies and lawyers. Another cosmos is also visible in the artistic engagements with these worlds.

This need to reclaim the aesthetics of cosmopolitanism is not launched as a counterpoint to, or in competition with, the normative versions of cosmopolitanism. There are important political steps that need to be pursued in order to rethink the new world order that is increasingly driven by the contradictory forces of techno-capitalism and neo-nationalism. However, the contemporary efforts to elevate the conception of human rights and the invention of new institutions that can deliver a cosmopolitical agenda are a long way from being secured in the present realities (Spivak 2012: 113). While there was a brief hope that cosmopolitanism was being embedded in the new transnational institutions, the developments in the past decade have done much to discredit the vision. We are at the crossroads—stuck between an aggressive territorialism with its attendant restrictions on the mobility of the poor and assertive globalism that gives greater freedoms to capital.

How can the imagination be of service in this contradictory context? The ethical orientation of welcoming cosmopolitanism has strong parallels in socially engaged and collaborative forms of contemporary art. Over the past two decades, socially engaged art practices—in which face-to-face/skin-to-skin/shoulder-to-shoulder encounters with strangers—have gained more prominence in the art world. During this period my focus on art writing has been on artists such as Emily Jacir who create “spaces of

friendship” and the emergence of a “cosmopolitan confederation” of museums under the banner of L’Internationale (Papastergiadis 2020a, 2020b). In these texts I have argued that artists have been at the forefront of the critique against the neo-nationalist rhetoric that stigmatizes refugees with bestial metaphors and the corporatist discourses that reduce migrant labour to instruments for exploitation. However, I also noted that artists have not confined their imagination to political and ethical struggles. They have often combined a normative vision of cosmopolitanism with an outward orientation towards the cosmos. From pioneering figures of the avant garde such as Kazimir Malevich to contemporary artists like Tomas Saraceno we witness the most expansive engagement with the cosmic spheres. Malevich was not just obsessed with the theme of flight, he was simultaneously inspired by both ancient philosophies of the cosmos and the modern engineering fantasies of cosmism (Andrews and Siddiqi 2011). Saraceno’s attention to atmospheres led him to experiment in the production of flying machines and speculate on the ecology of cloud cities (Saraceno 2017, 85).

In the widest possible sense this article has attempted to both trace the shifting shape of cosmopolitanism, but also to consider its relevance in the era of the anthropocene. The recognition of the challenges brought on by mobility is not alien to the humanities. Imperialism, globalization and multiculturalism are concepts that have been developed to address the political domination of other countries, the outward reach of economic integration, and the incorporation of minority cultures within national structures. Postcoloniality and the decolonial are also new terms for reflecting on and providing an alternative perspective to the exploitative and violent modes by which the North subordinated the South. However, whenever these concepts are brought into dialogue with the ancient idea of cosmopolitanism, the latter is only grasped by terms and perspectives that have been forged in say, the political economy of globalization and the national cultural policies of multiculturalism. Is this sufficient, and is it not another distortion and corruption of the basis for a dialogue in this complex and interconnected world? One of my aims is to avoid conflating the cosmos in cosmopolitanism with the globe in globalization. Going global has tended to follow the logic of the *nomos*—the competitive and coercive cutting up of the earth. Against this paradigm we can assert the outward reach of the cosmos. The rights to the cosmos must now be conceived not just in terms of a common humanity, but also a companionship with all that extends from the tiniest elements in nature to every galaxy in the universe. This endeavor is linked with others, such as the post-anthropocentric foundation of interspecies

cosmopolitanism (Mendieta 2012, 283), and the cosmopolitan turn in art history that has in part broken down the nationalist paradigms (Meskimmon 2020, 5). Despite these vast challenges and evidence of only small steps, I believe that a spherical sensibility to cosmopolitanism is already here and always present in the aesthetic experience of the cosmos.

Notes

1. Despite hurling derisive claims about the inherent intolerance and violence in communicative action theory (Derrida 1992, 35) and the debunking of deconstruction as heir to Dionysian messianism (Habermas 1987, 160), by 2001 both Derrida and Habermas, put aside their methodological disputes and found much more to agree on in terms of political philosophy.
2. The French publication of *The Other Heading* was in 1991, whereas *Monolingualism of the Other, Adieu A Word of Welcome, Of Hospitality and On Cosmopolitanism* appeared in quick succession between 1996 and 1997.
3. Is this space equivalent to the contemporary category of a resident stranger, or the ancient status of the *metic*? Derrida does not tease out these distinctions.
4. For an account of a range of artistic and cultural initiatives to form transnational collaborations and cosmopolitan confederations in Europe see: Papastergiadis (Papastergiadis 2020a, 1–4,50–67).

Notes on contributor

Nikos Papastergiadis Professor of Media and Communication and Director of Research Unit of Public Cultures.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

- Adcock, C. 1985. ““Light, Space, Time: The Visual Parameters of Roden Crater.”” In *Occluded Front: James Turrell*, edited by J. Brown. Museum of Contemporary Art: Los Angeles. 14–27.
- Andrews, J., and A. Siddiqi. 2011. *Into the Cosmos*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Araeen, R. 1984. *Making Myself Visible*. London: Kala Press.
- Balibar, E. 2012. ““Citizenship of the World Revisited.”” In *Routledge Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, edited by G. Delanty. Abingdon: Routledge. 291–301.
- Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Berger, P. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of Sociological Religion*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Borradori, G. 2003. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brett, G. 2000. *Force Fields: Phases of the Kinetic*. London: Hayward Gallery.

- Brett, G. 2019. *Takis*. London: Tate Modern.
- Cousins, M. (2011a) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/sep/01/ideas-movies-film-history> (accessed 2 Feb 2020)
- Cousins, M. (2011b) *The Story of Film – An Odyssey* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xz9Zt4Shjqg> (accessed 2 Feb 2020)
- Derrida, J. 1992. *The Other Heading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Derrida, J. 1998. *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. 1999. *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. 2000. “Step of Hospitality” in *Anne Dufourmantelle & Jacques Derrida, of Hospitality*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Derrida, J. 2000a. “Hostipality.” *Angelaki* 5 (3): 3–19.
- Derrida, J. 2001. *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. London: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. 2005. “The Principles of Hospitality.” *Parallax* 11 (No): 1.
- Habermas, J. 1981. *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Frederick Lawrence (trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Habermas, J. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. 1994. *The past as Future*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Habermas, J. 1997. “Kant’s Idea of Perpetual Peace, with the Benefit of Two Hundred Years Hindsight.” In *Perpetual Peace*, edited by J. Bohman and M. Lutz-Bachmann. MIT Press: Cambridge MA. 165-201.
- Habermas, J. 1998. *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Habermas, J. 2001. *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Habermas, J. 2007. “A Political Constitution for the Pluralist World Society?” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34 (3): 331–343.
- Habermas, J. 2008. “The Constitutionalisation of International Law and the Legitimation Problems of a Constitution for a World Society.” *Constellations* 15 (4): 444–455.
- Habermas, J. 2009. *Europe: The Faltering Project*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haraway, D. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kant, I. 1991. *Political Writings*. ed.) H. S. Reiss, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Levinas, E. 1979. *Totality and Infinity*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- McGuigan, J. 2005. “The Cultural Public Sphere.” *European J of Cultural Studies* 8 (4): 427–443.
- Medalla, D. (2011) <http://moussemagazine.it/david-medalla-adam-nankervis-2011/> accessed 20 March 2020.
- Mendieta, E. 2012. “Interspecies Cosmopolitanism.” In *Routledge International Handbook of Cosmopolitanism Studies*, edited by G. Delanty. Routledge: London. 276-288.
- Meskimmon, M. 2020. *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mouffe, C. 2008. “Which World Order, Cosmopolitan or Multipolar?” *Ethical Perspectives* 15 (4): 453–467.
- Mouffe, C. 2013. *Agonistics*. London: Verso.
- Papastergiadis, N. 2017. “Does Philosophy Contribute to an Invasion Complex? Sloterdijk the Antagonist and the Agonism of Mouffe.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 9(2). accessed <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/20004214.2017.1343083> 10 March 2020
- Papastergiadis, N. 2020a. *Museums of the Commons*. London: Routledge.
- Papastergiadis, N. 2020b. *On Art & Friendship*. Melbourne: Surpluss.
- Povinelli, E. (2018) “Mother Earth: Public Sphere, Biosphere, Colonial Sphere”, *e-flux*, Journal #92, June 2018. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/92/204673/mother-earth-public-sphere-biosphere-colonial-sphere/> (accessed 31 October 2019).
- Sanders, S. 2012. “They’ve Got God on Their Side”. In *Deadly in Between Heaven and Hell*, Adelaide: National Aboriginal Cultural Institute.
- Saraceno, T. 2017. *Flying Plaza: Work Journal 2012–2016*. Leipzig: Spector.
- Saunders, S. 2012. “They’ve Got God on Their Side.” In *Deadly in between Heaven and Hell*. exhibition: Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide.
- Schmitt, C. 2006. *The Nomos of the Earth*. transl. G. Ulmin, New York: Telos Books.
- Sloterdijk, P. 2013. *In the World Interior of Capital*. transl. Wieland Hoban, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Smithson, R. 1996. “Fragments of a Conversation.” In *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by C. William, Lipke, and J. Flam, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. 188-191.
- Spivak, G. 2012. “Foreword: Cosmopolitanisms and cosmopolitan.” *Cultural Dynamics*, 24 (2–3): 107–114.
- Tarrawarra (2020) <https://www.twma.com.au/exhibition/future-memorials-jonathan-jones-tom-nicholson-and-aunty-joy-wandin-murphy/> (accessed 1 May 2020).
- Warburg, A. 1988. “Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara.” In *German Essays on Art History*. New York: Continuum: ed. G. Schiff. 124-152.
- Lefebvre, H. 1996. *Writings on the City* (edited by E. Kofman & E. Lebas), Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell