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RESEARCH PROPOSAL
A History of Cosmopolitanism in Western Political Thought:
A Return to the Enlightenment
(1650-1795)

ABSTRACT

This research project proposes to study the history of cosmopolitanism in Western political thought. It focuses on the Enlightenment period in French, British and German political thoughts. Few studies exist and the novelty of this project is to propose, instead of starting with a fixed definition of cosmopolitanism, to analyse the contemporary discourse of cosmopolitanism in order to write the history of its compounds. The study argues that cosmopolitanism as we know it has been formed inside a nationalist framework, and must therefore be studied outside of it for the first time. The outcome of this research will participate to the historiography of the concepts of nation and *patrie* with a new outlook, and contribute to the clarification of contemporary debates in political theory about cosmopolitanism, nationalism, patriotism, and universalism.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has profoundly shaken the nation-state as the sole legitimate political community and actor in world politics. Sources of power plays have translated to global and transnational levels, altering the democratic legitimating of decision-making. At the same time, real-time means of communication offered the opportunity for the world's populations to get to know each other better and to start forming a 'world community.' Below the level of world community, other types of communities are experienced for the first time in human history, such as the European construction. All these developments are recently being tackled in terms of 'post-national' theory. Cosmopolitanism, in particular, has come to play an increasing role as an alternative to the nation-state, more and more perceived as a problem in globalised politics. For instance, it is commonly put forward that Europe can become neither a state nor a nation, but a cosmopolitan entity (Rumford, 2007).

Nussbaum's (1994) article triggered the debates in Western political theory on cosmopolitanism, as a sound alternative to nationalism and patriotism, mainly in the Anglo-American intellectual circles. Other cultural spheres contributed nonetheless with e.g. Beck (2004) and Habermas (1998) from Germany, Archibugi (2003) and Zolo (1997) from Italy, or Derrida (1997) from France. The debate is chiefly a Western one, but is spreading to other civilisations.

However, contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism express contradictory views: a world-state (Shaw, 2000) or a global democracy of nation-states (Archibugi, 2003; Archibugi, Held, & Köhler, 1998; Held, 1995, 1999, 2005) or even a statist cosmopolitanism (Ypi, 2008); a view opposed to patriotism (Nussbaum, 1994) or a rooted patriotic cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 1998); based on universal reason (Nussbaum, 1994) or on Habermasian communication (Benhabib, 2002; Dallmayr, 2001; Euben, 2001; Linklater, 1998; Shapcott, 2001); opposed to nationalism (Beck, 2004; Brock & Brighouse, 2005; Buchanan, 2005; Cheah, 1998; Delanty, 2000; Rée, 1998) or not (Kymlicka, 2001; Tan, 2004; 2005); as a universal justice based on a global contract (Beitz, 1979; Pogge, 1989) or outside contract theory, based on individual capacities (Nussbaum, 2006); cosmopolitan ethics based on feelings like patriotic ones (Sen, 2006) or on a cold international welfare structure (Appiah, 2006). These debates show an unclear understanding of the relationship between cosmopolitanism, nationalism, patriotism, and universalism. As a result, cosmopolitanism is not successful as a challenging political theory for explaining, and normatively guiding world politics in a globalised 21st century.

Some cosmopolitan theorists have been 'returning' to the Enlightenment — this 'golden age' of cosmopolitanism — in order to clarify what cosmopolitanism is, but they maintained its opposition to nationalism. This opposition between nationalism and cosmopolitanism is neither clear nor justified. And perhaps this is so because the meaning of cosmopolitanism is not either. Imagining a world community or a global state, is it not just taking the model of the nation and nation-state to a global level? In what way is this opposed then? And why is cosmopolitanism associated with world community? Has it always been so? Is it not sheer universalism then? Has cosmopolitanism always been opposed to nationalism? What are the fundamental elements on which they are opposed? A different conception of what the local and the global are? But was the nation not an imaginary abstract community above the local at one point? Was it not based on an ideal of individual human rights, freedom and equality? Why is it assumed that cosmopolitanism is related to transnational exchanges?

All this boils down to: what exactly is cosmopolitanism? When did it appear and how? Cosmopolitanism lacks a history of its formation in modern political thought in relation to nationalism and universalism, and this is what this research project is proposing to write. Some histories exist, but the problem is that cosmopolitan theorists do not take fully the consequences of their statements. If it is true that — as e.g. Beck (2004) argues — we think inside a nationalist framework, then it must mean that all our conceptions are made inside of it. As a consequence, our understandings of cosmopolitanism and the cosmopolite are nationalist ones. And our conceptions of the nation and *patrie* are equally nationalist. In other words, contemporary cosmopolitanism is in fact a 'nationalist cosmopolitanism.'

If cosmopolitanism is to become a successful political theory for the 21st century globalised world it needs a clear history so to develop into a 'cosmopolitan cosmopolitanism.' A history of the formation of cosmopolitanism based on a re-appraisal of our modern vocabulary outside a nationalist way of thinking is therefore important to contribute to a

clarification of the terms of the contemporary debates in political thought about cosmopolitanism, nationalism and universalism.' This research has far-reaching benefits. It would enlighten the original formation of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in a common vocabulary, but with different possible directions. It would enlighten legal theories of monism and dualism in international law. It would provide a novel reading of the concepts of 'nation' and '*patrie*.' This would ultimately contribute to theories of cosmopolitanism and a cosmopolitan Europe by showing the terms of the original debates during the 'golden age' of cosmopolitanism regarding plans for peace and political union.

BACKGROUND

As a matter of fact, few historical studies on cosmopolitanism exist. Perhaps the reason for this lack of study is that cosmopolitanism was previously not an interesting idea to research — as nationalism and patriotism were the dominant ideas — and that, today, it is a complex idea to research (as will be explain in the method section). In a literature overview on cosmopolitanism (Beck & Sznaider, 2006), only six entries are noted, three of which focusing on the Greek period, one on the Enlightenment (Schlereth, 1977) and two on its overall history (Heater, 1996; Toulmin, 1990). One may add to this list Coulmas' (1990) general history of the citizens of the world, a study of nineteenth-century German thought on European identity and nationhood (Perkins & Liebscher, 2006), Scrivener's (2007) study of cosmopolitans as a sociological group with a 'supra-national' identity during the Enlightenment, and Jacob's (2006) study of cosmopolitans during the Enlightenment.

And even for this period, which is supposedly the 'golden age' of cosmopolitanism — one of the 'cosmopolitan moments' (Cohen & Fine, 2002) —, there are very few studies focusing on cosmopolitanism as an idea and not a social movement: some focus on Europe at large using a few 'representative' authors (Dédéyan, 1976; O'Brien, 1997; Schlereth, 1977), others narrow down to individual countries like Germany (Kleingeld, 1999), or the country of reference, France (Bélissa, 1998), with a study on the *jus gentium* and peace projects, renamed *'cosmopolitique du droit des gens.'* There are however no studies on the history of cosmopolitanism in political thought, except some contributions on the cosmopolitan thought of individual political authors (Varouxakis, 2007).

When these studies focus specifically on 'cosmopolitanism' as an idea they, nonetheless, take for granted a certain fixed contemporary definition, without taking into account recent philosophical questionings on what cosmopolitanism is. For instance Schlereth's eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism is delineated as possessing the following characteristics: 'an attitude of mind that attempted to transcend chauvinistic national loyalties or parochial prejudices in its intellectual interests and pursuits' (1977, p. xi); '… an aspiration of the elite intellectual class that Voltaire called the world's *petite* [sic: *petit*] *troupeau des philosophes*' (1977, p. xii); '… more symbolic and theoretical than actual and practical' (1977, p. xii); '… a psychological construct that prompted many *philosophes* to replace or to modify their attachment to their geographical region or sphere of activity with a more expansive, albeit abstract, attitude toward the whole world' (1977, p. xiii). This definition assumes and defines cosmopolitanism as elitist, beyond the national, and abstract. The problem is that the historian must then look for the 'national' at a period when it did not yet exist, and oppose normatively a supposedly 'abstract' and 'elitist' cosmopolitanism to what is assumed to be a 'concrete' and 'popular' nationalism. What is wrong in this picture is that, not only did this 'national' not yet exist, but that, in eighteenth-century political thought, the 'national' in question was just as abstract and elitist as cosmopolitanism is today imagined to be. Not only that, but it also referred to a unifying abstract political community — beyond the local — under the natural law conception of freedom and equality among men. This sounds almost identical to the very same working definition provided by Schlereth of cosmopolitanism.

By taking a definition of cosmopolitanism as opposed to nationalism there is thus a risk of anachronistically appraising the past, and hence reproducing the very working definition one started with, instead of letting history surprise the historian with 'forgotten' views — and subsequently allow the philosopher to reinvestigate cosmopolitan theory. As a result, cosmopolitanism as a fixed definition opposed to nationalism is perpetuated. But what if this opposition was simply a product of history? And what if the concepts — i.e. nation, cosmopolite — these ideas are based on were not and had not for ever been attached to them?

This project suggests a pioneer and original history of cosmopolitanism in Western political thought. Instead of starting with a definition of cosmopolitanism, it suggests starting with a description of what the elements of the discourse of cosmopolitanism are, and then study these elements in the past. A research on the history of cosmopolitanism should take into consideration that cosmopolitanism as we know it was formed inside a nationalist framework. As such it should research the origins of both ideas outside any pre-given framework, and should not presume that they are necessarily opposed. By researching the formation of concepts of community such as the nation and the *patrie*, this history of cosmopolitanism becomes also the project of (re-)discovering the foundations of our modern political vocabulary under a new light, interrogating the various understandings of what constituted the local and what constituted the global during the Enlightenment.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Since the relation between cosmopolitanism on the one side, and nationalism/patriotism and universalism on the other is rather unclear, the research question should focus on this problematic. The question I intend to research is thus: 'How did cosmopolitanism appear in modern European political thought alongside nationalism and patriotism on the one hand, and universalism on the other?'

In my master's thesis I have researched this question using the theoretical framework, hypotheses and method expounded below. However, I focused mainly on eighteenth-century French thought, and as such this research will include these findings, but focus the three years on British and German thoughts. The goal is to compare these findings with new ones, and also to expand those, since French political thought have been largely influenced by British natural law and German natural law and metaphysics. In return the French revolution influenced German thought with e.g. Kant. In a nutshell, it was demonstrated that the discourse of humanity structured political theories by its focus on humankind as an object (both united through 'reason' and diverse through 'sociability') of study and also as a subject with the possibility to speak universally for humankind using reason. Natural law theories developed for this whole humankind in two branches, one metaphysical with God as sovereign and one physical with human beings as sovereign. Absolutism being regarded as tyranny against natural human rights, new political concepts emerged to embody the sovereign. The nation and the *patrie* became, during the revolution, this sovereign body, and *civitas*. However, the nation developed in describing particular 'races' or 'varieties' of humankind at first, and then an abstract universal concept of free and equal human beings owning sovereign power; hence a duality in its conception. Some revolutionaries such as Cloots took notice of the philosophical conundrum of finding an indivisible sovereign power for free and equal individuals, and suggested the principle of a unique nation and sovereign: humankind.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

The research is based on the Nietzschean view on history that ideas are the product of power struggles. As such, one must consider that today's scientific paradigm is 'methodological nationalism' (Beck, 2004). As a consequence our conception of cosmopolitanism must be assumed to be conceived inside this nationalist paradigm, which became socially embedded (according to modernist theories of nationalism) with the development of industrial societies during the nineteenth century — nationalism being understood as 'a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). Now, Dédéyan (1976, p. 3) notes that the word 'cosmopolitanism' was first coined in the French language in 1863. One could then assume that the apparition of the word 'cosmopolitanism' designating an idea at the same time as nationalism became socially embedded is not a mere coincidence, and that nationalism indeed constructed cosmopolitanism as a 'significant other' based on the 'cosmopolite,' understood as a constant traveller.

Consequently, a research on cosmopolitanism would gain to be set before the apparition of this paradigm, and the Enlightenment is a key period to study in this respect because of its importance in political thought, and because it is claimed to be the 'golden age' of cosmopolitanism. Foucault (1971) evoked a necessary 'return to' the founding figure of a discourse. There is, however, no founding figure of cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, it has a founding period, or at

least a very distinctive period, in direct relation to our contemporary time — the Enlightenment. A 'return to' the Enlightenment is happening within the contemporary discourse of cosmopolitanism, looking for the roots of this set of ideas in particular with Kant and Voltaire. This is why this research also focuses on this period, in order to provide a clarification to this contemporary 'return.'

Finally, it is assumed with Collingwood (1983 [1939]) that it is not possible to study the past if it did not exist in the present world. Moreover, since the objective of this historical account is to inform contemporary debates in political theory, it embraces Strauss' (1949) view that the history of ideas is political philosophy. This project is therefore situated inside the theoretical framework of an 'ontology of the present' (Foucault, 1994 [1984]); it aims to write a 'history of the present' (Foucault, 1994 [1977]), a history of present cosmopolitanism.

Considering this theoretical framework, how did cosmopolitanism appear in modern Western political thought? The project will research several hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that, if the above mentioned Nietzschean assumption is true, cosmopolitanism may be less related to the concepts 'traditionally' associated with it — i.e. 'cosmopolite,' 'citizen of the world' — precisely because their meaning was ascribed inside a nationalist paradigm. The study of cosmopolitanism should equally not exclude other concepts 'traditionally' associated with nationalism and patriotism — 'nation,' *'patrie.'* In particular, the research will argue for the original cosmopolitan inspiration of the concept of nation, mainly through natural law theories and conceptions of humanity and human rights. Finally, the project will research if and how conceptions of humanity influenced political and legal theories.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The first issue that a history of cosmopolitanism — as any history of ideas — has to deal with is to identify the 'idea' of which the history is to be written. The problem with cosmopolitanism is that:

> Cosmopolitanism may instead be a project whose conceptual content and pragmatic character are not only as yet unspecified but also must always escape positive and definite specification, precisely because specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do (Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, & Chakrabarty, 2002, p. 1).

The logic behind this argument is that, since 'worlds too are "imagined"' (Robbins, 1998, p. 2), then there are also different versions of cosmopolitanism (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002) to envisage. This is why it is important to find an approach to cosmopolitanism that avoids defining it, and this is one of the innovations of this research project. In order to do so, it is appropriate to consider cosmopolitanism as a discourse, and to focus on the Western one. As such the historian will operate a certain positioning without taking definitive commitments as to what cosmopolitanism is.

Since the aim of the project is a history of the present, one has to consider a contemporary understanding of cosmopolitanism as a starting point. In order to do so, providing a description of the contemporary discourse of cosmopolitanism rather than a definition thereof can prove effective. Lovejoy's (1936) method of studying 'unit ideas' rather than doctrines in –ism form is here adequate. It is however imprecise, assuming the continuity of 'perrenial ideas' that may result in an anachronistic 'mythology' (Skinner, 2002, pp. 57-89), and based on psychologising elements. Moreover, this method has a shortcoming, which is to provide a history of one idea outside the dynamic on which thinking is based, without considering the context of how it got formed in relation to other ideas. The conception of discourse enables to take into account the formation of diverse elements in the discourse in connection to other ones, while maintaining the description of 'units.'

According to Foucault (1969), a discourse is composed of certain elements: 'objects,' 'concepts,' and 'strategies' (theories) organised around 'announcements.' Using this approach, one can identify in the contemporary discourse of cosmopolitanism a primary core composed of a trinity 'humanity-individual-God' and a secondary core on which a certain conception of community (e.g. moral, based on humanity) is organised.

The project then turns into describing the discursive formation of these elements in Enlightenment political thought. It is essential to consider this description of the contemporary discourse in brackets, as a temporary given but necessary starting point, and not as a 'teleological structure' (Oakeshott, 1983 [1955]) to apply to the past. What are the methodological issues to consider next for this endeavour? We want to study cosmopolitanism in a past when this word did not exist, understand it as a discourse with a non-essentialist approach, account for its original formation in modern political thought in relation to other discourses, and provide a history of the present but without a teleological structure. In order to achieve these results, the appropriate method must combine two existing approaches. I suggest using Foucault's archaeology, but adding his later 'problematisation' (Foucault, 1984), and combining this with Skinner (2002) and Pocock's (1987) contextualism. This combination gives the possibility to studying the formation of a discourse with a historical thread relevant to the present through a certain problem, whilst maintaining an accurate description of the vocabulary of the time — 'seeing things their way.' The problematisation on which this research is based is the axis of what constitutes the local and the general.

SOURCES AND EMPIRICAL COMPONENTS

The Enlightenment is understood as a culturally determined period of time (Israel, 2006), and as such spanning from 1650 in Britain with Zouch's first manual of international law or 1651 with the publication of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, starting in 1713 in France with Saint-Pierre's *Universal and Perpetual Peace Project*, and ending around 1795 in Germany with Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden*. The main sources are works of political and/or legal philosophy published during the Enlightenment. This includes other sources than only political treatises and pamphlets. Darnton (1996) noted that censorship equally considered under the tag 'philosophical literature,' what we would now call philosophy together with all sorts of other illegal writings. Novels should also be considered as carrying a philosophical view (e.g. Voltaire's short novels). This includes the most renowned authors, but also 'forgotten' ones such as Cloots or Syrach Krosnowski, since the function of authorship is disregarded (Foucault, 1994 [1969-1970]).

All works carrying a conception of humanity must also be considered. Works on humanity can be found in the works of naturalists e.g. Buffon or de Pauw, or philosophers as Voltaire's *Discours en vers sur l'homme*. This also leads to considering works under the label 'natural law,' because of the continuation of the humanist tradition and the concern for humanity in general, transcribed into a political and legal system (e.g. Wolff, Pufendorf, Barbeyrac, Burlamaqui). Also works dealing with the 'law of nations' (e.g. Vattel) are interesting for the same reason. Finally, works considering the three Roman law categories of *jus naturale*, *jus gentium* and *jus civile* in a single theory are interesting because of the ordering of the discourse in terms of community, the local/general axis, and the humanity/individual divide.

Inside these works, only specific elements are considered, which can be classified according to the archaeological method as 'concepts,' 'objects,' and 'strategies.' These are defined as a starting point in the chapter on contemporary cosmopolitanism, primary revolving around conceptions of humanity, individuality, God, and understandings of community. Others are defined according to the contextualist approach of eighteenth-century political thought, e.g. 'reason,' 'sociability,' 'race,' 'variety,' 'climate theory.' The study will elaborate a precise historiography of the concepts/objects 'nation,' *'patrie,'* and concept/object/subject 'cosmopolite' or 'citizen of the world,' which will be the keywords to investigate inside the opuses delimited, as well as dictionaries. Goldsmith or Fougeret de Montbron, for instance, are interesting for their conceptions of the 'cosmopolite.'

This angle on these sources triggers many questions. How did perceptions of humanity influence political thought on community, and the sovereign power? Why did the nation become the sovereign, and what understanding did it then have? Why was the cosmopolite perceived as a wicked citizen while political thought was largely cosmopolitan? Did the secularisation of natural law theory have an impact on the end of universalism and the rise of nationalism in political though? All these questions will be dealt with in individual chapters on 'thinking humankind,' 'thinking humankind in society,' and 'thinking a government for humankind in society.'

ANNEXES

SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

Year	1st semester	2nd semester
1st year (taught year)	**Courses, seminars** (e.g. discourse analysis, historical method, Enlightenment, German & Italian courses) Reading secondary literature (method/Enlightenment)	**Courses, seminars** (e.g. contemporary political theory, nation and nationalism, German & Italian courses) Reading secondary literature (method/Enlightenment) June Paper: 'How to write the history of cosmopolitanism? Suggesting a method'
2nd year	**Research British Enlightenment** (German course) Natural law, conceptions of humankind, *jus gentium*	**Research British Enlightenment** (German course) Political theories, nation, homeland, cosmopolite/citizen of the world
3rd year	**Research German Enlightenment** (German course) Naturrecht, Menschheit, *jus gentium, jus cosmopolitanicum*	**Research German Enlightenment** (German course) Politiktheorie, Volk, Heimat, Weltbürger/Kosmopolit
4th year	**Dissertation writing (Research French Enlightenment)** Searching publishing possibilities, academic job opportunities	**Dissertation writing** Searching publishing possibilities, academic job opportunities

NOTE: This PhD research project is based on my master's thesis, which focused solely on the French Enlightenment. As such, the PhD research will focus less on French political thought and more and British and German ones.

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