

Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Political and Metapolitical Identities*

*Repensando el Cosmopolitismo:
Identidades políticas e identidades metapolíticas*

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Abstract: The paper defends the notion that cosmopolitanism is an important starting point for addressing political identities, but one that needs to be rethought. The paper starts by exposing some political situations both in Europe and in North America where the debate on national identity is faced with the need for a renewed idea of cosmopolitanism, an idea that must be differentiated from similar notions such as cultural diversity or multiculturalism, but also from the idea of globalization. It shows in this sense that there is an important and often forgotten difference between cosmopolitanism and politics, an essential difference when thinking about the real situation in Europe. The paper explains how contemporary cosmopolitanism has its roots in the Stoic and Kantian ideals, ideals that are no longer serviceable and that need to be renewed to confront the new demands of the complexity of the world. The paper concludes defending a new cosmopolitanism (tending towards the line

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of Hans Jonas or Yves Charles Zarka) that should be respectful to politics (but without forgetting that cosmopolitanism should be prioritised over politics) and also with different national or supranational identities, since it in fact provides a meta-identity for man as a citizen of the world.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, cultural diversity, globalization, European Identity, Seneca

Resumen: *Nuestro trabajo defiende que el cosmopolitismo es una fuente importante para pensar en las identidades políticas, una fuente que sin embargo debe renovarse. El trabajo comienza por exponer algunas situaciones políticas tanto en Europa como en América del Norte, donde la discusión sobre la identidad nacional se enfrenta con la necesidad de una idea renovada del cosmopolitismo, una idea que debe ser diferenciada de nociones similares como la diversidad cultural o el multiculturalismo, pero también del ideal de la globalización. Se muestra en este sentido que hay una diferencia importante y a menudo olvidada entre el cosmopolitismo y la política, una diferencia esencial para pensar en la situación real en Europa. El trabajo expone como el cosmopolitismo contemporáneo tiene sus raíces en los ideales estoicos y kantianos, ideales que deben conservarse, pero que ya no son válidos y que deben renovarse para enfrentar las nuevas demandas de la complejidad del mundo. El trabajo termina defendiendo la necesidad de un nuevo cosmopolitismo (en la línea de propuestas como las de Hans Jonas o Yves Charles Zarka) que debe ser respetuoso con la política (pero sin dejar de orientarla) y también con las diferentes identidades nacionales o supranacionales, ya que proporciona de hecho una metaidentidad para el hombre como ciudadano del mundo.*

Palabras clave: *Cosmopolitismo, diversidad cultural, globalización, identidad europea, Seneca*

“The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own”, Heraclitus¹

I. Introduction: philosophical confusions and their context

Humanity has been confronting, over the last few decades, substantive changes that force us to revise some crucial notions like those of identity, politics or cosmopolitanism. Confusion about *political citizenship* or

¹ “τοῖς ἐγρηγοροῦσιν ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον εἶναι, τῶν δὲ κοιμωμένων ἕκαστον εἰς ἴδιον ἀποστρέφεσθαι” Heraclitus, Fr. 89 (Plutarch, *On superstition*, 3, 166C). Artículo realizado en el seno del Grupo de Investigación Consolidado EIDOS (2017 SGR 584) y del Grupo de Investigación Consolidado Sarx (2017 SGR 317). Una primera versión de este artículo fue presentada en el XVIIth Meeting of the Collegium Politicum: Pain and Punishment in Ancient, celebrado en una Universidad Internacional de Catalunya en 2017.

cosmopolitanism, and the fact of not prioritizing the latter over the former, seems to be at the root of other confusions, such as the one between *civil rights* and *human rights*. This fact also affects our conception of hospitality and openness towards difference and gives rise at the same time to radical positions that move toward a closing of frontiers. The citizen of the world, as it has been understood in ancient times and in modernity, knows no frontiers, because frontiers are always a political division; the citizen of the world does not deny difference or diversity, but sees it from a human and universal perspective that is not immediately identical with political or historical diversity. Contemporary man, nevertheless, seems to be confused and at the same time is forced to rethink cosmopolitanism as a difficult possibility (one that needs to be distinguished from cultural diversity or globalization) and as a horizon of thought to confront the present challenges of a globalized world.

In the following paragraphs we are going to defend the premise that the idea of cosmopolitanism serves as a main concept to orient contemporary discussions about identity. We will see how the problem of identity as it is presented in the context of North-America is very similar to the one we find in the case of Europe. In both cases the quest for a national (or supranational if we are talking about Europe) identity are connected with cosmopolitanism. As we shall see, cosmopolitanism in the aforementioned sense needs to be distinguished from similar notions like cultural diversity or globalization. From the 90's to the present situation, from the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War until the creation of the «Islamic State», the massive migrations from the Middle East and the crisis of the integration policies both in Europe and in North-America, cosmopolitanism as a possibility has been brought into discussion in different forms and with different intentions. We will briefly examine this in three periods of time: the 90's; the beginning of the century; and the present day. Afterwards we will see how classical thought and also Illustration may be helpful in understanding present challenges and, at the same time, we will see the need to reinterpret and to rethink cosmopolitanism from the contemporary perspective.

II. Patriotism, difference and cosmopolitanism

In the mid 90's, Sheldon Hackney, educator and former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, initiated a debate on American identity and civic education. Hackney, preoccupied about an America that was becoming more quarrelsome, asked if there were a way to recover the overriding values that supposedly were once shared, the

sense of oneness, among American citizens². Hackney's views produced some reactions among prominent American thinkers, like Richard Sennett, Richard Rorty or Martha Nussbaum. Sennett asserted: «Mr. Hackney is the latest of a long line of Americans who have sought to counter society's fissures by discovering a national identity or an American character. These phrases, however, merely display the gentlemanly face of nationalism». In conclusion, he charged that «Mr. Hackney [...] seems to offer a Serbian solution to the challenge of living with one another»³. Rorty, in his defence of Hackney's views, said that «it is important to insist that a sense of shared national identity is not an evil. It is an absolutely essential component of citizenship, of any attempt to take our country and its problems seriously. There is no incompatibility between respect for cultural differences and American patriotism»⁴. From Rorty's point of view the primary alternative to a politics based on patriotism and national identity is multiculturalism or the so-called «politics of difference»⁵ one

² Sheldon Hackney, *One America, indivisible: a national conversation on American pluralism and identity*, National Endowment for the Humanities (Michigan: University of Michigan Library, 1997). Hackney set the NEH the task of providing a forum in schools, churches, libraries, campuses and TV studios. Ultimately, the discourse reached 3 million people during the period 1994-97. See Sheldon Hackney, «The American Identity», *The Public Historian* 19, 1 (Winter 1997): 21, where we can read, for instance, that «pluralism in any of its current guises does not provide for a shared American culture, an identity that all citizens have equal access to, an identity that actually exists and that most Americans want. For these reasons, existing forms of pluralism are inadequate. Americans seem to want a way to think about diversity that is not provided by any of these existing models but goes beyond them».

³ Richard Sennett, «The Identity Myth», *New York Times*, 30 January 1994.

⁴ In Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Harvard University Press, 1998), Rorty applies these views of knowledge and truth to the issue of patriotism. National pride, he argues, is analogous to self-respect and as such is necessary for self-improvement. Both self-respect and patriotism are virtues found in an Aristotelian Golden Mean between the vices of excess and deficiency. Just as too much self-respect results in arrogance, and too little can lead to moral cowardice, an excess of patriotism can produce imperialism and bellicosity, and a lack of patriotism prohibits imaginative and effective political debate and deliberation about national policy. Patriotism is instilled by means of inspirational images and stories about a nation's past, which help citizens to form a sense of moral identity.

⁵ The idea of a politics of difference is founded in opposition to a certain kind of difference-blind liberalism and its goal is to promote equality and freedom through public or civic interventions directed to treat members of different groups socially significant for issues of conflict, domination, or advantage differently. Regarding its etymology, the word «diverse» appears in the thirteenth century, perhaps in analogy with a term used in geometry, «transverse». Roughly four and a half centuries later, the word's meaning becomes more or less fixed: an adjective signifying «different in character or quality» Late in the 1930s, «diverse» emerges as a verb to designate a new imperative in U.S. economics: to diversify, meaning the careful quantitative distribution of various investments. By 1978, in a

based on internal divisions among America's ethnic, racial, religious, and other sub-groups⁶. Be that as it may, both Hackney and Rorty, among others, consider that American identity is bounded by the borders of the nation rather than considering ties of obligation and commitment that join America to the rest of the world.

In her article «Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism»⁷, Martha Nussbaum took part in the discussion confronting this idea of American patriotic pride, an idea that she considered to be both morally dangerous and «subversive of some of the worthy goals patriotism sets out to serve —for example, the goal of national unity in devotion to worthy moral ideals of justice and equality»⁸. Cosmopolitanism is, as Nussbaum points out, set apart as a third possibility in the discussion, a possibility that would, from her point of view, enable a best solution by unifying patriotism with openness toward the other and the difference in a nonexclusive sense. Nussbaum defends the notion that cosmopolitanism, the idea of «the interdependence of all

landmark United States Supreme Court ruling on university admissions, the word «diversity» now a noun, comes to inscribe both a qualitative distinction of ethno-cultural groups and their quantitative distribution in institutions of higher education. Although the balance between quality and quantity, as well as their definition, was the subject of much legal dispute, the notion became widely accepted that diversity of representation of various groups was fundamental to the educational mission of the university and the well-being of the social field. See Adam James Tebble, «What Is the Politics of Difference?», *Political Theory* 30, n.º2 (2002): 259-281.

⁶ He also adds that there is an important difference between «traditional American pluralism and the new movement called multiculturalism. Pluralism is the attempt to make America what the philosopher John Rawls calls “a social union of social unions” a community of communities, a nation with far more room for difference than most. Multiculturalism is turning into the attempt to keep these communities at odds with one another» (cf. Richard Rorty, “The unpatriotic academy”, *The New York Times*, February 13, 1994. Rorty's idea that the academic left lacks a vision of national pride, and the fact that it exhibits a kind of fashionable hopelessness, is attributed by the American thinker to the breakdown of the alliance between the intellectuals and the unions in the Sixties, the influence of postmodern theory, and the impact of the Vietnam War. (cf. *Achieving Our Country* Rorty).

⁷ Martha Nussbaum, «Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism», *Boston Review*, 1 October (1994). Consulted on April 18th, 2017, <http://bostonreview.net/martha-nussbaum-patriotism-and-cosmopolitanism>.

⁸ She also adds that “on the one hand Rorty and Hackney seem to argue well when they insist on the centrality to democratic deliberation of certain values that bind all citizens together. But why should these values, which instruct us to join hands across boundaries of ethnicity and class and gender and race, lose steam when they get to the borders of the nation? By conceding that a morally arbitrary boundary such as the boundary of the nation has a deep and formative role in our deliberations, we seem to be depriving ourselves of any principled way of arguing to citizens that they should in fact join hands across these other barriers [...] We say that respect should be accorded to humanity as such, but we really mean that Americans as such are worthy of special respect. And that, I think, is a story that Americans have told for far too long.” (Nussbaum *op. cit.*).

human beings and communities», should be efficiently integrated in liberal education because it serves to properly understand our identity by looking at ourselves through the lens of the other; to better solve political problems avoiding partisan loyalties; and, finally, it allows us to see others for their intrinsic value⁹.

In her *Cultivating Humanity: a Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education*¹⁰, she exposes this same idea in a more detailed manner. Nussbaum's understanding of cosmopolitanism is taken from both the Indian Tradition transmitted by Tagore and the Stoic idea of the *kosmou politês*. For her, following Seneca's Stoicism, the idea of the world citizen is the idea that each of us dwells in two communities: the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that «is truly great and truly common, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our nation by the sun» (Seneca, *De Otio*). Nussbaum considers this community as the source of our moral obligations, because we should regard our deliberations as, first and foremost, deliberations about human problems of people in particular concrete situations, not problems growing out of a national identity that is altogether unlike that of others. The Stoic idea of cosmopolitanism is defended as being prior and more fundamental than the idea of a national identity, which should be, from Nussbaum's point of view, a guiding principle to rethink liberal education: students —the American philosopher advocates— should «be taught that they are above all citizens of a world of human beings, and that, while they themselves happen to be situated in the United States, they have to share this world of human beings with the citizens of other countries». In this sense, cosmopolitanism seems to be a better alternative to patriotic pride than the «politics of difference»¹¹ that

⁹ «Proponents of nationalism in politics and in education frequently make a thin concession to cosmopolitanism. They may argue, for example, that although nations should in general base education and political deliberation on shared national values, a commitment to basic human rights should be part of any national educational system, and that this commitment will in a sense serve to hold many nations together [...] But is it sufficient? As students here grow up, is it sufficient for them to learn that they are above all citizens of the United States, but that they ought to respect the basic human rights of citizens of India, Bolivia, Nigeria, and Norway? Or should they, as I think —in addition to giving special attention to the history and current situation of their own nation— learn a good deal more than is frequently the case about the rest of the world in which they live, about India and Bolivia and Nigeria and Norway and their histories, problems, and comparative successes?» (Nussbaum, *ibid.*).

¹⁰ Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: a Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹¹ See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton University Press, 1992); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2003); Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Cul-*

Rorty recalls. Nevertheless, multiculturalism, or the idea of diversity, may be also sometimes confused with cosmopolitanism¹². This is so because cosmopolitanism is identified with a contextual process of a sociological nature, detached from its philosophical sense. This is the perspective of Ulrich Beck, who asserts that cosmopolitanism is the result of the sociology of economic, social, political or juridical transformations rather than a normative idea. Beck talks in this sense of a «cosmopolitan realism» that should be prioritized over the national perspective, but in his proposition it is not possible to distinguish cosmopolitanism from mundialization or globalization, the idea of the citizen of the world and the so-called jetsetter, mainly because the Stoic and Kantian sources of cosmopolitanism are neglected. This confusion needs to be avoided to fully understand the present reflection.

III. Cosmopolitanism and the search for a European identity

We shall now move forward in time to the beginning of the century, observing the reactions after relevant events like the Twin Towers attacks or the different threats that Europe has experienced, like the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015 or the Barcelona attacks in 2017. These and other facts seem to show that both American and European strategies concerning the politics of diversity or the politics of difference are not really working. One may say that understanding and protecting cultural difference or diversity is one of the central challenges in modern societies, where migrations and more or less differentiated and marginal groups are appearing here and there, generating unexpected reactions in different countries. But when this is not leading to a peaceful coexistence between cultures, ethnic groups or religions, the political problem that arises is: firstly, which political principles are more useful or essential in order to preserve and respect diversity; and, secondly, which political principles are more important or should be established as being more important than diversity or difference. Postmodern times are marked by an almost universal agreement as to the idea that difference is not only inevitable, but also valuable and positive and that it must be protected

ture (Clarendon Press, 1991); Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference and Inclusion and Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹² Ulrich Beck, *Que'est-ce que le cosmopolitisme?* (Paris: Aubier, 2006). This same confusion is to be found in Isabelle Strengers, *Cosmopolitics I and II*, transl. by Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 and 2011) or in Daniel Archibugui, *Cosmopolitan Democracy. An Agenda for a New World Order* (Polity Press, 1995).

and cultivated¹³. In this context, both in the North-American context and in the European one, the discussion should be brought round to the distinction between politics and cosmopolitanism. This distinction should be at the same time of some help in confronting (and reaching agreement about) the problem of identity.

In 2003, Jean Daniel, founder and director of *Le Nouvel Observateur* spoke at the European Institute of the Mediterranean about the «universality of values and cultural diversities»¹⁴. His speech focused on analysing the reactions that the 11th September attacks had had among American neo-conservatists, «who have projected the remodelling of the Near East and the export of their democracy in Napoleonic fashion»¹⁵. What we may call the «innocent» European alternative to this situation would be that the «West can respect cultural diversities by defending the universality of values on the condition that it finds in its most eminent members a harmony of projects and of attitudes which places them beyond all suspicion». Of course, to say that about, for instance, the foreign policy of France, could sound sarcastic; the «others» that are not «the West» have enough reasons to despise us because we have given them all possible reasons to deserve it. Note two valuable contributions in the text: the first one from Addennou Bidar, a French Muslim philosopher, who states that «not to concern oneself with forming one's citizens is to manufacture delinquents or fanatics»¹⁶; the second one a comparison between the study of «primitive mentality» by the anthropologist Lévi-Bruhl and the study of diversity, wealth and equality in different cultures by Lévi-Strauss, who at the end of his life confessed not to believe in universal values:

«I have to acknowledge the West's invention of critical thinking, which implies the separation between reason and faith, and intellectual progress, which means the independence of reason. They are both

¹³ See Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); Zygmunt Bauman, «Educational Challenges of the Liquid-Modern Era», *Diogenes* 50 (2003): 15–26. The Philosophical consideration of this issue should lead one to consider the work of Derrida (“La différence”) and Deleuze in order to elucidate its influence today. See for a critical perspective Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1987); Philippe Bénétou, *De l'égalité par défaut* (Paris Critérion, 1997), and also Josep Monserrat, «At the limits of Rhetoric: Political Philosophy and the Media», *Catalan Social Sciences Review* 2, (2012): 79-96.

¹⁴ Jean Daniel, *Universality of Values and Cultural Diversities* (Barcelona: IEMed, 2004).

¹⁵ Daniel, *Universality...*, 19.

¹⁶ Daniel, *Universality...*, 18.

desirable for the whole of humanity, and at the end of my life I place them above everything else. But the West still needs to be worthy of itself»¹⁷.

In another lecture on the same forum, Gilles Kepel showed two possible routes: the American one, the military-political way; and the European, the education of the elites of other countries. This strategy is merely an indirect confirmation of the fact that Europe is lacking some kind of «fundamentalism», but that its «innocent» conscience (and «unconscious» guilt because of colonization) uncritically accepts any culture within its territory for the sake of diversity without any methodical and critical suspicion — a methodical and critical suspicion that Europe does apply to its own culture¹⁸. What we could call the illustrated values (respect, education and acceptance of diversity), which may orient the problem of European identity or identities, are not up to the task or are not sufficient; they are in need of a renewed reflection on cosmopolitanism, a cosmopolitanism respectful of politics and of identities.

Finally, if we observe the present situation, the creation of the “Islamic State” and the recent terrorist attacks in France and in other European countries, we see how these events have reawakened the problematic coexistence between national identity and the integration of diversity. After the attacks in Paris in November 2015 in the northern suburb of Saint-Denis, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying that they were in retaliation for the French airstrikes on ISIL targets in Syria and Iraq. Immediately after the attacks and during the next three months an «état d’urgence» was declared across France and *Président* Hollande suggested an important amendment to the constitution, namely the deprivation of citizenship for dual nationals¹⁹. Reactions appeared denouncing this measure, comparing it to Nazism and the lead-up to a totalitarian state governed by fear and repression, and arguing that limiting freedom for the sake of security implies an inevitable loss of freedom and an uncertain gain for security²⁰.

¹⁷ Daniel, *Universality...*, 16.

¹⁸ Gilles Kepel, *Political and Religious Frontiers in the Mediterranean* (Barcelona: IEMed, 2004).

¹⁹ Alex Lantier, «French government considers deprivation of nationality as possible sentence to all citizens», *Global Research*, 6 January 2016. Consulted on the 18th April 2017, <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2016/01/06/fran-j06.html>.

²⁰ See Alex Lantier, «French Government Proposes Constitutional Amendment on State of Emergency, Deprivation of Citizenship», *Global Research*, December 25, 2015. Consulted on the 18th April 2017, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/french-government-proposes-constitutional-amendment-on-state-of-emergency-deprivation-of-citizenship/5497882>

But this argument is based on a mistaken understanding of the relation between security and freedom, notions that are not necessarily opposed: increased security should be understood as a measure to ensure the fundamental rights that any democratic society needs to preserve and, in this sense, an increase in security should be understood as a means to ensure the goal of freedom. In this sense, the problem should not revolve around accusations that these measures are totalitarian, but in seeing what conditions are needed to protect fundamental rights. Again, the establishment of a hierarchy between political problems and world problems (or between politics and cosmopolitanism) seems to be at the origin of these confusions. The same could be said concerning another argument against the amendment, one that suggested depriving people of their nationality is a direct attack on human rights. Once again this conclusion suggests a confusion between civil rights and human rights, a confusion caused by disregarding the fact that the first ones are granted by a political system and the second ones are not granted by anyone (they derive their value from human nature alone) and, in this sense, they cannot be taken away either. Nationality in general, and French nationality in particular, ensures some rights but also some obligations which, if disregarded (in the case of a proven terrorist for instance), means the rights may be invalidated. Another major problem that emerges from this situation is the debate on the ability of European countries to integrate massive migrations from Syria, Iraq or Libya. The rise of different radical parties like the «Front National» in France is indicative of a wish to close a country's borders to protect national identity; on the other side of the political arena, we can see the will to abolish frontiers between countries. Both positions are invalid in the sense that they confuse cosmopolitanism and politics: cosmopolitanism is the idea of a citizen of the world that knows no frontiers and is at home everywhere; whereas politics describes the situation where a citizen of a country which is not his home lives inside a state enclosed by frontiers²¹. As Yves-Charles Zarka puts it,

«Cosmopolitanism must be distinguished from politics, because cosmopolitanism is established on a more primary level that escapes the contingency of the facts and events, that is, of history. Cosmopolitanism includes the whole of humanity made up of singularities. On the contrary, politics is concerned with populations, nations, juridical and political

²¹ Yves-Charles Zarka, «Face aux migrants, on construit des murs quand il n'y a plus de vraies frontières», *Le Figaro*, 11 January 2016. Consulted on the 18th April 2017, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/monde/2016/01/11/31002-20160111ARTFIG00255-face-aux-migrants-on-construit-des-murs-quand-il-n-y-a-plus-de-vraies-frontieres.php>.

unities in a given territory, that is, with realities that are historical and contingent»²².

That does not mean that the political dimension and its frontiers should be absorbed and substituted by cosmopolitics, by a world without frontiers. As Zarka explains, one thing is a frontier and another thing is a wall: not only do frontiers separate and discriminate, they also enable recognition and relation; they imply not only men, but also laws, goods or languages; whereas walls are created to prevent others from entering, whether these others are people with humanitarian needs or people who may be a danger, like drug dealers or terrorists. In this sense, walls are not normally recognized by both sides (as we can see in the case of Israel or might see in the case of the American-Mexican frontier). Frontiers, on the contrary, allow mutual recognition between sides and, in this sense, are intended to allow coexistence. Again, rather than focusing the accusations or the arguments on the closure or the abolition of frontiers, the real concern should be trying to avoid the situations of war, poverty and exploitation that make people leave their country. This shows from another perspective how cosmopolitanism should orient politics, by showing the importance of the principle of hospitality, meaning the solidarity between different countries and the duty to protect strangers.²³

IV. The classical roots of cosmopolitanism I: difference and division of humanity as a punishment

Having seen the complexity of the present situation and the different ways in which in different historical moments cosmopolitanism comes into play in the discussion, let us now focus on the way ancient thought understands and describes cosmopolitanism and some of its related concepts, like diversity or integration. Let us first of all move as far as possible back into the history —or even the prehistory— of these concepts. In the Old Testament, Jahaveh sends a Flood to destroy all humankind because He «saw how bad the people on earth were and that everything they thought and planned was evil» (*Gn.* 6,5). After that, the generations descended from Noah decide to build a city and a big tower, the tower of Babel:

²² Yves-Charles Zarka, *Refonder le cosmopolitisme* (Presses universitaires de France, 2014), 95 [Catalan translation: Yves-Charles Zarka, *Refundar el Cosmopolitisme* (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 2014): 83.

²³ Zarka, «Face aux migrants...».

«Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” The Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the Lord said, “Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another’s speech.” So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.» (*Genesis* 11:1-9 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)).

Note that the intention of the builders of the city is to avoid being «scattered abroad over the face of all the earth»; the fear of being scattered is at the origin and also at the end of the narration: «the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth». The way God chooses to scatter humanity is precisely by introducing linguistic and cultural diversity or differences. In this sense, diversity is seen both by God and by human beings as something negative. Diversity may be enriching, but it impedes the construction of a city and makes us in some sense weak.

A similar idea can be found in the Greek tradition transmitted by Plato. In the *Symposium*, Aristophanes (who has recovered from his hiccups thanks to doctor Eriximachus) describes, in his encomium to *Eros*, the real story of the fall of man. Humans were cylindrical beings descending from the sun, the earth and the moon, they were strong «and they had great and proud thoughts, so they made an attempt on the gods» (Plato, *Symposium*, 190d). Zeus could not destroy them because «their own honours and sacrifices from human beings would vanish», but he decided to divide them: «they will be both weaker and more useful to us through the increase in their numbers. And they will walk upright on two legs. But if they are thought to behave licentiously still, and are unwilling to keep quiet, then I shall cut them again in two» (*Symposium*, 190d). After that, Apollo made them seem like actual human figures with separated sexualities and Eros reveals himself as «the bringer-together of their ancient nature, who tries to make one out of two and to heal their human nature» (*Symposium*,

190d). Difference and division of humanity is seen again as a punishment, a punishment that can be repeated if we remain «unwilling to keep quiet». Moreover, note that through diversity humanity becomes more «useful» and in this sense less free to choose its destiny. In both the Biblical and the Greek tradition diversity is described as a consequence of a punishment derived from the human will to live proudly in their original unity. In both cases a difficult and complex tension is shown between unity and diversity or difference.

Unity, on the other side, has also been considered in ancient times as something to be preserved and conquered. This has been the objective of Alexander in the Hellenistic period, an objective fully accomplished during Roman times. It is commonly accepted that Alexander's aim was not only the unification of Greece (which was what his father had projected), but also the conquest and unification of the cultural diversity existing in Egypt, Persia and the East as far as India²⁴. This project was not fulfilled by Alexander himself due to the opposition of his Macedonian generals, but Rome did fulfil it through its hegemony over the Mediterranean and the East. As is well known, Alexander was a pupil of Aristotle, but the idea of the unification of the differences doesn't seem to come from his teachings, inspired in a small, homogeneous city with a single culture. What Alexander knows about unifying different cultures may come rather from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (the education of Cyrus) and the *Anabasis*. In this last work, Xenophon describes in detail the adventure of the Greek general and his men in their campaign against the Persians and the story of their journey back home. Herodotus supplied the cultural vision of the territory and, in doing so, he should be considered not only as the father of history or scientific anthropology, but also as a very useful source in the process of colonizing the Mediterranean in ancient times. Herodotus would in this sense be performing a service similar to that of the Scientific Societies in the nineteenth century colonial process.

V. The classical roots of cosmopolitanism II: Seneca's defence of a cosmic *res publica*

Alexander's legacy, as we have said, finds a fulfilment (finds its fulfilment) in the Roman Empire, and it is precisely in this context, a situation where diversity and unity were in a difficult but nevertheless sustained equilibrium, and where new concepts were able to achieve their plenitude.

²⁴ On Alexander, see Waldemar Heckel and Lawrence A. Tritle, (eds.) *Alexander the Great: A New History* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

This may be the main reason why the Stoic conception of cosmopolitanism —a conception that seems to owe much to the Socratic legacy— becomes established. As we have already seen, Seneca is often taken as a key reference in describing this notion. Seneca, in the context of the Roman Empire, seems to be a good example of a citizen of a nation who is, at the same time, a citizen of the world. Precisely in his *Consolatio to Helvia* he writes to his mother describing his experience of exile in Corsica (41-49 a.C.). It is most interesting to follow Seneca's arguments of consolation. He first argues that adversity, against the decrees of the vulgar, is something from which we should learn, because happiness depends first and foremost upon oneself: «External circumstances have very little importance either for good or for evil: the wise man is neither elated by prosperity nor depressed by adversity; for he has always endeavoured to depend chiefly upon himself and to derive all his joys from himself» (*Consolatio to Helvia*, 5.1)²⁵. Afterwards he argues that being far away from one's motherland is not negative, that cities tend to corrupt people, that many people live and become virtuous in cities which are not their own (as in the case of Aeneas) and, finally, that moving around the world is something that makes us resemble the movements of the cosmos:

«Look at the luminaries which light the world: none of them stands still. The sun is perpetually in motion, and passes from one quarter to another, and although he revolves with the entire heaven, yet nevertheless he has a motion in the contrary direction to that of the universe itself, and passes through all the constellations without remaining in any: his wandering is incessant, and he never ceases to move from place to place. [...] Be not surprised, then, if the human mind, which is formed from the same seeds as the heavenly bodies, delights in change and wandering, since the divine nature itself either takes pleasure in constant and exceeding swift motion or perhaps even preserves its existence thereby». (*Consolatio to Helvia*, 6.1, 7-8).

Finally, his final argument in his letter of consolation to his mother completes Seneca's exposition of cosmopolitanism, a notion that he explains to be build from the «two most excellent things [that will always] accompany us, namely, a common Nature and our own especial virtue». Seneca tells us that he learned about the relevance of nature from Marcus Varro²⁶, who defended the idea that the remedy to all sufferings is to remain in contact with one's own nature, no matter where we are; and about the

²⁵ Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Minor Dialogs Together with the Dialog "On Clemency"*, transl. by Aubrey Stewart, (London: George Bell, 1989), 320-352.

²⁶ Varro (116-127a.C), whose works are not known to us, was a contemporary of Cicero and supportive of Pompey in his confrontation with Caesar.

relevance of virtue from Marcus Brutus, who considered that «there was sufficient comfort in the thought that those who go into exile are permitted to carry their virtues thither with them»²⁷. From Varro, Seneca learned that

«this world, the greatest and the most beautiful of Nature's productions, and its noblest part, a mind which can behold and admire it, are our own property, and will remain with us as long as we ourselves endure. Let us therefore briskly and cheerfully hasten with undaunted steps whithersoever circumstances call us: let us wander over whatever countries we please; no place of banishment can be found in the whole world in which man cannot find a home [*nihil humani a me alienum puto*]²⁸» (*Consolatio to Helvia*, 8.1).

Seneca's approach is clearly locating us in a perspective where we can see the local city from above²⁹, from the *logos* as a source of order in the world. It is not the case that we are forgetting the *minor res publica*, the local city located below in which we all belong³⁰, but we are prioritizing over it a universal city, a cosmic *res publica* governed by a *logos* from which we understand the unity and also the diversity of human nature. It is noteworthy that Seneca's cosmopolitanism always appears in a context: as a strategy to comfort the sadness of his mother; or in order to transform the conscience of the exile; or even as a medium to detach himself mentally from the tumultuous reign of Claudius or Nero, but Seneca's approach still represents the key elements that describe cosmopolitanism. Similar descriptions are to be found in *De otio*³¹ or *Letters to Lucili* and also in other

²⁷ Brutus (85-42 a.C), also a declared enemy of Caesar, is describing here the experiences of his friend Marcellus, consul in the times of Caesar who fought against Pompey; Marcellus in his exile in Mytilene states that «the loss of your country is no misery to you: you have so steeped yourself in philosophic lore, as to know that all the world is the wise man's country» (*Consolation to Helvia*, 9-10).

²⁸ Terentius, *Heauton Timorumenos*, 77.

²⁹ Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Paris, Gallimard, 1995): 245.

³⁰ «Nemo patriam quia magna est amat, sed quia sua» (*Letter to Lucili*, 66): 26. See *Consolation to Helvia* 1-4.

³¹ This work is addressed to Anneo Sereno, who also appears in other dialogues. The main idea is that leisure favours reflection and a good life: «we will be better when alone. Moreover, then we may withdraw among the best men and choose some example towards which we may turn our lives. This only comes about in leisure: then it is possible to maintain what pleases once and for all, where no-one interrupts who would pervert a still weak judgement with popular assistance» (*On Leisure*, trans. Timothy Chandler, 4): 1-2. From this text one of the most common references to cosmopolitanism is taken when Seneca explains that «We should try to comprehend two commonwealths: one great and truly common to all, by which gods and men are held together and in which we should not look for this or that out-of-the-way place but the boundaries of a city as measured by the course of the sun; and another

Stoic thinkers, above all in Cicero, all of them sharing the essential idea that “this whole universe should [be] thought to be one city in common between gods and human beings”³².

VI. The modern roots of cosmopolitanism: Kant and the need to rethink the concept

Arriving at the end of our journey we must now ask what is the usefulness and which are the limitations of the ancient and specifically the Stoic perspective upon cosmopolitanism. The present situation, as we have seen at the beginning of our paper, seems somehow more complicated, partly because of the new actors in the plot and partly because of the absent ones. Here we might mention some of the new ones; we should take into account the fact that in a globalized world it is not only states that decide the future of humanity, but that there are other actors, like terrorist organizations and multinational companies, and also the progressive and inevitable development of technology, a technology that is clearly able to destroy the world in which we should feel ourselves to be citizens, as the work of Hans Jonas —through the concept of responsibility— tries to describe³³. And some elements, as we have said, seem to be absent, like the Stoic belief in a cosmic order governed by a divine *logos*. In these new circumstances, there is a need to rethink cosmopolitanism, to rebuild the old foundations and to supply new ones.

in which we are included by accident of birth, which may be that of the Athenians or of the Carthaginians or any other city which does not reach out to include all men but only specific ones. Certain individuals give service to both commonwealths at the same time, to the greater and to the lesser; some only to the lesser, others only to the greater. We can serve devotedly this greater commonwealth even in leisure, or indeed probably better in leisure, for then might we contemplate what virtue is, whether it is one or many, whether nature or the arts make men good; whether that which encloses the seas and lands and those things attached to seas and lands is one, or many bodies of the same kind which god scatters; whether all matter from which the universe is formed is continuous, without intervals of space, or dispersed as emptiness mixed with solid matter; what kind of abode a god has, looking upon his work in detachment or actively controlling it, whether he encompasses it from without or is implanted in the whole; whether the world is immortal or to be reckoned among perishable things and things born at a certain time. What does the contemplator of these things have to offer a god? A witness to so much of his work!» (*On Leisure*, trans. Timothy Chandler, 4): 1-2.

³² Cicero, *De legibus*, I, IV, 23. See also *De legibus*, I, X, 29-30; *Tusculanes*, V, XXXVII, 108. *De Finibus*, III, XIX, 64.

³³ «Handle so, daß die Wirkungen deiner Handlungen verträglich sind mit der Permanenz echten menschlichen Lebens auf Erden» [«Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life on earth»]; Cf. Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*.

Between the ancient and the contemporary sense of cosmopolitanism we find the reflections of Immanuel Kant, who reformulates the stoic idea of cosmopolitan under new circumstances and with some new principles. Whereas the key elements to understand Stoic cosmopolitanism seem to be the centrality of *logos* as a source of order and the fact that all human beings belong to a same universal republic, Kant introduces the historical perspective (cosmopolitanism as a result of the ideal regulation of practical reason according to which there is a universal destiny of Humanity toward a possible progress)³⁴ and also the juridical and political one (the progress of humanity implies the constitution of a cosmopolitan and international law built upon an agreement between a federative community of states or *Völkerbund*). From Kant's perspective hospitality comes to be the main principle of this future legislation: «the Right of a stranger in consequence of his arrival on the soil of another country, not to be treated by its citizens as an enemy»³⁵. But again, we should ask in which sense Kant's perspective can orient us in the present situation. Is it still possible to believe in the progress of humanity, as his model does? Are we allowed to be as optimistic as he is? Can the new actors mentioned before be included or integrated in the *Völkerbund* that he proposes? And, what is more important, how can the new dangers —unknown by Kant— that threaten the natural resources of the earth (an earth where we should feel like citizens) be understood from this perspective? Both Stoicism and Kantism supply us with strong arguments to give cosmopolitanism a fundamentation. They give us a framework. We need to rethink it in the new context of the present situation.

³⁴ See Immanuel Kant, «Vom Verhältnis der Theorie zur Praxis im Völkerrecht in allgemein-philanthropischer, d.i. kosmopolitischer Absicht betrachtet (Gegen Moses Mendelssohn)» [«On the relationship of theory and practice in international right considered from a universal philanthropic, i.e. cosmopolitan point of view (Against Moses Mendelssohn)»], where we can read: «For my own part, I put my trust in the theory of what the relationships between men and states *ought to be* according to the principle of right. It recommends to us earthly gods the maxim that we should proceed in our disputes in such a way that a universal [state of peoples] may be inaugurated, so that we should therefore assume that it is *possible (in praxi)*. I likewise rely (*in subsidium*) upon the very nature of things to force men to do what they do not willingly choose (*fata volentem ducunt nolentem trahunt*). This involves human nature, which is still animated by respect for right and duty. I therefore cannot and will not see it as so deeply immersed in evil that practical moral reason will not triumph in the end, after many unsuccessful attempts, thereby showing that it is worthy of admiration after all. On the cosmopolitan level too, it thus remains true to say that whatever reason shows to be valid in theory, is also valid in practice.» [trans. H. B. Nisbet]. The «*fata volentem, nolentem trahunt*» is a reference to Seneca (who is in its turn quoting Cicero; See *Letters to Lucilius*, 107).

³⁵ See Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, «Third Definitive Article in the conditions of a Perpetual Peace». See also Yves-Charles Zarka, «Cosmopolitisme et hospitalité chez Kant», in *Kant cosmopolitique* ed. by Yves-Charles Zarka and Caroline Guibet-Lafaye, (Combas: L'Éclat, 2008).

VII. Conclusions: contemporary cosmopolitanism and metapolitical identities

As we have stated at the beginning of our paper, cosmopolitanism must be distinguished from and prioritized over politics in order to avoid confusion with the meaning of globalization, multiculturalism or diversity. Cosmopolitanism should supply us with the principles that will make us able to judge political circumstances. As when facing diversity, we need to find the correct balance between the constitutional principles of a political community, and the cosmopolitan rights of humanity. Understanding cosmopolitanism means understanding humanity in its full sense, understanding the fact of being humans and sharing a same human condition and a same world. This world where we live, the world understood as the condition of our existence, of our present, past and future as humans, is maybe the key element in rethinking cosmopolitanism. This idea, recently developed by the French Philosopher Yves Charles Zarka, may serve as a conclusion to our exposition, showing a new attempt to understand cosmopolitanism, an attempt that doesn't forget (does not overlook) the relevance of the Ancient (Seneca and Stoicism) and Modern thought (Kant):

«we must return to finitude, not only to that finitude that Kant thought so well, but also to the finitude of nature, of natural resources and also the finitude of man against the frenetic and unlimited accumulation of objects, benefits, etc. The concern for the world becomes now a cosmopolitan concern, because the world is the counterpart of humanity in the sense that the exhaustion of one implies the exhaustion of the other»³⁶.

The world understood in this sense may serve as a Philosophical foundation for Hans Jonas' principle of responsibility and may also offer a complementary approach to cosmopolitanism to understand the present challenges, avoiding the Stoic belief in a divine *logos* and also the Kantian, maybe too optimistic, ideal of human progress. In the context of the problematic search for a national or supranational identity, cosmopolitanism, through its contemporary renewed sense, strongly suggests that national and supranational identities are essentially political, that the only human identity is the one that binds us together in a common world. This identity, an identity that may be called a metaidentity, has its roots in cosmopolitanism as a source of a metapolitical truth (a truth

³⁶ Zarka, *Refonder le cosmopolitisme*, 28. [Catalan translation, Zarka, *Refundar...*, 30-31.]

that should deserve priority over political truth). As we said at the very beginning of our paper, a distinction between politics and cosmopolitanism needs to be established in order to orient our discussions; contemporary cosmopolitanism, a renewed version of the Stoic and Kantian ideal, should serve as a regulatory ideal that could orient politics, but not replace it, being at the same time respectful to identities.

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