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Chapter Four

Europe Unbounded: Critical Cosmopolitanism and the Problem of Eurocentrism

One of the questions that this book seeks to answer is whether it is possible to find within the European heritage an alternative account of the past to what is often summarily called Eurocentrism. Is the European heritage necessarily Eurocentric? Does it admit of the possibility of a more cosmopolitan account that can challenge its Eurocentrism?

Obviously the answer to these questions will partly depend on how Eurocentrism and cosmopolitanism are defined. If Eurocentrism is defined in a way that more or less equates it with the idea of Europe, then, there can be no escape. The chapter will make an attempt to offer a definition and defend the relevance of a cosmopolitan account of the European heritage. My argument is that a critical account of the European heritage will reveal that it contains both cosmopolitan orientations that challenge Eurocentrism as well as anti-cosmopolitanism forces that affirm Eurocentrism. To identify these legacies is the task of a cosmopolitan critique. This is not to argue that Europe *per se* is cosmopolitan or that cosmopolitanism is to be identified exclusively with the European legacy. It is one such legacy of the European heritage and stands alongside other legacies in various degrees of tension and resistance. I argue that Europe is defined by these diverse forces and does not exist outside them. This is all a question about what can be rescued from the European heritage and what is of relevance for the present day. I argue that there are important intellectual and cultural currents in the European heritage that can be termed cosmopolitan and that these can offer European today with a critical lens with view it can evaluate its historical legacy. In this sense, then, cosmopolitanism is also an immanent critique of the European heritage and part of its own self-understanding. For this reason, I refer to the approach as critical cosmopolitanism in order to distinguish it from affirmative conceptions of cosmopolitanism that simply celebrate the cosmopolitanism of Europe's cultural heritage. It thus entails a critical-normative evaluative standpoint and an approach that recognises

cosmopolitan currents within European culture and which need to be reconstructed for the present.

Looking at the European heritage from a critical cosmopolitan perspective builds upon the transnational analysis discussed in the preceding chapters. In the previous two chapters I argued that a transnational approach to history reveals a more interconnected account of both the histories of nations and of Europe more generally. This is largely a corrective of accounts of history that posit nations as homogenous or self-contained units. It is also a corrective of approaches that see Europe as authentic and unique. The previous chapter highlighted modernity as a context in which to view the unity and diversity of Europe, which was shaped by global connections. Modernity gave to Europe a direction and meaning that made possible the revitalisation of its civilisational heritage, but in ways that led to unevenness, resistances, and contradictions. A feature of modernity is the accelerated momentum of global connections and flows of ideas, a movement that is multi-directional. It created an augmented space for cosmopolitan thought and cultural possibility. However, a transnational approach as such does not necessarily lead to cosmopolitanism, but offers an analytical basis on which cosmopolitan arguments can be built.

The chapter begins with a genealogical reconstruction of the cosmopolitanism. This will provide a basis for the idea of critical cosmopolitanism. In the next section the problem of Eurocentrism is discussed and assessed from a critical cosmopolitan perspective.

Cosmopolitanism: A Brief Genealogy

The term cosmopolitanism derives from the Greek word *kosmopolites* and means simply 'a citizen of the world.' It thus signifies a relation to the world as a whole. Its meaning has considerably changed from its Greek origins. It was first used by the Diogenes the Cynic and later by the more influential Stoics, who used it to refer to a universal human community to which all individuals belonged. There was thus a relation of tension between the human and local order of the polis and the wider universal order. One did not entail a rejection of the other. Zeno of Citium, for instance, argued for a conception of cosmopolitanism that extended the horizon of the polis rather than abandon it.

The Stoic legacy of cosmopolitanism was revived in the eighteenth century by Immanuel Kant and has a particular importance in German thought. Despite its classical origins it was primarily a product of modernity and did not figure significantly in western medieval thought. The Christian Pauline tradition is sometimes seen as a carrier of cosmopolitanism, as in St Paul's dictum in his Letter to the Ephesians that 'we are all

brothers, sons of God, not Foreigners.'[i] However, Christian thought did not use the term cosmopolitanism. In *Perpetual Peace* in 1795 Kant (1990) established the principle of hospitality as the defining tenet of cosmopolitanism, which he contrasted to internationalism, which for Kant was based on treaties between states. In contrast, cosmopolitanism, Kant argued, is based on the individual and reflects the need for the rights of the individual to be recognised even where the individual is a foreigner. It is the entry of the stranger that establishes the cosmopolitan imagination. Kant invoked the idea of cosmopolitan law rather than the vision of global government, which he believed was desirable but not realistic, in order to give the ethic of hospitality a political foundation. In doing so he established the main legacy of modern cosmopolitanism. Kant's embracing of cosmopolitanism is not uncontroversial (see Fikschuh and Ypi 2014). It is often noted that much of his work was characterised by a racialised anthropology and was precisely the contrary to the spirit of cosmopolitanism. There can be little doubt about that. However, it does appear to be the case that Kant shifted position in his later years and by the time he wrote *Perpetual Peace* in 1775 the racial philosophical anthropology of the earlier works no longer directly figures. It remains unclear the extent to which he intellectually abandoned his racist ideas and it is also unclear whether his conception of cosmopolitanism pertained only to the European political order, which he earlier believed was tending towards republican government.

Kant's normative conception of cosmopolitanism can be contrasted to the romantic conception of cosmopolitanism, as in Byron as a condition of wandering and by Goethe, who advocated the idea of 'world literature' to replace national literature. In a similar but more critical vein, Alexander von Humboldt also established a notion of cosmopolitanism as a new world consciousness that arises with the discovery of new worlds. This notion of cosmopolitan embraced a wider view of the world than Kant's model, which was confined to the European world. Unlike Kant, von Humboldt was explicitly opposed to slavery and travelled extensively throughout the world.

Cosmopolitanism took on a more politically radical notion of cosmopolitanism in Marx and Engel's *Communist Manifesto* with the slogan 'the workers of the world have no country' and gave to cosmopolitanism an edge that was often lacking in the Enlightenment accounts for which it was generally a mode of knowing the world. Although it had ancient Greek origins, cosmopolitanism was a characteristically Enlightenment movement (Schlereth 1977). It arose at a time before the rise of nationalism as a dominant movement and when nationalism had to compete with other ideas. It can be argued that cosmopolitanism is an older movement and was for a time more attractive to intellectuals than nationalism. It had

particular appeal for French and German intellectuals at a time when there was a battle of ideas on how the present time should be understood. Since Edward Said's influential *Orientalism*, it has become fashionable to dismiss European thought as Eurocentric and at best only superficially cosmopolitan (Said 1979). This position neglects the serious engagement that Enlightenment intellectuals had with non-European cultures and with the critique of colonialism and slavery. An important but often neglected aspect of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism was the desire for a positive engagement between East and West. Philosophers such as Leibniz and Schlegel sought to discover common links between Chinese and European thought and were major figures in what Clarke has referred to as the Oriental Enlightenment in European thought (Clarke 1997). Leibniz held that there was a higher unity of purpose that could be revealed only by an understanding of cultures. Before the end of the eighteenth century, there was a strong anti-Christian radicalism in European enlightenment thought that appealed to Medieval Islamic thought and Asian philosophies, such as ancient Indian and Confucian philosophy (see Israel 2002, Park 2013). The tradition of what Jonathan Israel (2002) has termed the 'radical enlightenment' can be seen as a carrier or radical cosmopolitan thought.

There is nothing to suggest that cosmopolitanism, although a product of European thought, is not also relevant to nonEuropean traditions and in ways that are not reducible to European categories of thought. Sheldon Pollock (2008) has argued against the traditional association of cosmopolitanism with western universalism confronting Asian particularism and claims there is a Sanskrit Cosmopolis, which can be regarded as an Asian cosmopolitan tradition. Cosmopolitanism can also be related to other ancient civilizations, such as the Chinese whose notion of '*Tian Zia*' – meaning 'all under heaven' has often been compared to the western cosmopolitan idea, as has Menicus's ideal of a universal peace.[ii]

The account offered here challenges the argument of the conservative German historian Frederich Meineke (1970) in a famous work in 1907, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, that cosmopolitanism went into decline with the rise of the nation-state and modern nationalism. There can be no doubt that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are often in tension in that they reflect quite different conceptions of political community, a closed versus and open one. The former was embraced by Meineke who supported National Socialism and praised the German invasion of Poland in 1939. However, cosmopolitanism and nationalism are not necessarily incompatible, as evidenced by many examples of liberal nationalism. Nationalism has often been a carrier of cosmopolitanism. Indeed, much of modern nationalism was derived from the same republican heritage that also fostered

cosmopolitanism. Both traditions share a common concern with human freedom. Nonetheless, the cosmopolitan tradition places a stronger emphasis on widening the scope of political community and in a more positive embracing of cultural difference.

Cosmopolitanism after its high point in the eighteenth century certainly declined as an explicit movement in the first half of the twentieth century in the wake of two world wars. Thus is not to neglect, as Harrington (2016) has persuasively shown, that in this time many German intellectuals defended liberal cosmopolitanism. After 1945 cosmopolitanism received a new impetus in a new age of global ethics as a normative standard. The foundation of the United Nations and UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 was a significant movement in establishing cosmopolitan principles as was the new legal category of crimes against humanity. Cosmopolitanism appeared to be increasingly relevant to the intensified pace of globalisation since the early 1990s.[iii] Martha Nussbaum (1996) in a much cited essay revived the Stoic notion with a plea for the relevance of cosmopolitanism in broadening the moral horizons of society. Another essay on cosmopolitanism as an everyday empirical phenomenon by Hannerz (1990) contributed to its uptake within the social sciences. The arrival of the internet and an epochal revolution in communication technologies appeared to point to new possibilities for cosmopolitanism to become a force in the world.

While the critics and defenders of cosmopolitanism disagree on the viability of cosmopolitanism, it is arguably the case that despite widespread anti-cosmopolitan trends, there has been a world-wide increase in the recognition of cosmopolitan principles and the carriers of it are more likely to be oppositional movements seeking to advance global social justice. In this sense it is more of a 'bottom up' movement than one deriving from global elite culture or transnational institutions. The notion of a rooted cosmopolitanism has been invoked to capture this notion of an everyday cosmopolitanism. The reception of cosmopolitanism in the social sciences as well as in post-colonial thought, whereby cosmopolitanism becomes linked with empirical social phenomena, makes it difficult to claim that cosmopolitanism is only an elite phenomenon. It is increasingly associated with the claims to rights of groups previously excluded from political community and has become part of the self-understanding of many societies throughout the world even if the term might not be used.

The appeal of cosmopolitanism can be accounted for as an alternative to the violent nationalism that was a feature of much of the twentieth century, but also due to the desire for a normative critique of globalisation. Rather than being an affirmative condition, it is transformative and is produced by social struggles. The cosmopolitan vision has not

undermined nations; it has in most cases served to reorient the nation to encompass a wider sphere of meaning and experience.

Definitions of cosmopolitanism thus vary greatly and its meaning remains contested. Cosmopolitanism concerns ways in which diversity (different conceptions of the common good) and unity (belief in the possibility of a common good and the equality of all persons) can be reconciled both within given societies or cultures and in the wider global context through taking into account the perspective of others. For this reason, cosmopolitanism has an unavoidable cognitive dimension in that it is also about the degree to which societies can develop ways of thinking and feeling about justice; it is not simply a matter of the application of normative principles, such as the pursuit of freedom or specific human rights, since those principles themselves need to be interpreted and realised in different forms. It is an integral component of the self-understanding of modern societies as they seek to accommodate diversity and incorporate the perspectives of those previously excluded from the political community.

The significance of cosmopolitanism might thus be seen less as an alternative to nationalism than as the pursuit of potentials within the present. Sociological approaches tend to argue that cosmopolitanism is never an absolute or fixed category, but a variable dimension of social life[iv]. Political philosophers draw attention to normative visions of alternative ways of organising societies, especially with respect to solving major problems relating to social justice[v]. At the forefront of such debates is the political challenge of the Anthropocene, which is very much one that can be cast in the terms of cosmopolitanism. Some of the central objectives of the Anthropocene as a political condition resonate with cosmopolitical ideas, for example increasing biological diversity, the need for a global dialogue between the developed and developing world on reducing carbon emissions in ways that respects the desire of the non-western world to have a share in the benefits it has had until now, the need to strike a balance between short and long term thinking (see Delanty and Mota 2017).

Critical Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is clearly a diffuse concept embodying a normative framework as well as being an empirical phenomenon that is part of the make-up of the modern world. It is an integral part of the intellectual heritage of Europe. In this book I advocate what I refer to as a critical cosmopolitanism and which I see as characterised by four main features.[vi]

First, as the term suggests, critical cosmopolitanism stresses the critical nature of cosmopolitanism, which is not simply a prescriptive vision of how the world should be. Cosmopolitan shares with critical theory the goal of opening thought and action to a wider sphere of meaning through a process of reflection and dialogue. The mainstream tradition in liberal political theory has not emphasised its critical self-understanding. In contrast, critical cosmopolitanism stresses the potentially transformative nature of cosmopolitanism as an expression of the belief that a shared world is possible. The notion of critique suggested by this is one of reflection whereby the subject undergoes self-transformation in questioning the world in which it finds itself and building a relation to the other. Critique is transformative of both self and other. Cosmopolitanism can thus be defined as a condition of openness to the world that occurs through encounters between self and other which lead to a transformation in self-understanding.

A second characteristic of cosmopolitanism is that it is a normative in its essential substance. Its normative substance does not reside simply in abstract principles that are divorced from social reality. It entails counter-factual ideas that challenge the *status quo*, but these are also part of the social reality in that they are articulated by social actors in specific places and times. In this sense, cosmopolitanism is both normative and critical. The normative dimension cannot be neglected as it is often in cultural accounts of cosmopolitanism. Without its ethical-political orientation that a shared world is possible, it loses its force.

A third feature of critical cosmopolitanism follows from the previous two: it is a condition immanent to modern political community and modern society more generally. In other words, it is not simply a projection of intellectuals and thus transcendent or utopian, but is part of the make-up of societies. The notion of critical cosmopolitanism associates the term with social struggles and social transformation that is not constrained by a bounded notion of the political community. It is in this sense also an empirical condition in so far as it is an expression of future possibilities within the present. It is also in a more general sense immanent in that it is an epistemic condition of self-understanding: societies interpret themselves in relation to others and incorporate knowledge of others into their interpretation of themselves. An abiding feature of Europe in particular has been an intense curiosity about other societies. This was often a basis of domination, as Said (1979) has argued, but it has also been as much a basis of self-knowledge that placed the other culture on an equal footing.

Four, cosmopolitanism entails a universalistic orientation towards the world. This needs to be qualified, since it must be carefully distinguished from the received notion of a universal morality or a universalistic culture. The world orientation relates to the process by which universalising structures emerge and develop and are not irreducible to the ideas of a particular group. The notion of the universal cannot be entirely dispensed with, even if not much is left of it once its absolute nature has been discarded. Today the notion of the universal is a matter of degree in many cases as well as containing within it the recognition of relativism (see Chernilo 2012). Habermas has also argued for communicative reason as a universal competence, implying a notion of universalisation as a precondition that makes possible communication. The relevant point is that such processes of universalisation are not simply an absolute position, but develop from particular positions. In other words, the particular is always the location of the universal which exists within the particular as part of its orientation to transcend the limitations of the particular. As Strydom (2012) has demonstrated, processes of universalisation develop from the interaction of different perspectives, starting from the human cognitive endowment and culminating in the stabilisation of counterfactual ideas, which include cosmopolitan ideas. The notion of humanity and human dignity, for instance, is such a universalistic normative idea, which serves as a way in which ethical and political issues can be posed without necessarily prescribing a universal set of values that define the human condition.

For critical cosmopolitanism normative critique does not proceed from the position of an absolute universal order of values or truths. It is compatible with what is often called rooted cosmopolitanism in that it emanates from the particular but it is not confined to the limits of the particular. This is one sense in which cosmopolitanism can be contrasted to globality. While having a strong orientation towards the world, cosmopolitanism can take a strong critical attitude towards globalisation and in many of its expressions are in global solidarity and counter-global movement. For these reasons, cosmopolitanism in so far as it challenges global power can also be distinguished from internationalism in so far as this refers to the international order of states.

As noted, cosmopolitanism does not require a radical disjuncture from the local. Most conceptions of cosmopolitanism today see cosmopolitanism more in terms of the broadening of the horizons of the local than a condition of globality. For this reason, cosmopolitanism is not only compatible with the category of the nation, but is essential to it in that the national community is one of the most important carriers of cosmopolitanism. Where they are in

tension, is in how they see the limits of the political community. A narrow nationalistic view of the political community as unique, bounded and separate is in tension with the cosmopolitan vision of the political community as open, de-centred, incomplete and undefined.

It can also be commented that critical cosmopolitanism does not see cosmopolitanism as a zero sum condition, that is as either present or absent from the world. Cosmopolitanism as an empirical fact about the world is present to varying degrees in all societies; it exists in strong and in weak forms. Examples of weak forms are cultural omnivorousness, i.e. the consumption or interest in other cultures, educational programmes fostering cultural awareness. Liberal multiculturalism with its characteristic emphasis of tolerance of otherness is also an example of a relatively weak form of cosmopolitanism. It is weak because it does not require cultural acceptable. Stronger forms of cosmopolitanism would be Kant's principle of hospitality, where this is a condition of the positive embracing of the stranger, or cosmopolitics. Ulrich Beck in his many writings on cosmopolitanism attempted to capture these kinds of social and cultural transformation with his notion of cosmopolitanisation, namely mechanisms and processes whereby societies, collective identities etc become increasingly shaped by their interaction with each other. This important insight does lead to the difficulty that the normative and critical dimension of cosmopolitanism can be lost in the identification of cosmopolitanism with what is essentially transnationalism.

What then is the relationship between cosmopolitanism and transnationalism? In the previous chapters, I argued that transnationalism offers a view of societies as interconnected rather than as unique, bounded and exceptional. This involves challenges to self-perceived accounts of how nations see themselves. However, it does not follow from the fact that a given society has emerged from transnational connections that it is cosmopolitan. Transnational analysis identifies some important preconditions for cosmopolitanism. It may show that there is greater presence of cosmopolitanism than previously assumed or reveal the potential for the cosmopolitan values to emerge. Clearly both are closely connected, but transnationalism is better seen as an analytical method of inquiry rather than a normative approach. In contrast, cosmopolitanism offers a critical-normative interpretation of societal trends. Not all transnational phenomena exhibit cosmopolitan values or are a basis for cosmopolitanism to take a more enhanced form. Not all encounters bring about a transformation in moral and political self-understanding, which would be necessary for a

cosmopolitan outcome. Cosmopolitan critique does not require the prior existence of transnationalism. However, the latter is an important facilitator of cosmopolitan trends.

In order to concretise the arguement, an example can be taken that illustrates how a transnational phenomenon can be seen as a reminder of cosmopolitan currents. The Stari Most bridge in the city of Mostar in Bosnia, where it crosses the river Neretva, can be taken as an example of a past cosmopolitanism that offers the present with an orientation for the future (see Image). The Ottoman bridge, a world heritage site, was built in the sixteenth century where it was the focus for a multi-cultural city in which preOttoman, eastern Ottoman, Mediterranean and western architectural styles and a transnational urban settlement in which different cultures co-existed. The bridge was destroyed in November 1993 during the Bosnia war in what has been seen as a deliberate attempt by the Croat military to obliterate the transnational heritage of the city and its Ottoman memory. It was rebuilt in 2014. The reconstructed bridge, declared a UNESCO world heritage site, is a symbol of reconciliation and of the co-existence of diverse people.[vii] It is a living example of the cosmopolitanism of the European cultural heritage and of the adversity of war.

Image

Figure 7. The Stari Most bridge, Mostar, Bosnia

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Eurocentrism and Cosmopolitan Critique

One of the central contentions of this book is that the European heritage can escape Eurocentrism, which is neither an all embracing entity nor its essential defining tenet. The argument is that when viewed through the lens of transnational history, Europe is unbounded and decentred within; it is not homogeneous but plural and many of its intellectual and cultural traditions embrace alterity, the positive acceptance of diference. The notion of Eurocentrism cannot be extended to embrace the entirety of the European heritage; nor can it be extended to encompass all forms of European self-understanding and knowledge. This is something that has been recognised by many major philosophers such as Karl Jaspers (1948), Jacques Derrida (1992), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1992). One of the challenges of scholarship

on the European heritage is to identify the self-problematising and critical currents that have been equally constitutive of Europe's past. Whether Europe can escape Eurocentrism is very much a question of how the past is read and what weight is given to cosmopolitan currents in relation to those that fall under the rubric of Eurocentrism. Post-colonial critiques of Eurocentrism fail to address the diverse currents of the European heritage and the fact that nothing has ever been finally settled. The argument of this book is that a critical cosmopolitan critique of Europe is itself one of the legacies of the European heritage and gives to the present a possible direction for the future. This means that the European heritage contains within itself the resources to overcome itself. It is in this emphasis on an immanent critique of the European heritage that I depart from postcolonial theory. Viewing the European heritage in such terms, as unbounded and decentred, questions the unreflective use of the notion of Eurocentrism, which implies that Europe – or thinking about Europe – is somehow necessarily based on a centre and that it makes false claims to universality. As Jonathan Israel has argued of the Enlightenment, so often held to be the source of much of the intellectual heritage of modern Europe, there was not a single dominant Enlightenment but at least two. He has written extensively about the 'radical enlightenment' that offered a different vision of the world from the mainstream one and which provided the modern world with its most important ideas that in their time were radical: freedom, toleration, equality, critique (see Israel 2002, 2011). The intellectual and cultural orientation of the radical enlightenment was also intensively critical of Eurocentrism. An example of this would be Guilaume Thomas Raynal's four volume *History of the Two Indies* published in 1770. The work, which included the collaboration of Diderot, in its time was regarded as a subversive work and evidence of a critical philosophy of Eurocentrism and European colonialism (Raynal 2006). Another pertinent example is the writings of the Scottish author and traveller Robert Louis Stevenson. A figure from the era of European colonialism, he was the contrary to Said's examples of European orientalism in that he was a critic of colonialism for whom travel was an opportunity for the positive exploration of other cultures.[viii]

As normally understood, Eurocentrism is the view espoused by postcolonial thinkers, such as Samir Amin in *Eurocentrism* (1989) who defines it as 'a theory of the world that posits Europe as unique and superior.' These are two separate claims, the claim to uniqueness

and the claim to superiority. The position put forward in this book is that this theory, which is more like a worldview than a theory, is not only contested within the European intellectual tradition, but in fact gains one of its most important counter-critiques from within Europe. Some of the most far-reaching critiques of European Eurocentrism have come from within European thought, but from mainstream and from its radical traditions (Harrington 2016, Israel 2002, 20111). The notion that non-Eurocentrism comes from outside Europe, which cannot escape its own particularity, is far from self-evident. In these terms, there can realistically be no alternative to Eurocentrism. This is a position that Edward Said more or less arrived at with his notion of a monolithic culture of orientalism.

According to Said, Orientalism is 'A style of thought based on the ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and the "Occident" '(Said, 1979: 2). As an account of Eurocentrism the notion of orientalism has the merit of providing a useful way of thinking about Europe as constructed in terms of a relation with an Other, who is the opposite and the necessary means of European self-identity. However, unless qualified, it becomes an over-generalised category that subsumes within it the entirety of both Occident and Orient. As often noted, it denies agency to Orient, which exists only in ways defined by Europe, but also reduces Europe to the condition of the Occident, that is necessarily a condition defined by its relation to the Orient. In Said's work, the Orient is a construction of the Occident and neither can exist outside the binary terms of the discourse. It is certainly the case that the relation to non-Europe – whether the Orient or something else – has been central to the nature of Eurocentrism and gave to Europe a means of defining its own identity at a number of critical junctures in history. This Other has not been constant and the nature of the relationship and has also changed. However, the Other has been as much an 'internal' one as an external one. It is arguably the case that the discovery of America had a greater impact in the shaping of the European mind that the Orient. Said's book has been pivotal in critical thinking about Eurocentrism, but also raises many problems in thinking beyond Eurocentrism.

Eurocentrism can mean a number of different things. It can mean, as in Amir's definition, the superiority of Europe that allegedly derives from its uniqueness. The problem with this is that it is difficult to find examples of thinkers who have advocated the superiority of Europe. A more plausible designation is the presumption of European uniqueness or exceptionality, that is claim that Europe is singularly different from the rest of the world. This does not necessarily lead to sense of superiority. A variant of this argument would be the

claim that certain phenomena that can be observed worldwide are universal characteristics of human societies when in fact these are peculiarities of Europe that have been given universal significance. These are two separate claims that often paradoxically go together: the thesis of exceptionality and the attribution of universality. A famous example of this Eurocentrism is Max Weber's enigmatic and much quoted opening sentence of the 'Author's Introduction' to the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1904/5: 'A product of modern European civilisation, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilisation, and in Western civilisation only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value' (Weber 1979: 13). This can hardly be taken as an example of European superiority in that Weber was not proclaiming the superiority of the Europe. As often noted, it is also unclear what he meant with the words 'we like to think'. However, his position is arguably illustrative of what is in essence an analytical claim that the European historical experience reveals trends that while specific to Europe can be discerned in weaker forms in other world civilisations. Whether this is the case or not is ultimately an empirical matter. But there can be little doubt that Weber did assume that theoretical concepts derived from the analysis of European civilisation could be applied to the rest of the world. His abiding concern lay in understanding the uniqueness of the West, in the sense that in western Europe and North America rationalisation in all spheres of life became dominant by the dawning of the twentieth century. This in itself can hardly be called Eurocentric, even if he misunderstood certain facts about both Europe and the civilisations that he was comparing, since it was primarily a critique of the West than a proclamation of its greatness. Weber belonged to a tradition of European thought that was profoundly pessimistic about the course of European civilisation. However, if the exceptionality he discovered was arrived at through a comparative analysis of the civilisations of the world that was based on a universalisation of what in fact were western particular experiences, the conclusion can be deemed Eurocentric.

The unreflective use of concepts of western origin and the western historical experience as a reference point is one of the most pervasive forms of Eurocentrism in the social and human sciences. It has been rightfully criticised by Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provencializing* Europe (2000) in which he questions the global relevance of European thought without necessarily rejecting it in its entirety. Europe should not be an exclusive term of reference for the analysis of the rest of the world. Chakrabarty's call does not require the

relinquishing of European concepts and putting in place nativist concepts. This is one line of argument that is often behind critiques of Eurocentrism. One problem here is that there was more or less no non-western science of the world prior the twentieth century. Certainly Abd al-Rahman Ibn Kaldun (1332-1406) can be as a possible originator of social science. However this is a limited example and it is questionable that such reflections on premodern tribal societies can be a basis for a non-Eurocentric knowledge today. Indeed, as often noted, one reason why he is commonly selected is because of the compatibility of his thinking with classical sociological theory. Nonetheless, he is an example of a thinker who can be located as part of an earlier European-Islamic heritage.

Provencialising Europe demands greater self-problematisation about the global application of concepts and theories drawn from the European historical experience. It can also be taken further: it requires a view of the European heritage as itself the product of many histories and thus must be provincialised from within Europe. The task of 'provincialising' or 'decolonising' Europe is part of the cosmopolitan challenge of seeing within the European heritage forms of thought that reveal different histories to those that marginalise the diversity of Europe's past, a diversity that includes non-European histories. One expression of Eurocentrism is then the marginalisation of the non-European dimension which is also constitutive of Europe and calls into question the notion of European uniqueness. Arab/Islamic thought, between the 9th and 14th centuries was very important in the making of the European heritage but it is often reduced to its function of preserving and transmitting classical European thought. Provincialising Europe would include giving greater acknowledge of what has come to be seen as a non-European traditions as constitutive of Europe. This can and must include writing in non-western sources of knowledge or giving them greater place. However, while correcting some Eurocentric thinking that cultivates the view that Europe is unique, such exercises do not offer an alternative view of Europe or of how the past should be evaluated other than the inclusion of that which has been marginalised. This in itself is not an insignificant endeavour, but it still leaves open the question whether there are other ways of approaching the European heritage beyond this task of the inclusion of what has been hidden. Revealing hidden histories may be more than a corrective exercise in the sense of adding in that which was missing but otherwise not changing the narrative; it may lead to fundamentally new insights if those histories reveal an alternative way of looking at the world. If this is the case – as in for example the way in which women's history reshaped the way we think about the past – it would require us to

rethink the received views of the past in ways that go beyond mere pluralism. For example, the relative neglect of colonialism in the formation of the modern history of Europe leads to a myopic view of Europe as something that can be understood without taking into account the formative impact of the rest of the world. A relevant example concerns the Anglo-centric memory of World War One in the UK which erased the presence of one million Indian troops and two million black soldiers. This forgotten history has only recently been reinserted into the British heritage.[ix]

IMAGE

Figure 8. Convalescent Indian Troops at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton during World War

By permission of Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove

From a critical cosmopolitan perspective, is possible to speak of the European heritage in a way that rejects the notion of European uniqueness, which is the core of Eurocentric thinking. The recognition of the non-European dimension of Europe is a necessary part of the task, but this must be part of a wider vision of seeing Europe as unbounded and decentred from within. This vision will require embracing the diversity of histories of Europe, both those previously marginalised or excluded, as well as those that have been seen as constituting the mainstream. Such perspectives have been central to post-colonial subaltern studies in the context of societies, in particular India, colonised by Europeans. For the subaltern school, Eurocentrism obscured the history of the colonised. The aim thus, as expressed in Gayatri Spivak's signal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak' (1988), became the 'writing in' the unwritten history of the colonised and to overcome the silence of the marginalised by the dominant voice of the coloniser. This is not necessarily confined to the nonEuropean world.

Eurocentrism is not then an exhaustive category that includes within it all that can be said of the idea of Europe. A critical cosmopolitan view of the European heritage emphasises not only inclusivity but also the critique of particularity, including European particularity. It can be seen as a reversal of Orientalism. Where Orientalism posits a relation of inequality

between Europe and its others, a cosmopolitan perspective would see the relation as admitting of the possibility of dialogue and exchange as well as resistances. The idea of Europe is today very much linked with the critique of Europe. It is also associated with the shared experiences and interpretations of those experiences by Europeans as they re-evaluate themselves in light of those interpretations. The European heritage today might then be best seen as a site of resistances and of reflection. The dark shadow of the holocaust remains one of the core symbolic reference points for reflection on the European heritage. It has long cased to be a German specific memory, but has become a European one.

Image

Figure 9. Entrance to Auschwitz with the Nazi emblem 'Work makes you free'

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I am arguing, then, that the critique of Eurocentrism is already part of the European heritage in so far as this is carried by particular social actors at specific times and places. This is different from saying the European heritage, or any heritage is essentially cosmopolitan; no culture has a defining essence. This is also not to say that it has no shape and is incoherent, but it is not fixed or based on an unchanging substance. In Chapter 6 I return to this question of the shape of Europe in light of its diversity and rupture. Julia Kristeva (2000), for example, has commented on the spiritual contribution of the Orthodox world to the European heritage. She highlights the very different Orthodox spirituality as a contrast to the spirit of liberty and critique in the western tradition and how this has led to different notions of the individual and has also sent itself to political instrumentalisation.

The argument put forward here differs then from post-colonial critiques in four main ways, which in general revolve around a more open ended understanding of the idea of Europe as a mode of self-understanding that is changes in light of new interpretations of shared experiences. First, the European heritage is not necessarily Eurocentric. This is a concept that by definition posits a centre to culture. In view of the diversity and historical variability of Europe, it is difficult to specify a centre that had enduring significance. A

feature of European history has been a plurality of centres, none of which gained supremacy. This latter fact – that no centre of power gained supremacy for long – is probably more significance than that of diversity, since diversity is not a specifically European characteristic. Second, some of the greatest struggles in European history have been within Europe. There are of course a few examples of a panEuropean struggle with the rest of the world (an important example would be the Berlin Conference in 1884-5 when European powers met to agree on the division of Africa). However, on the whole Europe, prior to the EU, did not act in unity. Third, there has been a diversity of forms of colonisation, ranging from the Spanish and Portuguese colonialisation, both very different, to the nineteenth century Age of Empire that saw the rise and expansion of the British Empire as well as the French and Dutch colonial missions. All these were overseas empires and were very different from the land-based central European empires, such the German Reich, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire. For much of the history of Europe and Asia, empire was the normal condition for the organisation of societies and many such imperial orders were not European. This suggests if not the futility of the concepts of colonisation and empire, at least their limited value as the core concepts in accounting for the substance of the European heritage. Finally, the notion of Eurocentrism as a condition that derives from the dominance of European colonisation fails to give due regard to the precolonial heritage of Europe. It is arguably the case that the defining features of European societies were established in the medieval period, between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries with the consolidation of Christianity, capitalism and the legal and political structures of the medieval states.

Post-colonial theories have been predominately focussed on the western imperial states, in particular Britain and France. The important insights that emerged from this scholarship are not easily transferred to other European countries whose histories have been very different. Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as Portugal (which retained its African overseas empire long after the loss of Brazil) are today post-imperial nations that cannot be understood outside their colonial past. Central and Eastern European is a different matter and many other countries, such as Nordic Europe, do not fit into the same pattern as those countries that possessed overseas empires. The German Reich had a relatively limited experience with overseas colonisation, of which Namibia is a relevant example. A genocide of the Herero people in 1904 has been the subject of an exhibition in the German Historical Museum in Berlin in 2017. However, this colonial memory has been

overshadowed by the Holocaust memory and has only recently entered into public consciousness[x].

Conclusion

For all these reasons, the notion of critical cosmopolitanism is used here as a wider framework to approach the complexity of the European heritage and the limits of the notion of Eurocentrism. This is not a question of seeking the universal validity of European values and culture. It a position that seeks to retrieve the normative content of the European heritage from a point within it. In doing so it does not reject the possibility that cultural heritage may have some validity for the present. To make this claim is not the same as attributing to it a universal validity. The cultural heritage of a nation or of Europe more generally includes within it universalistic ideas, but these are always mediated by the particularity of culture and are thus located in specific times and places. The critical cosmopolitan perspective draws attention to the ways in which cultures seek to transcend themselves through the broadening of their horizons and the recognition of their unboundness.

The definition of the idea of Europe that results from this is that it is not a fixed and self-contained structure that has a clear-cut shape, but is produced in ever-shifting bundles of relations that produced, at different times and places, variable configurations of meaning. These configurations certainly had common reference points and were not so variable that there was no continuity. The idea of Europe took shape alongside the formation of other systems of meaning, such as the nation, in creating shared experiences and interpretations of those experiences. There was a certain co-emergence of both the nation and Europe such that each defined the other. Europe is rooted in its nations and in other cultural formations that exist within and across nations, but it also contains within it an orientation to the world and which is also transmitted to the idea of the nation. The critical cosmopolitan perspective developed here attempts to capture this tension by which the idea of Europe mediates between universalistic ideas and particularism. Thus to speak of Europe unbounded is to retrieve encounters, resistances and relations to otherness within the European heritage in ways that challenge some of the received views about the exceptionality and universality of European culture.

NOTES

[i] This chapter is based on a keynote lecture given to the Annual conference of the Global Studies Association, Roehampton University, London, 10th July 2013. A different version was given at the conference 'China in the World, the World in China: East Asian Cosmopolitanisms?' Hong Kong Sociological Association, Hong Kong, 7-8th December, 2013. A later version was presented as a lecture at the University of Naples, 3rd September 2015. In writing this chapter I have also drawn upon a contribution to a symposium at Leeds University on 7th December 2016 on Austin Harrington's *German Cosmopolitan Social Thought and the Idea of the West: Voices from Weimar*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

[ii] I have explored some of these issues of cultural translation in Delanty (2014).

[iii] See Beck (2006), Cheah and Robbbins (1998), Vertovec and Cohen (2002).

[iv] Holton (2009), Kendall et al (2009).

[v] Brock (2009).

[vi] For a more detailed discussion see, my book *The Cosmopolitican Imagination* (Delanty 2009).

[vii] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/946

[viii] His travels is one of the Council of Europe's cultural routes sites of cultural heritage http://culture-routes.net/cultural-routes/list

[ix] I am grateful to Iqbal Husan and Jasper Chalcraft for this example.

[x] https://www.dhm.de/en/ausstellungen/german-colonialism.html

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