

To Be A World Citizen: Political Horizon or Abyss?

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The world is no longer a vague, indeterminate idea: our lives are so globalized that it is now a reality. Does cosmopolitanism have a future under such conditions? Michaël Føessel explains the origin and meaning of this utopia, highlighting its transformations and reaffirming its political relevance.

Can a utopia survive if one of its variants is realized? At a time when crossing boundaries (actual or virtual) has become an everyday occurrence, this question is particularly relevant to cosmopolitanism. Certainly, there would appear to be a number of slight differences between the phenomena linked to globalization and the cosmopolitical ideal. The opposition between a globalization of a primarily economic nature and a political regulation that is commensurate with the world has become a leitmotif of contemporary cosmopolitical discourse. Even in this case, however, the necessity of the ideal is deduced from the physiognomy of the present: considering that capital, as well as risk, now ignores borders altogether, cosmopolitanism has become a realistic ideal for the first time in history.

If “reality itself has become cosmopolitan”¹, as Ulrich Beck observes, what remains of a utopia that, historically, has been fuelled by its subversive nature with regard to established orders? The contemporary processes of “cosmopolitization” take place first and foremost at the level of individual experiences. In general terms, these cause the field of perception to widen: modern methods of sharing information lend events a global dimension, the democratization of transport and virtual networks does away with distance, and migratory developments everywhere tend to establish multicultural societies. The figure of the “cosmopolitan person”, idealized and fought against in equal measure, has ceased to be elitist in the era of mass tourism. The global dominance of the English language lends credence to the idea of a universal translatability of languages.

These are just some of the contemporary elements that explain why the world has lost its transcendence and established itself as a fact. In Kantian language (references to Kant are almost always present in modern cosmopolitical discourse), one would say that the world has shifted from the status of regulative principle to that of constitutive principle. What had previously remained a horizon accessible only through the imagination or reason has become a fact of experience. The proliferation of social and cultural interdependencies explains why

¹ U. Beck, *Qu'est-ce que le cosmopolitisme ?*, Paris, Aubier.

we have all more or less become “citizens of the world” without having made the choice. However, this statement also distorts the requirement of law: can one still wish for something that occurs in a seemingly unavoidable manner? Unless one makes cosmopolitanism the logical and inevitable result of the developments of the present, one must wonder how such an ideal is likely not to support the course of things but to contradict any unjustness it might bring with it.

This last consideration tends to make cosmopolitanism part of the wider field of a theory of justice. Henceforth, as we shall see, it is no longer a question of simply establishing the world politically in order to respond to recent historical developments. Rather, one should envisage the world as the horizon of political achievement. At the heart of this problem lies the question of world citizenship around which most contemporary theories on cosmopolitanism revolve. What does it mean for an individual to be a “citizen of the world”? Is this citizenship destined to remain purely symbolic or must it be instituted? If so, which institution is best able to guarantee a set of rights that are independent from national affiliations? Is cosmopolitan citizenship a matter for private law or public law? Does it require a global political authority or, on the contrary, are supranational bodies (like the European Union) enough to guarantee its efficiency?

These questions fall within the sphere of political science as well as that of law and sociology. Since the Abbé de Saint-Pierre and Kant, philosophy has contributed to the imagining of institutional models that are able to give world citizenship an actual content. This would not be the method used in this contribution. Rather than defining a framework that is appropriate for a “cosmopolitical democracy” able to meet the challenges of the present², we shall endeavour to clarify the main meanings that the subject of world citizenship entails. In its introduction alone, it puts to the test the most recognized concepts of modern political theory: we shall only look at those of sovereignty, people and state. The reason for this – which will be the unifying thread running through this analysis – is that cosmopolitanism has an ambivalent relationship with politics as such. It stands as both its horizon of expectation (Jacques Derrida’s 1997 work *On Cosmopolitanism* comes to mind) and its limit, since it is usually against an established power that the rights of the world citizen are invoked. Saying that cosmopolitanism is the “fulfilment” of political power reinforces its ambiguity. Indeed, one might wonder if world citizenship sanctions the political dimension of human existence or whether it puts it into perspective to the benefit of other authorities (moral, religious, cultural, even metaphysical).

Before deciding whether or not cosmopolitanism has become a realistic ideal today, and in order to be able to do so, it is therefore necessary to establish whether or not it constitutes a legitimate collective demand or if instead it might lead to the distortion of any authentically political link.

A metaphysics of the universal?

The idea of a cosmo-politics is so unlikely that the first occurrences of the theme of world citizenship are clearly antipolitical. To prove this, it is enough to cite the response given by Diogenes the Cynic when Alexander the Great asked him which city he was from: “I

² On this point, reference should be made to Daniele Archibugi’s proposal in *La démocratie cosmopolitique, Sur la voie d’une démocratie mondiale*, Paris, Cerf, 2009.

am a citizen of the world (*cosmopolites*)". This claim appears to be a challenge issued not only to the conqueror's power but also to the political classifications used in Ancient Greece. Diogenes' cosmopolitanism was essentially individualistic and anarchistic: for him, being a "citizen of the world" meant first of all not belonging to any city or being submissive to the power of any establishment. From this perspective, the absence of a global institution is not an argument against cosmopolitanism but on the contrary a guarantee of absolute independence. It is precisely because it eludes institution that the world is a fitting space for cynical individualism.

This is not a presentation of the history of cosmopolitanism, even in the context of the criticisms its supporters have made of established powers³. It suffices to recall that the anti-institutional tradition begun by Diogenes resurfaced in Stoic cosmopolitanism, whose essence was more metaphysical and moral than political. For the Stoics, even if it is called "citizenship", man's belonging to the world and its law created a power of knowing and a duty to act, not a right that can be legally opposed to cities or the Empire. Admittedly, any citizen of the world belongs to a community. However, as a community of wise men this exceeds all the institutional formations that are likely to occur in history.

Of greater importance to us than any historical aspect is the way in which modern thinkers have used this antipolitical dimension *against* cosmopolitanism. It is precisely because it applies to an abstract and unreal form of universality that cosmopolitanism constitutes the abyss of politics. This argument is not only found among traditionalist thinkers who pit the constraint of national moral values against man's universalism. Rousseau thus challenged cosmopolitanism, which he saw as a concealment of political power in favour of a metaphysics of "humankind", which he viewed with suspicion⁴. There is a combination of two different arguments in Rousseau's critique: 1/ the notion of humanity is too general to be used as justification for public action (the feeling of humanity can only ever be vague and, therefore, proves incapable of generating any motivation); 2/ the political rights of humanity cannot be derived from the existence of a natural right (Diderot) or from a sense of charity innate in humankind (Pufendorf). In both cases, the political claims of world citizenship are contradicted in the name of a theory of will which, despite its generality, cannot turn against particular (national) interests. Wanting *politically* firstly means wanting as a people, in other words sovereignly, because the will cannot let itself be limited by a *pre-existing* representation, albeit that of the absolute equality between members of the human race.

Of concern here is the dependence of cosmopolitanism in relation to an ontology of natural law. For Rousseau, an identity of nature among men does indeed exist, but it is incapable of justifying legitimate institutions because only contradictions resulting from the social (degenerate) life make the social contract indispensable. In short, the fact of belonging

³ See Peter Coulmas' historical overview, *Les citoyens du monde, Histoire du cosmopolitisme*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1995.

⁴ It is in the Geneva Manuscript that his critique, almost always unambiguous, is the most clear-cut: "We conceive of general society on the model of our individual societies, the establishment of small republics makes us wish for a large one, and we only really begin to become men after having been citizens. This should tell us what we ought to think of those so-called cosmopolitans, who justify the love of their country on the basis of their love for the human race, and vaunt themselves as loving everyone so that they can have the right to love no-one." *Of the Social Contract or Essay on the Form of the Republic* (1st version) Translated from the French by Christopher Bertram, Chapter 2: Of the General Society of the Human Race http://eis.bris.ac.uk/~plcdib/General_Society.htm

to the human race does not dictate any behaviour or legitimize any collective project and, above all, it is not the source of any political will.

Taking their cue from Rousseau, many authors emphasized the “idealist” excesses of cosmopolitanism. More than its utopian nature, they cited its metaphysical dimension as an argument against it⁵. How could procedures of deliberation and decision be established on a basis as fragile as membership of the human race? Politics was based on concrete experiences that, at least in the context of the first modernity, were linked to national realities. Moreover, the feeling of belonging to the world as if it were a universal society can be interpreted as an illusion particular to a defined social group. Marxist criticism of the “cosmopolitan” figure connects it with bourgeois ideology which, in a contradictory way, ascribes the universal to a class. This argument would resurface in other forms: world citizenship was depoliticizing because it was based on a concealment of conflicts in the name of an illusory common interest⁶.

A legal ideal

As we can see, the difficulty lies in the connection between politics and humanity as a race. When politics is conducted in the name of the universal does it not always mask a conflict of interests? And how can “man” be defined so that such a concept provides the will with a content?

It is true that cosmopolitanism is the condition of metaphysics whenever world citizenship is inferred from man’s universal and substantial essence, which determines his destiny in advance. While this is somewhat antipolitical, it is nevertheless the subordination of human reason to *nature* that would subject behaviour to a normative hierarchy. And yet, a key trait of modern cosmopolitanism consists in freeing oneself of all metaphysics of the *cosmos* and from the ontology of belonging associated with it⁷. In Kant, for example, the status of world citizen no longer depends on an anthropological definition but rather on a strictly legal requirement: the pacification of interactions between individuals is the source of the law. Practical legal reason establishes that no connection between individuals should be abandoned to the violence of the state of nature. From the moment interactions spread throughout the whole world (a condition that has been fulfilled in the modern world), it is necessary to consider a form of rights that governs transnational relations. “Cosmopolitan right” in the strict sense concerns precisely the legal claims that “foreigners” can make of states⁸.

Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch (1795) therefore constituted a significant step forward in the “politicization” of the concept of cosmopolitanism. In Kant, world citizenship is no longer asserted on the basis of philanthropic morality but rather in accordance with the rational requirement establishing that no intersubjective relationship evades the law. If “world

⁵ This is, for example, the case of John Rawls who argues in favour of applying the principles of justice in a national context in which the responsibility for safeguarding human rights lies first and foremost with states (see *Paix et démocratie, Le droit des peuples et la raison publique*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003).

⁶ On this point, see Étienne Balibar, “Cosmopolitisme et internationalisme: deux modèles, deux héritages”, in *Philosophie politique et horizon cosmopolitique*, Unesco, Paris, 2004, p. 37-63.

⁷ I develop this point in *Après la fin du monde, Critique de la raison apocalyptique*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2012, p. 243-282.

⁸ See *Vers la paix perpétuelle*, Third Definitive Article.

citizens” are first of all foreigners, it is because the establishment of a global state is well underway and condemns to arbitrariness those individuals whose status as a national citizen is not recognized. The Kantian limitation of the cosmopolitical right to a “right of visitation” has often been criticized: the state should agree to enter into a legal relationship with foreigners present on its soil; however those foreigners may not assert a “right to settle” in that territory. In concrete terms, cosmopolitical right guaranteed that foreigners would be taken charge of by legal bodies not administrative ones (as is generally the case in France today). The limitation on the “right to settle” has a precise historical meaning: Kant was contemplating this in the context of early colonization⁹. World citizenship justified the claim to enter into a legal relationship with others, not to establish a new empire.

In this respect, it is no longer contradictory to assert cosmopolitanism in the context of the political pluralism of states. In reality, there would be no “foreigners” in a world governed by a unified world state. Habermas also followed the Kantian tradition when he focused on the main foundation of the European construction: the invention of a transnational citizenship that does not formally challenge the existence of nation-states¹⁰. There is a debate to be had on which form of institution is best able to guarantee that right for foreigners, and it is inevitable that such a right limits the sovereignty of states. However, beneath these institutional aspects, what Kant posits lies within a strictly political construction (i.e. it is neither metaphysical nor moral but refers to the condition of coexistence between individuals) of the concept of cosmopolitanism. The universal is no longer the point of departure for this reflection because it is no longer a given in human nature. Rather, it constitutes the legal horizon within which lies a political reason that is free from any presupposition regarding man’s essence.

A demand made by civil society

However, cosmopolitanism has had an effect on the definition of politics. As a general rule, its opponents criticize this ideal for limiting politics to morality, often in a hypocritical way. “Whoever says ‘humanity’ wants to deceive”, stated Carl Schmitt, parodying a saying by Proudhon¹¹. A war waged in the name of humanity implies the criminalization (i.e. dehumanization) of the opposing side, which, in the eyes of the German jurist, constitutes the moral front for imperialist actions. Above all, the “deceit” lies in the concealment, by cosmopolitical liberalism, of the criterion of politics: the sharing between friend and enemy. Given that humanity has only a monstrous exterior, (cosmo)politics is limited to actions taken by the international police in the name of Good, of which there have been countless examples in recent decades.

From this kind of criticism we shall only retain the principle that consists in identifying cosmopolitanism with a *politics of depoliticization* and, therefore, with a morality that is all the more ambiguous because it justifies the greatest violence. There is no doubt that, like other utopias, cosmopolitanism has been subject to diverse ideological hijackings. The point is knowing whether or not the fact of thinking in categories and acting in institutions that do not receive any guarantees from tradition necessarily reveals an antipolitical ethos. In fact, the model of pluralist cosmopolitanism set out above presupposes that something political is being played out outside of the state or at least on its fringes. The assertion of a world

⁹ In the case in point, European efforts to conquer China and Japan.

¹⁰ See Habermas, *La paix perpétuelle, Le bicentenaire d'une idée kantienne*, Paris, Cerf, 1996.

¹¹ C. Schmitt, *La notion de politique*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1972, repub. Champs-Flammarion, p. 96.

citizenship is by nature subversive as regards the modern identification between legal capacity and nationality.

Many contemporary theorists of cosmopolitanism emphasize the fact that this hybrid form of citizenship finds justification for its claim, as well as its most exemplary legal expression, in civil society rather than the state. Thereby, they use an argument in favour of cosmopolitanism that Hegel put forward against this ideal. The only reference made to cosmopolitanism in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* can be found in the section on civil society, more specifically in a discussion devoted to the “administration of right”. The context presents no risk since in this passage Hegel presents what can be called the ideology of civil society, in other words the universalist and liberal theory of human rights. Within modern societies,

A human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc. This consciousness, which is the aim of thought, is of infinite importance, and it is inadequate only if it adopts a fixed position – for example as cosmopolitanism – in opposition to the concrete life of the state¹².

According to Hegel, the principle of individual freedom and equality constitutes a perfectly legitimate historical discovery, provided that it is confined to a particular institution: modern civil society, in so far as it legally organizes the sphere of exchange and the satisfaction of needs. One might say that, in civil society, individuals are citizens of the world in the sense that they have the same original rights, whatever their national belonging might be. Hegel clearly saw that there was a global dimension to capitalism and that this encouraged the human race to increase its awareness of universality. However, he refused to give political value to what was already part of the cosmopoliticization of experience: to his mind, the (national) state remained the sole credible political player. The true citizen should show allegiance to a state that had, in particular, the means to deal with the economic inequalities inherent to modern civil society.

This line of reasoning can be reversed by showing that it argues in favour of a new conception of cosmopolitanism rather than against the idea of world citizenship. In fact, Hegel’s presupposition, which can be found in many contemporary political theories, is that cosmopolitanism can only be the non-historical (and therefore antipolitical) fulfilment of the idea of state. Liberalism detaches from its historical conditions the image of universal man that is produced by modern civil society in order to create an absolute that is *opposable* to the power of states. A good example of the state’s subordination to civil society can be found in the concept of “crime against humanity” established after the Second World War: its enduring nature situates us outside of history while subjecting states to a legal duty that transcends their constitutions.

The Hegelian presupposition is nevertheless based on the identification between state and politics. It is true that the cosmopolitical demand usually comes from civil society organizations: humanitarian associations, NGOs and transnational unions. However, the claims laid by these organizations 1/ are not anti-institutional in principle because, on the contrary, they aim to achieve the recognition of rights previously denied by states, and 2/ they do not concern a hypothetical “product of history” but rather are part of a politicization of social relations. Cosmopolitanism here can be understood as an increased demand for

¹² Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 209, Remark, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

citizenship on the basis that it includes claims that exceed the formal rights guaranteed by nationality alone. Individuals who are organized within civil society campaign as “workers”, defenders of human rights, environmentalists, etc. Only by the fact of establishing legal claims that are independent from their national belonging can they declare themselves to be citizens of the world.

There is nothing naively optimistic about this, as seen from contemporary social movements which, for example in South America, have succeeded in imposing transnational economic and environmental standards that have progressively transformed into political rights. In Brazil it has been observed that the dynamic of right has been the opposite of that experienced in the West: social claims existed before political claims, while also facilitating their emergence¹³. In other words, the claim of citizenship was born out of the rejection of a social condition that had become intolerable. This dynamic is cosmopolitical in the sense that it did not originate in national struggles yet it challenges the way in which citizenship is limited to nationality. No matter that cosmopolitanism does not immediately adopt the “world” as its sphere of action. It can very well connect with local struggles (at city or regional level) from the moment claims of right are formulated in a language other than that of states.

Hegel was right to see civil society as the space in which cosmopolitical ideology emerges. The fact that cultural, economic and social relations are relatively indifferent to borders helps to sketch out an experimental space for the universal. However, the facts show that civil society, provided it does not allow itself to be colonized by the market, is a forum for the politicization of individual experiences. To borrow an example from Merleau-Ponty, the “day-labourer” has the experience of living in the world when he has “perceived, in a concrete way, that his life is synchronized with the life of the town labourers and all that share a common lot.”¹⁴. First and foremost, world citizenship indicates an awareness of sharing common interests despite the perceptive divide between classes and individuals. In this sense, cosmopolitanism becomes the basis for a claim whose nature has yet to be specified.

The right to have rights

Modern cosmopolitanism does not identify with the uniformization of the world, whether through “goods” or through “values”. Moreover, this is what distinguishes it from the phenomena of globalization that refer primarily to the generalization of capitalist logic among the whole of humanity. Cosmopolitanism promotes a pluralized universalism which, unlike the market, does not necessarily require the adoption of global institutions. This is the main strength of the theories of “cosmopolitization” mentioned at the start of this analysis: they show that the awareness that we all belong to the (same) world by no means excludes other forms of allegiance. As Ulrich Beck suggests, there is no longer an unequivocal answer to the question “Who am I?”: cosmopolitization marks a “non-linear, dialectic [development] in which that which is universal and contextual, similar and different, global and local must be apprehended not in terms of cultural polarities but as closely linked principles overlapping one another”¹⁵.

¹³ This point has been underlined by Catherine Colliot-Thélène in *La démocratie sans “demos”*, Paris, PUF, 2011.

¹⁴ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, London, Routledge, 1962, p. 396.

¹⁵ U. Beck, *Qu'est-ce que le cosmopolitisme ?*, *op. cit.*, p. 144. Own English translation.

This sociological approach has the advantage of playing down the problem of the institutional translation of world citizenship. In fact, from the moment the world became post-national and post-international, even though nation-states remained, some nagging questions in the philosophy of cosmopolitanism lost their intensity. For example, the non-existence of “lenders between states” (Hegel), in other words of authorities capable of arbitrating between sovereign entities, is no longer an anti-cosmopolitical argument because the action of financial markets shows – often for the worse – that it has become easy to cross borders. The challenge of contemporary cosmopolitanism is imagining institutions that can be based on the (relative) weakening of national sovereignties while slowing the most worrying developments of economic globalization.

However, the contemporary calling into question of the impermeability of national borders does not necessarily go hand in hand with the cosmopolitization of minds, let alone that of institutions. Wendy Brown showed that the traditional borders of the Westphalian era have been replaced with the construction of “walls” which, sometimes in a transnational way, guarantee the division between favourable globalization and catastrophic globalization¹⁶. The entry requirements are no longer determined according to national characteristics: increasingly, they have become social, ethnic and securitarian. It is the poor, the immigrants and the presumed terrorists who are driven back by the walls of globalization. The weakening of national sovereignties does not therefore necessarily lead to cosmopolitanism because it causes “melancholic” reactions from states that invest what remains of their power in repression.

This point enables the content of world citizenship to be specified. We have already put forward the reasons for which it was imprudent to define cosmopolitical rights in substantial terms: there is a risk of depoliticizing this concept by subjecting it to a dogmatic image of man. However, if cosmopolitanism is to have a meaning, citizens must have recognized those rights that relate to their belonging to the world. This calls to mind a notion invented by Hannah Arendt in the context of a critique of totalitarianism: the “right to have rights”. The historical emergence, during the 1920s, of a host of “pariahs” deprived of their nationality shows that the institutional creation of individuals “without rights” is one of the *sine qua non* conditions for total domination. From the moment the protections granted to an individual depend exclusively on national belonging, it becomes easy for states to deprive a section of their population of its legal capacity. Consequently, the cosmopolitical right should be seen as a limitation of the national arbitrariness that, at the same time, paves the way for a legal dynamic.

The right to have rights is the fundamental right to acquire legal capacities¹⁷. It is universal in the sense that it constitutes a necessary presupposition for considering subjective right in general, including that which is attached to national citizenship. In this sense, cosmopolitical right comes close to human rights but only in so far as these by nature exceed any historical formulation. More than a substantial right, it is an original right without which any legal claim would be impossible. To those who criticize the excessively formal nature of this right, it must be said that this formalism forms the basis for the political effectiveness of

¹⁶ W. Brown, *Murs, les murs de séparation et le déclin de la souveraineté étatique*, Paris, Les Prairies ordinaires, 2009.

¹⁷ Following in Kant’s footsteps, Fichte was in fact the first to define cosmopolitical right as the right to acquire rights (see *Foundations of Natural Right*, 1796, § 15).

cosmopolitanism. The right to have rights is the right to *politicize* relations that, without it, would be limited to economic, securitarian or ethnic issues. On this level, cosmopolitanism is simply a principle by which all the hierarchies that have not been politically formulated and intended are put into perspective. Indeed, it enables a solution to the processes of “de-democratization” (Wendy Brown) that make one’s right subject to market-oriented imperatives on which there has been no public debate.

What world?

A provisional conclusion can be drawn from what has been said: cosmopolitanism constitutes a means of coming closer to what is *shared* without making it subordinate to *belonging*. In the point of view defended here, world citizenship is not based on the human individual’s belonging to a species with a nature, but rather on a legal claim that transcends national borders. In the same way, this form of citizenship does not indicate any legal belonging to a sphere that is larger than, but remains the equivalent of, that defined by states. The world is not a great All waiting to be institutionalized. As we have seen, the dynamic of cosmopolitanism must be envisaged on the basis of local claims made by civil society, not on the basis of state-level right becoming widespread across the globe. Finally, the “right to have rights”, through which we have tried to demonstrate the specificity of cosmopolitical citizenship, does not originate in substantial characteristics of human nature; on the contrary, it threatens the regimes of belonging that characterize ordinary social existence.

At every level on which it is grasped, cosmopolitanism constitutes a critical principle for disengagement in relation to effective communities. In that sense, it is based on an idea of the world even if, paradoxically, that idea is usually overlooked by contemporary theorists of world citizenship. As Pierre Guénancia writes, “the world fulfils the function – critical *par excellence* – of definition: we imagine our belonging as one of the possible belongings, our destiny as one of the possible destinies and not as the destiny that is necessarily mine”¹⁸. Far from referring to a thing or a totality, the “world” here acts as an operator of derealization that deprives local belonging of its claim to be absolute. Seeing oneself as a “world citizen” may not be a legal act first of all, but rather a game with representations allowing the subject to put his own ethical and political allegiances into perspective. Access to a shared world presupposes putting on hold the particular worlds (professional, cultural, religious, etc.) in which individuals evolve¹⁹.

From this point of view, it is no doubt illusory to reach a clear distinction between those elements that, within cosmopolitanism, are part of politics and those that borrow from morality or the simple act of thinking²⁰. For a human being, the fact of imagining oneself as an “inhabitant of the world” paves the way for a legal claim as discussed in this text, but also for duties (such as the protection of nature) and even for fundamental metaphysical positions (should the world be seen as the “creation”, “land” or “horizon” of existence?). For the experience of the world is made up of sensory perceptions just as much as normative

¹⁸ P. Guénancia, “Le citoyen du monde. Prolégomènes à une philosophie du cosmopolitisme”, lecture delivered at the Société française de philosophie on 23 March 2013, forthcoming. By the same author, see “L’idée de nation d’un point de vue cosmopolitique”, *Esprit*, June 2008.

¹⁹ This exclusion is related to the phenomenological method of “reduction”. The connection between the phenomenological idea of the world and cosmopolitanism merits a separate discussion.

²⁰ On the interweaving between politics and morality in modern cosmopolitanism, reference is made to Seyla Benhabib’s analyses in *Another Cosmopolitanism*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

intuitions and idealizations. In that sense, a cosmopolitanism that takes the matter of the world seriously, in other words that are not merely a variant of the universalism of reason, inevitably has recourse to unstable categories. Its strength is also its weakness: it challenges the usual concepts of political philosophy (people, sovereignty, state) because it does not possess the foundations (particularly contractualist and institutional) that have traditionally guaranteed citizenship.

The aim of the perspective outlined in this text was simply to show that, at least in a modern context, the subject of world citizenship unavoidably has a political impact. Its first consequence is paradoxical: cosmopolitanism blurs the traditional divisions (national/international, external/internal, sovereignty/dependence), thereby preventing us from deciding too quickly what is political and what is not. The right to have rights refuses to be contained within a constitution, which is why it will always be deemed suspect by lovers of restrictive legal reasoning. The cosmopolitan individual fights to reveal what is common to the world without prejudging what can legitimately be presented on such a stage. Cosmopolitanism goes against the temptations of containment, thus establishing itself as a part of democratic uncertainty.

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