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(BRILL , open access, 2025)

Everybody's Cosmopolitanism An idea for the 21st Century

“My city and country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome, but so far as I am a man, it is the world”

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book vi, 44, 6.

“Everyone should be able to include in what he regards as his own identity a new ingredient, one that will assume more and more importance in the course of the new century and the new millennium: the sense of belonging to the human adventure as well as his own”

Amin Maalouf. 1998. *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. London: Penguin, p. 163-4.

« *Our humanity and planet Earth are under threat. The pandemic has only served to prove our fragility and our interconnectedness. Now urgent action, taken together, is needed to change course and reimagine our futures* ».

Unesco. 2021. *Reimagining our futures together: a new social contract for education*. Paris: Unesco <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>

Abstract:

This international reference book (BRILL, 2025, open access) is an encyclopedic project covering varieties of cosmopolitanism rooted in different traditions of thoughts (in the West, in Europe, in the Mediterranean area, in Islam World and the Middle East, in the East and South Asia, in Sub-Saharan Societies and elsewhere). Built on the idea of a genuinely enriching dialogue between scholars living in distinctive and distant societies, this book starts from the

idea that cosmopolitanism, born of the European Enlightenment and proposing a path to universality, is nevertheless a situated cultural production, accused of perpetuating epistemic injustices and betraying its ultimate aspiration of inclusion. It is thus worth asking whether cosmopolitanism can survive the critique of its allegiance to the Western hegemonic universal, and inquiring about its possible enrichments by other, non-western contributions, so that cosmopolitanism really becomes “everybody’s cosmopolitanism”. The cosmopolitan approach is rooted in both normative and empirical, situated perspectives, all of which are embedded in the dialectic of the universal and the particular. Far from reducing others to subalterns, the multiple "cosmopolitan" traditions, of which the Western tradition is only one, allow for an understanding of a plural *and* shared world, as a rich scholarly literature has shown. From the universal horizon of Humanity captured in its different forms of life and claims, comes what we call "everybody's cosmopolitanism" (in reference to Gertrud Stein's book, "Everybody's autobiography"): these are forms of cosmopolitanism that draw the possibility of an inclusive and just world, precisely through the encounter with others and by submitting to the test of others, that is, by receiving their criticism and building bridges. At stake will be the co-production (with recognition of legitimate challenges along the way) of common norms and values that will bring together different heritages and traditions on an equal footing.

Keywords: Plural and shared world – pluralism- intercultural future – (Everybody’s) cosmopolitanism - inclusive theory and praxis- contextualism- political philosophy- cultural studies- Cultural globalization- Ethics in International Relations

Aim and scope:

This project of a reference book that will be published in open access by BRILL Publishing (2025) starts from the idea, which has recently spread worldwide, that universalism would take on water (Grosfoguel, 2007). Denounced by decolonial criticism, the dominant and self-confident West oppressing many unequal “others from its metropolises" is called to account (Bhabha, 1994). The economic, political, cultural, and symbolic hegemony of the Western world certainly explains the virulence of a critique that cannot be ignored - even though one can quickly notice that the right to criticize is an indirect tribute to the Spirit of the Enlightenment (Wolff, 2019; Policar, 2021).

This sharp criticism is exacerbated today by a climate emergency that clearly shows the economic and civilizational responsibility of the global North in the destruction of a world that is unsustainable for the damned of the earth, the most impoverished of individuals, the most fragile of states (IPCC, 2021; *Laudato Si*, 2015). Yet, with a Promethean enthusiasm, the West is inclined to impose diagnoses and solutions that are universal in name only - since behind the "Anthropocene" or "androgenic" climate change, the interests of Western man, a great consumer of goods and producer of carbon, are clearly in evidence. How can we be surprised that the West and its values are distrusted? Thus, cosmopolitanism, despite the universal promise of the European Enlightenment, appears as a cultural production with many blind spots. It is still guilty of perpetuating epistemic injustices and betraying its ultimate aspiration of inclusion (Santos, 2006; Dufoix, 2020).

Can cosmopolitanism survive the critique of its subjection to the universal, accused of annexionism and imposture (Mignolo, 2010; Chernilo, 2012)? The first reason for a positive answer is that the Greek etymology of cosmopolitanism (*id est* "world citizenship") reveals a tension towards transcendence: this transcendence means liberation from the privilege of birth (Milanovic, 2016) and ethnocentric prejudices embedded in localized belonging on the one hand, and suggests an ethical and ecumenical aspiration to build a common world on the other (Coulmas, 1995; Kleingeld and Brown, 2006; Cicchelli, 2018).

Secondly, no one can deny that this 25-century-old thought has been the object of renewed international interest for a good thirty years (one can speak of the emergence of cosmopolitanism studies, Delanty 2018, or cosmopolitan turn, Beck, 2006) in parallel with the flourishing of works in the field of globalization. Abundant and varied literature in many languages claims this intellectual filiation while forging tools to make it more operational. The cosmopolitan approach opens up its fields of application, be they institutional, legal and political, or aesthetic and cultural, and is rooted in both normative and factual perspectives (Cicchelli and Mesure, 2020; Rouyer et al., 2011). Despite their diversity, these perspectives are embedded in the dialectic of the universal and the particular, the Ego and the Other. Since the central premise of a cosmopolitan outlook is that humanity 'can be understood only if it is treated as a single subject, within which all forms of differences are recognized and respected but conceptualized as internal to the substantive unity of all human beings' (Fine, 2007: 10), defining the relationship between the universal and the particular (Cotesta, 2012), but also questioning the universal, without falling into sheer relativism, remains the main task of this approach. Cosmopolitanism entails recognizing and appreciating the other as an Other, but also, *oneself as another* (Rimbaud, 1871; Levinas 1995). The other is neither wholly foreign nor an exact copy of oneself' (Hassner, 2002: 198); neither is it or should it be, a pure object of (our) discourse. The approach valued here opens all "others" to build together a world in common (Appiah, 2006; Levinas, 1989).

Leaning on abundant scientific literature, we argue that cosmopolitanism far from essentially reducing others to subalterns, makes it possible to receive criticism from others, to listen to different voices, and by doing so, to build a world in common anchored in various contexts and meanings.

From the universal horizon of Humanity (taken in its varied forms of life and its different claims) comes what we call "Everybody's Cosmopolitanism" (in reference to Gertrud Stein's book: "Everybody's autobiography"): these are forms of cosmopolitanism that are not exhausted in the Kantian project but which, in either entirely different forms or still poorly known in the West (Chinese thought, Afro-cosmopolitanism, etc.), draw the possibility of a shared and fair world, open to the test of others and receptive to their criticism (Bhambra, 2007; Kuhn and Yazawa, 2015; Roulleau-Berger, 2016). The urgency of a more inclusive world can be seen in the magnitude of the challenges that humanity is called upon to respond to: the planet is burning, pandemics are weakening us, neoliberalism is alienating us, the competition between the United States and China on the one hand, and between Russia and the West on the other, is dividing us. Joint actions become vital in this dangerous global situation (Beck, 2009). Cosmopolitan thinking makes humanity the horizon of inscription and action, calling for an anchored global governance pursuing peace, equality, democracy, and based on respect for human rights (Held and Maffettone, 2016; Archibugi, 2008; Pogge, 2008; Whelan, 2010).

Cosmopolitanism being a theory and a praxis of inclusion, thinking to act in a shared world is precisely the objective of this initiative carried by the Grip (University of Paris), DCS (Nantes University), the University of Salerno (Center for European Studies, CES), and the University of Helsinki. By planning an edited volume (to be published by BRILL in 2025, we wish to explore the thoughts and actions that are part of and create shared worlds. "There is only one world," says Achille Mbembé (2013), but how can it be fully realized? That is the question... Necessarily based on the opening to researchers coming from diverse cultural and civilizational horizons, claiming any intellectual filiation and any disciplinary belonging, this book in open access wants to be a real global encyclopedia of cosmopolitanism in the XXIst century. Universalism has long been restricted to "the West", and this proved neither fair, nor effective: we pay the price of our past exclusions and humiliations in international relations today (Badie, 2019). This is an invitation to open it widely, to new perspectives, to those the West didn't want to hear, and who today, may also hold the key to fairer ways towards political freedom, understood globally.

Envisaged outline:

The envisaged outline is composed of two parts. The first can be considered as a *pars destruens*, the second as a *pars construens*.

I. The cosmopolitanism of others

Establishing a dialogical, symmetrical, and reflexive cosmopolitanism involves the confrontation of thinking born in the West with distant civilizational areas rich in universalist thoughts.

I.1. Cosmopolitanism at the test of others

In this sub-section, we will discuss the criticisms addressed to cosmopolitanism as seen by others.

I.2. Non-Western sources of cosmopolitanism

This second sub-section will examine how "other" intellectual sources of cosmopolitanism can contribute to elaborating a "common world". This posture is resolutely nominalistic insofar as it seeks the elements in authors belonging to non-European, non-Western cultures and civilizations that allow to think and say this cosmopolitanism even without naming it or using other expressions instead. How has dignified life (from the point of view of rights) and decent life (from the point of view of material conditions) been thought/formulated?

II. Cosmopolitanism as an inclusive praxis

This part will focus on case studies – both Western and non-Western - that analyze aspirations that, although they may be locally situated, aim to be part of the commons.

We will focus on the following global inclusive demands:

- access to education;

- reduction of global economic inequalities;
- reparation of cultural and epistemic injustices;
- indignation against gender, ethnic and religious discrimination;
- environmental law and climate governance.

Timeline:

Call for publication: April 2023

Submission of abstracts (500 words maximum): end of September 2023

Answers to the authors: November 15th, 2023

First versions of the chapters (5000/7000 words maximum): early June 2024

Remarks to the authors: end of September 2024

Second versions of the chapters: end of November 2024

Submission of the manuscript to Brill: May 2025

Date of publication: Fall 2025

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