The Transfigurations of Cosmopolitanism

Vladimir Biti

Abstract: Despite habitual assumptions, cosmopolitanism is a deeply divided phenomenon, carried either by the dominant or dominated agencies. If it is launched by the first carrier group, it is self-asserting and self-expanding, if by the second, it is other-related and interlocking, i.e. looking for allies in order to strengthen its carriers' aspirations. In political terms, the first kind of cosmopolitanism is usually interpreted as colonial or hegemonic, the second as postcolonial or liberating. In psychoanalytical terms, the theorists speak of an "appropriative" identification of the other *as* the self's object vs. "non-appropriative" identification *with* the other as the self's model. The other figures either as an object for the self's assertion or as an invitation to the self's exemption from his or her given identity. Because one kind of the self's relationship to the other disconcerts the other as its uncanny shadow, cosmopolitanism is doomed to a persistent transfiguration. The paper presents three historically successive cases in point. The first is the relationship between Greek and Roman cosmopolitanism, the second that between French Enlightenment and German Romanticist cosmopolitanism and the third the relationship between literary theory's cosmopolitanism and literary history's nationalism.

Key words: cosmopolitanism; nationalism; French Enlightenment; early German Romanticism; modern literary theory

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标题：世界主义的历时演绎

内容摘要：无论人们怎样习惯性的讨论世界主义，它一直都是一个两级分化的现象：一边是支配者，一边是被支配者。在前者那里，世界主义呈现出意

得志满的样态，自我膨胀；在后者那里，世界主义呈现出与他者关联交错的样态，寻求同盟，强化抱负。从政治学上来说，第一种类型一般为阐释为殖民世界主义或霸权世界主义，第二种类型一般为阐释为后殖民世界主义或自由世界主义。从心理学上来说，理论家总是“特意”将他者视为自我的客体；或“无意”间将他者等同于自我的范本。他者要么是自我肯定的对象，要么是自我摆脱既定身份的诱因。鉴于自我与他者之间的这种对应关系将他者弱化成自我的暗恐之影，世界主义注定经历持续不断的演绎与变化。本文试图探讨世界主义概念在历史进程中的三重关系：古希腊世界主义与古罗马世界主义，法国启蒙主义者的世界主义和德国浪漫主义者的世界主义，以及文学理论上的世界主义和文学史上的民族主义。

关键词：世界主义；民族主义；法国启蒙主义；德国早期浪漫主义；现代文学理论

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Despite habitual assumptions, cosmopolitanism is a deeply divided phenomenon, carried either by the dominant or dominated agencies. If it is launched by the first carrier group, it is self-asserting and self-expanding, if by the second, it is other-related and interlocking, i.e. looking for allies in order to strengthen its carriers' aspirations. In political terms, the first kind of cosmopolitanism is usually interpreted ascolonial or hegemonic, the second as postcolonial or liberating. In psychological terms, the theorists speak of an "appropriative" identification of the other *as* the self's object vs. "non-appropriative" identification *with* the other as the self's model. The other figures either as an object for the self's assertion or as an invitation to the self's exemption from his or her given identity. Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, rendered these two fundamental axes of self-formation as the *desire* (for the mother) resp. *identification* (with the father). According to more recent interpreters, although incommensurable, these axes are inextricably interconnected. Applied to our topic, the thesis reads: Because one kind of the self's relationship to the other disconcerts the other as its uncanny shadow, cosmopolitanism is doomed to a persistent transfiguration.

To illustrate this central thesis, let us start with the distinction between French Enlightenment and German early Romanticist cosmopolitanism, which set the frame of European modernity. Neither of these cosmopolitan orientations

is completely original. The cosmopolitanism of the French Enlightenment is starkly reminiscent of Roman imperial cosmopolitanism. The latter demonstrated an openness toward the inferior foreigners within and outside Roman Empire. Its central agency endorsed the inclusion of foreign constituencies into the community frame, but under the condition of their compliance to the established legal rules. Peripheral subordinates were only welcomed as long as they accepted subordination to the central agency's law. In sum, Roman imperial cosmopolitanism, despite its seemingly generous attitude toward the inclusion of subordinates, displayed the same internal constraints as its French descendant would do much later on. Whoever does not comply with the restructuration of his or her identity as envisioned by the central agency's universalism is mercilessly excluded from citizen rights. As for the subordinates that obey, the process of their requested adjusting eliminates their inassimilable otherness.

This is how the inclusionary logic of the imperial cosmopolitan operation surreptitiously turns into the exclusionary one, how the interaction between the central agencies and peripheral subordinates gradually translates into a gap between them, making the proclaimed universal equality fail. The foreigner in the Roman empire was included among the contractual allies not "out of mercy but for the sake of the expansion of the polis which, from now on, was expected to affiliate even the most foreign members to the new alliance of comrades" (Arendt 114–15). Concomitantly, the French cosmopolitan expansion in the eighteenth century, by inviting foreign "comrades" into the French community on the basis of the same model, implied a silent occupation of the international space by French national norms. Despite its revolutionary ambition to lay the foundations for a completely new and truly global community, its "national universalism" reintroduced the *déjà vu* experience of discrimination.

In opposing this French *imperial* cosmopolitanism, German early Romanticist cosmopolitanism draws on the Greek *elitist* cosmopolitanism directed against the benighted others at home. Greek cosmopolitanism for its part declared itself ready to open the broadest possible dialogue between heterogeneous agencies, but only on condition that its distinguished participants first exempted themselves from the narrow-minded interests of their compatriots. According to Hannah Arendt, the liberation of people for the broad-minded exchange of opinions that it envisages is inconceivable without slave labour; freedom and non-coerciveness are preconditioned by violence and coercion. *Agencies* are those who think and act, *enablers* those who work and produce, i.e. provide all the necessary prerequisites for the remarkable cosmopolitan achievement of the first. The Greek cosmopolitan

dialogue commences at the point where existential necessity ends, which means that the population in permanent need constitutes the suppressed enabling condition of its possibility. Such a dialogue requires the courage to put at risk one's private being and allegiance to the family, both apparently not to be expected from the slavish souls that passionately stick to them. Coerced into subordination, these souls are disqualified a priori from the democratic behaviour of respecting and seriously considering the other's (and this also means the enemy's) opinion (Arendt 44–45). Indulged in compulsive reactivity, they are too belligerent for a well-balanced impartial reflection of autonomous individuals. In the Greek exclusionist understanding, therefore, democracy is everything but omnipresent and a matter of course (Arendt 41–42). As one has to qualify for it in the first place, freedom is reserved for the enlightened agencies capable of permanent self-extension through the assimilation of many of the others' points of view, whereas their benighted enablers are sentenced to a restrictive condition of their selves. The latter's excommunication is therefore the necessary prerequisite for the former to include the broadest possible range of opinions and thus ensure the democratic character of the judgment passed.

The Greek elitist cosmopolitan creates his comprehensive intellectual horizon through the patient and open exchange of attitudes recruited from the most heterogeneous political, social and cultural regions — and this is precisely how the *interaction* re-enters the constitutive *gap* between him and local subordinates, how the inclusive intellectual logic rearticulates the discriminative political logic established between them. In such a way, Greek cosmopolitanism traces an alternative path to democracy, based on an unremitting *self*-formation rather than the educational shaping of *others*. Yet, as if repeating the unplanned entanglement of Roman imperial cosmopolitanism's inclusion and exclusion, its unparalleled judgmental mobility and independence proved to be limited to the political elite. Plato obviously realized this when he founded his Academy as the space of *true* freedom, as opposed to the Greek polis's *feigned* freedom. However, Academia reinstated, if it did not reinforce, freeing of the few through enslavement of the many. It repeated the excluding gesture of the polis in order to compensate for its failure. It thus reaffirmed the work of self-exemption from the deluded crowd characteristic of Greek cosmopolitanism.

> Wherever the few separated themselves from the many, they obviously became dependent on them, that is to say, in all those matters of coexistence which have to be really negotiated. […] This is why the realm of the freedom

> of the few is not only at pains to maintain itself against the realm of the political determined by the many, but is, dependent on the many for its very existence; the simultaneous existence of the polis is existentially necessary for the existence of the academy. […] It becomes a necessity that on the one hand opposes the freedom, and is its precondition on the other. (Arendt 58–59)

The gist of this paradox, according to Arendt, is that philosophy is determined to rescue the value which disappeared from the polis's public space, i.e. the greatest possible survey of the greatest variety of opinions. When a community conducts a war against another community, like the Greeks against the Trojans, it tends to obliterate the point of view of the other. But the political judgment demands at least two parties, which is why it has to liberate itself from the destructive belligerent attitude towards the other in order to pay respect to both sides; to equally consider both points of view in conflict. Yet such mobility of thought, even if it enables an unparalleled independence of Greek judgment (Arendt 96), remains constrained to the public space within city walls and pertains neither to the abroad (i.e. foreigners) nor to the family space (i.e. women and children) (Arendt 99–100), both determined as they are by the relation of domination.

> The free space of the political appears like an island; solely there is the principle of violence and coercion excluded from human relations. What remains outside that tiny space, the family and the relation of the given polis to other political units, remains subject to the principle of coercion and the power. (Arendt 100)

To apply to foreign policy the patient consideration of many points of view is therefore unthinkable for the Greeks. Because legislation is by definition limited to the space within city walls there is no common legislation that regulates relations between political communities. Precisely this walling off of the outside world paves the way for the internal political world characterized by free communication between humans. Whoever ventures beyond the pale transgresses the law and exposes himself or herself to its force. Insofar as the legislating bridge building between peoples did not belong to the Greek world, the founding of an empire of the Roman kind was under such conditions simply impossible (Arendt 114). We can therefore conclude that the unparalleled mobility of thinking in the Greek polis was purchased at the price of violence against the insiders and outsiders excluded by its law. In order for the thinking subjects to be free, those who are disqualified

from the activity of thought had to be ruled out. To occupy as many points of view as possible — yes, but not those of slaves, women, children and foreigners! Those who think are expected to transgress every single boundary, excepting that between the free and the bound. As the hard won ability of judgment keeps aloof from any relation of domination, it is reserved for the elect few or philosophers. The many or the philistines are on the contrary delivered to domination, which makes them incapable of free theoretical thinking. Operating as it does with the continuous engagement of the otherwise minded, theory is for the Greeks tantamount to a domestic policy that relies on an elect elite.

Since the Romans established their city in exile, on foreign soil, their relation to foreign affairs was completely different.

> What happened when Trojan descendants arrived on the Italic territory, amounted to the following: Their politics came into being precisely at the point where for the Greeks it reached its limit and end, in the in-between; that is to say, not between citizens, but between peoples, foreign and unequally opposed to each other and brought together only by conflict as they are. (Arendt 108)

Turning their former enemies into future allies by means of peace treaties, the Romans transferred politics to the relation between peoples, owing to which from their perspective law amounts to the establishment of an in-between area between former opponents. Because Aeneas is a newcomer among the Latin settlers, he must rely on his contract with them. In as much as the Romans owe their historical existence to this contract, they are oriented to protect the inferior foreigners by means of the always-new contracts, until the entire globe is finally clamped down in a system of contracts (Arendt 114–15). Their imperial slogan reads: Do not destroy, expand! The life of the other had to be saved not "out of mercy, but for the sake of the expansion of the polis, which was from now on expected to affiliate even the most foreign members to the new alliance of comrades" (Arendt 116). Yet the cosmopolitan Societas Romana envisioned as an endlessly expandable alliance system turns out to be a boundless and insatiable enterprise. The Greek restrictive nomos wanted, according to Arendt, to prevent exactly this evaporation of the political in an incalculable system of relations. However, neither Greek elitism, nor the Roman cosmopolitan attitude, saved their ideas of free judgment from ultimate breakdown. Arendt therefore states:

> There is no doubt that at the end the whole Hellas collapsed because of the nomos of their political units, city-states which could multiply by way of colonization but were not able to unite into an enduring bond. But we could with equal justice state that the Romans became prey to their "lex," which, although it made possible for them to create bonds and alliances wherever they arrived, was for its part uncontainable because it pushed them, very much against their will and without any lordliness on their part, into the domination over the entire globe which, as soon as it was established, fell apart again by itself. (Arendt 119)

The final price for the boundless expansion of the empire was the loss of Greek impartiality. Unlike the Greeks, the Romans refused to acknowledge the other in its otherness, regarding him or her as a mere extension of their own kind. The Romans could simply not imagine that there existed something equal to them in terms of greatness and different from them (Arendt 121). Precisely this paternalist appropriation of foreign cultures, Arendt claims, "created the Western world as a world in the first place" (Arendt 121). Even though Roman imperial rule followed the ideal of inclusiveness, it crushed out the local customs of the included in favor of imperial institutions. The more it became universal, the less the Roman citizenship respected the rights of the lower classes, women, or ex-slaves (Mamdani 76). Besides, as the recent specialist in the field Greg Wolf has put it, we may conceptualize this process as the expansion of Roman society through the recruitment of a colonized population to various underprivileged roles and positions in the social order (Wolf 105). Arendt seems to be claiming that the same kind of discriminating absorption of foreign cultures underlies the much-trumpeted Western openness toward the others.

To summarize, both Greek and Roman cosmopolitanism, despite their proclamations, prove to be discriminatory. Against their egalitarian proclamations, elitist cosmopolitanism demonstrates imperial traits, and imperial cosmopolitanism in its turn elitist traits. Let us now return to the initially introduced confrontation of French Enlightenment with German early Romanticist cosmopolitanism. As indicated, it resumed the delineated Greek-Roman confrontation but in substantially changed historical circumstances and, due to that, in a reversed order. While Roman cosmopolitanism responded to the insufficiencies of the Greek one, now Greek-inspired German cosmopolitanism responds to the insufficiencies of the Roman-inspired French one. While the Romans reacted to Greek cosmopolitanism from the position of a dominant nation, the Germans react to French cosmopolitanism

from the position of a dominated nation. In fact, through its resistance to French cultural hegemony, German national awakening set the standards for the "dominated nationalisms" (Balibar 62) that were to come. Looking for allies to strengthen their own resistance and forming thus a new basis for international solidarity, these nationalisms display a strong interlocking inclination. Struggling for their own emancipation, German intellectuals affirmed the right to self-determination of all nations put under similar assimilatory pressure, in the first place the forthcoming East-Central European post-imperial ones. As opposed to the French self-sufficient and invisible "national universalism" orientated toward individual liberties, German other-related and all-too-visible "cosmopolitan nationalism" was striving for national sovereignty.

However, in the course of the international expansion and institutionalization of French cosmopolitanism, its proudly flagged individualism was surreptitiously replaced with the hegemonic universalism of its elite carrier group. Behind the proclaimed liberal individualism, a transnational alliance that struggled to defend its elite privileges was dismantled (Calhoun 291–92). Once it was disclosed, it provoked in return the ethnonational solidarity of those who, lacking the elementary cosmopolitan prerequisites to practice such a luxurious attitude (such as wealth, network of communication, administrative or educational services, established set of social rules and customs, or technological equipment), found themselves oppressed or denied by it. This is why the "dominating nationalism" inhered to French cosmopolitanism from its very beginning, the noblest intention and proclamation of its architects and chief proponents notwithstanding. The rise of German dominated nationalism that orchestrated German cosmopolitanism has to be interpreted as a bitter response to it. "Ethnic solidarity is not always a matter of the powerful exclusion of others; it is often a resource for effective collective action and mutual support among the less powerful" (Calhoun 295). Many ethnocultural claims are intended to rectify injustices caused by the classification of nations imposed by the imperial cosmopolitan policies. However, we should beware of identifying the Germans with the ethnic, i.e. community-related "cosmopolitan nationalism" and the Frenchmen with the civic, i.e. individual-related "national universalism". Considering that there are prominent Germans, for example the philosopher Immanuel Kant, and prominent Frenchmen, for example the writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who make important exceptions to this "rule", this would amount to an incautious if not inadmissible generalization. This is why the difference between these cultures has to be reintroduced into each of them themselves. Although they blame each other for discrimination, they are

not homogeneous but instead internally divided, i.e. unable to free their interior of the compromising shadow of the stigmatized other. In what follows, we will come to identify this return of the suppressed other as a resurfacing feature of cosmopolitanism, which forces it to an incessant transfiguration.

Let us start with the founder of the modern idea of cosmopolitanism, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who had already realized, thanks to the improved traffic, communicational, and intellectual mobility toward the end of the eighteenth century, that 'exotic aliens' inhabit the same Earth as his fellow beings.The disaggregating potentiality of world's heterotopias entered his universe in the form of a disconcerting inchoate experience with these races. Given that in his eyes it threatened to destroy the providential design of man created by the divine *ratio*, Kant apprehended this free-floating anxiety as a philosophical and political demand. He responded to it by introducing the concept of *Menschenrasse* that associated man with the divine *ratio*. However one-sided and problematic, this association of man with the reasoning ability was fully natural at the time of Enlightenment and enabled him to distinguish man from irrational animals and animal-like human beings (such as women, children, and barbarians). Using this "self-evident" criterion, he instituted the regulative idea of mankind to put the immature self-willingness of humans, which unconcernedly serve their benighted inclinations and habits, under pressure. They were expected to pull themselves out of their communal constraints that were established by determining judgments in order to accomplish individuality by way of a postponed reflective judgment. Individuality is by definition a state of exemption that cannot be shared with others or translated into regular states. Whereas determining judgments spontaneously apply a common rule as shared with the familiar others, this explains why reflective judgment, guided by the distant others, consistently exempts itself from this rule's application (15–16; 134–39). Since reflective judgment's law exists exclusively in its inapplicability, it is doomed to an eternal itinerancy. It requires an unremitting evacuation of prejudgments, which is a demanding and interminable task.

Johann Gottfried Herder's opposite design of cosmopolitanism is a polemical response to the harsh effects of the delineated Kant's imperative. More an anti-Enlightener than a Romanticist proper, Herder was the first to take strong exception to Kant's statement that unenlightened humans are animals in need of a master by insisting that the reverse is actually true: humans who need a master are animals. To summarize his opinion, any force despotically imposed from above is unable to hold the people together; a political order must express the will of the people itself, its common affects, beliefs and traditions, its natural roots; it has to be

built from the bottom up. As genuine *Bildungswesen*, men are able to breed and govern themselves without external custodians. They are summoned to *Bildung*, moreover, by the linguistic and cultural *Umwelt* as their nurturing sole, saturated with the aspirations, habits and customs of predecessors; any descendant is obliged to cultivate this memory archive of his or her national spirit in order for the latter not to stagnate and perish. This is how Herder redirected Kant's demand put on individual to transpose himself or herself into the minds of the geographically and culturally distant others toward the demand put on the same individual to establish a continuous interaction with the undying spirit of his or her ancestors. As opposed to the proud French self of the time, the German self was non-existent, and therefore bereft of the possibility to be simply asserted via the others. It had to be invented through a discovery of its forgotten genealogical memory archive, a discovery which was in fact a creation.

Within the same tradition of German "cosmopolitan nationalism," this was the task of Friedrich Schlegel who established an organic genetic lineage between the descendants and ancestors.The past now belonged to the same national geographic and cultural space as the present; it thereby lost its alien traits, acquiring the familiar ones instead. Being forerunners rather than foreigners, ancestors are considered by Schlegel to be grandparents of sorts, and descendants become their grandchildren. Consequently, in the relationship to the present to the past *genetic dependence is substituted for cognitive sovereignty.* That is to say, family descendants can now take possession of themselves only through family ancestors. Successive perspectives of past generations treasured in the national literary memory archive chart the trajectory of the present national self. But the latter is at the same time the vertex of the ancestors' centuries-long differential, individualizing, and self-disentangling self-identification directed toward national peculiarity. If the ancestors represent the body, then the descendants are the mind of the national self; without them the slumbering national community *in* itself could not be transformed into the awakened national community *for* itself and the self-finding could not be successfully accomplished. Herder anticipated this highly influential interactive historical pattern in his early *Fragments on the New German Literature* (1766/7) in order to define the profile of European literature. At the outset of the third collection (Herder, *FrüheSchriften* 374), he describes this "colossus" as consisting of the Oriental head, the Greek breast, the Roman belly, the Nordic-Gallic legs, and the German feet. Paying tribute to all European nations, he reserves the earthly fundament and the only dynamic part of the European colossal body for the Germans who are now expected to move the magnificent

European whole forward. "The present carries the past, traditions are founded not in the hidden origin, whence they emerged, but in the reflective acknowledgment and interpretation attributed to them by the present" (Koch 98).

In the Preface to his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784–91) Herder accordingly cautions mankind to extend and deepen its domestication of (wild) nature in order not to perish from the two greatest tyrants on earth, chance and time, which mercilessly harass him beyond the cultivated domestic sphere. The same imperative responsibility for their historically, linguistically and culturally infinitely resonating *Umwelt* certainly holds for races, peoples, nations and individuals respectively (Herder, *Ideenzur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* 15–16). This implies that in order to come to expression the potentially inexhaustible memory archive of the past generations, whose acts, thoughts and feelings are treasured in the *Umwelt*'s resources, requires of communities and individuals a proper education, committed reflection and continuity of cultivation. Herder's *Umwelt* is by no means an immediately available and universally accessible given. To become rich nurturing soil, it has to be persistently relived, reinterpreted and recreated from the perspective of each single phase of its historical unfolding. Therefore only very diligent and qualified communities and individuals can properly channel, filter, and articulate the Umwelt's open-ended natural energy; all the others are destined, as Rousseau puts it, to "no more social structure than family, no laws but that of nature, no language but that of gesture and some inarticulate sounds" (Rousseau 31).

According to this Herderian pattern, the truth of the German self is to be judged in terms of its future potentiality, while the truth of others is to be judged in terms of a past perfect being. All people belong to humanity but they do not occupy the same tense. To engage Elisabeth Povinelli's vocabulary, the future-oriented *autological subject* and the past-addicted *genealogical communities* part ways with Herder (Povinelli 41–42). The German subject pushes forward taking responsibility for the course of history and shaping his biography as a work of life-art, whereas inferior communities, relegated to their restricted site in life, appear to be in need of constant assistance, protection and custody. Frozen in their exotic particularity, considered to be infantile and immature, unable to change themselves and develop their capacities, they serve as the backdrop of the Western self's untiring disentanglement. "[T]heir inclusion within the realm of the human is precisely the source of their exclusion" (Rothberg 57–58).

Goethe's recourse to Greek elitist cosmopolitanism, which polemicizes against the provincial taste of his compatriots, cannot be properly understood

outside the context of this Romanticist cosmopolitan pattern. On the one hand, Goethe endorses their imperative of a tireless self-finding and self-propelling but on the other he transfers it from the national community on the individual. No national community can represent humankind without distorting it. This is why the individual is expected to transgress the constraints of any community, which means both the worldwide and national one. Faced with the worldwide vulgarization of literary taste, Goethe reacts to it by defending the exclusive right of the creative writer to speak in the name of humankind (*die ganze Menschheit*) against the grotesque distortion of its universal human substance (*das allgemein Menschliche*) as carried out either in the name of the world or a nation. Such a writer must go beyond his immediate neighbor who provides him the ready security of "house piety" if he wants to embrace the true amplitude of "world piety" (FA I 10: 514). It is exactly this uncompromising universality that in the works of world literature shines and shimmers through the particular (Goethe 265). Yet under the pressure of the mob that expects everything to fit its false concepts and prejudices, true works of art remain unrecognized and unacknowledged (Goethe 303). Threatened by the "flood" of market-influenced literature as if it were about to swallow up his delineated elitist claim, towards the end of his life Goethe bitterly complained to Eckermann that barbarous times had come (March 22, 1831; Goethe 297). New barbarians misapprehend true art as that which is exemplary (*Vortreffliche*) for humankind, i.e., precisely that to which he was at pains to remain loyal throughout his literary career (letter to Zelter on the same day; Goethe 297).

He is equally embarrassed by the intellectual misery of his compatriots. In a conversation with Eckerman conducted on December 25, 1825, Goethe highlights the grotesque effect of Shakespeare's plays on his compatriots, who put their potatoes into his silver dishes (Goethe 228). The magnificent Calderón drives the young Schiller into madness, threatening to erode his humble virtues while the unprecedented Molière becomes desperately weak in German treatment, he remarks to his secretary on May 12, 1825 (Goethe 226). No matter how much German novels and tragedies imitate Goldsmith, Fielding and Shakespeare, they nonetheless pollute and pervert their models (December 3, 1824; 223). No wonder Goethe warns Eckermann himself, in a conversation conducted at the beginning of their acquaintance (September 18, 1823), to beware of great undertakings and inventions of his own: they are almost destined to fail! One cannot expect a real sense for what is true and capable (*echter Sinn für das Wahre und Tüchtige*) in German petty circumstances, he tells his secretary on October 15, 1825. The masses who dominate them abhor whatever is truly great, tending to banish it from

the world (Goethe 227) (including Goethe himself, we might add, to elucidate his obvious bitterness).

Ultimately, Goethe does not hesitate to introduce a *clear-cut division to literature*, placing the benighted majority of its agents on one side, and the select minority on the other: "Yet the route they take, the pace they keep is not everyone's concern." Their sublime task is to rescue the world from descending into narrow-mindedness or barbarity. They belong to the "quiet, almost chastened church" (*einestille, fast gedrückte Kirche*) of the serious-minded (*die Ernsten*) who, because it would be futile (*vergebens*) to oppose the wide current of the day (*die breite Tagesfluth*), must nonetheless "steadfastly (*standhaft*) try to maintain their position till the flow (*die Strömung*) has passed" (FA I 22: 866f.). Their solitary position, removed from the silly worldwide crowd orientated toward immediate consumption, is tantamount to "aesthetic autonomy." This elitism strongly reminds us of Plato who founded his Academy as an isolated space of intellectual freedom in opposition to the false freedom of the polis that inflicts the restricted and narrow-minded opinion of its political elite upon all citizens. This insight into the limits of democracy induced Plato's resolute refusal of its universal claim that entitles everybody to partake in the business of rule. In his view, such an unnatural attitude was derived from the traumatic absence of the "divine shepherd," the only authority naturally entitled to take care of the human flock. For Goethe, the creative writer is such a shepherd, the only one entitled to represent the true humanity.

However, through the founding of Academy, Plato opposed Athenian democracy by redeploying its own *maneuver of self-exemption from the deluded dominant opinion in the name of the forgotten divine truth*. He reintroduced this self-redeeming cosmopolitan maneuver because the shepherd's *archaic* truth was in his opinion subjected to democratic perversion into the human *anarchic* truth. While the democratic government claimed to be the only authentic representative of God, beneath this appearance he discerned a group of selfish humans with their impatient and petty appetites. To counteract this selfishness, Plato holds on to the eliminated pastor, taking him as "the reference point by which an opposition between good government and democratic government is established" (Rancière 35). Confronted with Plato's thesis based on such redoubling of the opponent's argument, one can hardly resist the impression that cosmopolitanism relies on the same human misappropriation of the divine truth that it fiercely condemns on its behalf, and blames for discrimination. Exactly by passing judgments in the name of a "higher truth," cosmopolitanism redoubles its opponents' discriminatory argument. Applied to Goethe, one might ask whether the aesthetically autonomous

world literature, if it must be restricted to a "quiet church of the serious-minded," the initiated circle of agencies walled in against the masses of the uninitiated subalterns, really deserves the name of *world* literature. How encompassing can a literature that rests on the exclusion of those without whose persistent work it cannot possibly come into being be? Costas Douzinas infers that "cosmopolitanism starts as a moral universalism but often degenerates into imperial globalism" (Douzinas 159). He warns of continuous slide of cosmopolitan ideas into a harsh discrimination.

In my terms, cosmopolitanism is an equivocal project, persistently on the edge between a liberating and hegemonic undertaking. Because cosmopolitanism's one constitutive relationship to otherness cannot get rid of the other, it is sentenced to a permanent transfiguration. To underpin this thesis, let us now turn to a third case in point (next to the above presented Greek-Roman and French-German cosmopolitan controversies). At stake is the birth of modern literary theory as an eminently cosmopolitan project.

Charting a genealogy of American comparative literature as the institutional domicile of literary theory after the Second World War, Emily Apter derived its endemic feeling of placelessness out of exilic consciousness continuously passed and refined from one comparatist generation to another. According to Apter, this deeply ingrained constant of the field lent it its "consistency of character as a relentlessly distantiating mode of criticality" (Apter 87), i.e. a profile which is today usually attributed to literary theory. Early American comparatists, many of them European emigrants like Leo Spitzer, Erich Auerbach, René Wellek, and Wolfgang Kayser, had a distaste for nationalism which paved the way for "the nation-neutral textuality of American New Criticism" and developed theoretically based pedagogies for which "no visa was necessary" (Apter 88). Because the lingua franca of the burgeoning discipline was German, similarly to the theories of alienation and subjective estrangement expounded by the likes of Marx, Freud, Simmel, Benjamin and Lukács, comparative literature was characterized by an ethics of linguistic estrangement and secessionism from mainstream American culture (Apter 89). Through their exilic experience first comparatists were banished from the world of purely aesthetic forms but the trauma of exodus resonated even louder for the next melancholic generation of deconstructionists who, beginning with Jewish epistemological placelessness, speak of the "anxiety of influence," "agonism," and "criticism in wilderness" (Apter 90). The current postcolonial generation of exilic critics, finally, is anti-Eurocentric, non-German-speaking, non-white, antipatriarchal, and hostile to elite literariness and yet, like its antecedents,

imbued with "melancholia, Heimlosigkeit, cultural ambivalence, consciousness of linguistic loss, amnesia of origins, border trauma" (Apter 90). Like Leo Spitzer, Homi Bhabha for instance activates cultural difference and disinheritance as engines of literary analysis, which is why theorization of *Heimlosigkeit*, with its unbroken decades-long persistence, turns comparative literature as the traditional domicile of literary theory into "a placeless place that is homely in its unhomeliness," "the institutional and pedagogical space of not-being-there" (Apter 93). "This unhomely voice, together with the restless, migratory thought patterns of the discipline's theory and methods, highlights the extent to which comparative literature's very disciplinarity has been and continues to be grounded in exilic consciousness" (Apter 94).

In the aftermath of the First World War, many of the East-Central European literary theorists developed their ideas out of the political dislocation and consequent linguistic and cultural displacement. The lives, for example, of Trubetskoy, Jakobson, Lukács, Bogatyrëv, Šklovskij and Wellek were deeply marked by the experience of exile and emigration, coercive evacuation from their familiar universe. As Galin Tihanov pointed out, their

> /e/xile and emigration were the extreme embodiment of heterotopia and polyglossia, triggered by drastic historical changes that brought about the traumas of dislocation, but also, as part of this, the productive insecurity of having to face and make use of more than one language and culture. (419)

Living as dislocated remnants of the broken multinational East-Central European empires within the environments of the new nation-states, these intellectuals embodied "transcendental homelessness," an existential feeling detected by Lukács, in a typical transference maneuver, in the behavior of the novelistic hero. As the elected representatives of this post-imperial generation were unable to identify either with German or Russian culture as their own meaning horizon, they consistently challenged both of them, raising the evacuation of empirical evidence to the basic operation of modern literary theory. "Appropriating literature theoretically meant, after all, being able to transcend its (and one's) national embeddedness by electing to position oneself as an outsider contemplating its abstract laws" (Tihanov 420).

Interestingly enough, far from being an exclusive feature of modern theory, such contemplation of abstract laws after an enforced detour is, after Hans Blumenberg (1987), a well-established legacy of European theory since the time

of Greek *theōría*. The Greek word *theōrós*, according to Hannelore Rausch, designated a special envoy sent to inter-communal religious ceremonies to request the divine wisdom and relay it, with consecrating effects, back to community members (Rausch 9–10). The purpose of *theōría* and the objective of *theōrós* were therefore to tranquilize community fears caused by inexplicable occurrences (Blumenberg 12). Jean-Michel Rabaté observed: "in his authorized gaze everyday deeds will be integrated into a sacred 'theater'; there, things will be seen under their most essential aspect, so that they can be recorded officially"(Rabaté 114). Aristotle dubbed this essence of community life, discerned from an authorized remote position by means of theoretical insight, the truth (Rausch 11). The truth introduces the divine perspective into the shattered community horizon, re-centering it through its extension. As European culture, because of its persistently enforced detours, was challenged to continuously extend its communal horizon in this manner, Blumenberg interprets theory as its consistently unifying telos (158–59). Theory's persistent search after the truth, as long as it has the ambition to restore the community's jeopardized consensus through a cosmopolitan reordering of the disquieted habitual perspective, seems to be warranted for the unbroken continuity of European history. The tacit corollary to Blumenberg's argument is that this distinguishes Europe from the self-enclosed history of other cultural circles ignorant of or inimical to the others.

Theory was nonetheless from the Greek time constantly subject to misunderstandings that questioned its pretension to truth. Apparently, the theorist's "adultery with the foreigners" that in the first place *enabled* such pretension simultaneously *prevented* its acknowledgment. It suddenly jeopardized the entrenched prejudices of the community; and whenever such a threat arises, people who find existential shelter in these prejudices tend to consolidate them further thereby burying themselves ever deeper into their self-defending phantasms. This is the gist of the famous anecdote on Tales and the Thracian maid recounted by Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus*, whose numerous transformations Blumenberg attentively investigates to demonstrate theory's persistent vulnerability to laughter and mockery. Theorists' privilege with regard to peasant or philistine community members cannot be accomplished without simultaneous exposure to their down-to-earth judgment. To counter the mistrust of "simple minds" and foster the necessary consensus for its supposedly divine contemplation, theory was forced to make its sublime vision of the truth available to a broad spectatorship (Gasché, *The Honor of Thinking* 198). Because of this brutal exposure to the same mob prejudice that was envisaged to be dismantled, theory, instead of providing a privileged private

insight into the divine truth, became a public performance dependent on the confirmation of the earthly gaze. Without ever being able completely to assimilate this benighted philistine gaze in the illuminating divine truth provided by "adultery," but remaining dependent on the crowd's uncertain approval, theory, despite its strenuous efforts to deactivate the community's ignorant self-evidence, was at constant risk to reaffirm it.

In *The Honor of Thinking* (2007), Rodolphe Gasché interprets early Romanticists as rescuing the honor of the mobile Greek theoretical thought, because at the time, accelerated confrontation with foreign cultures stimulated them to question all empirical truths of literature. As communal judgment at the micro and macro level was, almost overnight, immensely diversified, empirical truths turned into non-reflected self-evidence in need of enlightenment. Under such world-opening conditions, theory was obliged to dismantle the self-enclosure of these local truths raising the universal truth of literature to the dialogic horizon of their eventual reconciliation. Early Romanticists thus introduced the self-reflective age of modern theory, compelled to observe the intracommunal and intercommunal differences and measure them against each other. However, they undertook a comparative detour through the reigning *dissent* in order to accomplish a truly universal *reconciliation*, which is a moment heavily downplayed in Gasché's reading. They focused first on the difference between literature and every acknowledged truth of it, instead of directly upon literature, systematically evacuating the self-evidence of the latter. No theoretical location was authorized in advance but all were compelled to reflect critically on their down-to-earth indebtedness. Unlike a substantially less mobile Greek theory whose divine truth enjoyed an only domestically questioned authority, such a mutually questioning relating of numerous earthly truths to each other followed from their growing social and international dispersal. No particular literary work, genre or corpus, however broadly acclaimed by a given social group or national community, could represent the final truth of literature anymore. However, what early Romanticists were eventually aiming at, pace Gasché's portraying of their cosmopolitanism in predominantly oppositional terms, was literature's truth as an indifferent, impartial and unselfish metteur-en-scene of this dialogue. Far from being disinterested, the integration of the mutually historically and culturally very remote views on literature into the final truth of literature was an operation serving the consolidation of this instance's sovereignty.

Concerning the profile of this truth, Goethe as usual hit the nail on the head in *Makariens Archiv*: "The truth is god-like; it does not appear to us immediately;

we have to derive it from its manifestations" (*Das Wahreistgottähnlich; eserscheintnichtunmittelbar, wirmüssenesausseinen Manifestationenerrathen* (FA I 10: 746). Far from being accidental and isolated, this claim is in full accordance with a motto from *Kunst und Altertum* (VI 1) in that one can learn the truth only from its effects (*Die Wahrheitlässtsicherst an ihren Folgenerkennen*). It is also in line with the letter to Iken of September 27, 1827 in which the God-like author Goethe confides in his addressee that he long ago decided to drive his attentive reader to derive the secret meaning of his work from its counter-positioned and mutually mirroring constituents (*so habeichseitlangem das Mittelgewählt, durcheinandergegenübergestellte und sichgleichsam in einanderabspiegelnde Gebilde den geheimeren Sinn dem Aufmerkendenzuoffenbaren*) (BA IV 43: 83). This explains why Romanticist artists and philosophers must authorize their truth — the community's homogenizing common sense (*Gemeinsinn*) — through the accumulation and mutual comparison of its most manifold international effects. The truth emerges through a series of self-transpositions into the most diverse perspectives, i.e. a complex management of frustrating differences carried out by a disquieted self that searches for accreditation.

What therefore distinguishes the early Romanticist from the old Greek theorist is that this authorizing "adultery with the foreigners" does not take place in the *real world* but in the *imagination* of the theorist's disconcerted self. As Lauren Berlant has put it, the object of desire must be *absent* in order for the desiring subject to stabilize his or her proximity to it and to invest its hopes into it (26). This is to say, the inter-community that is expected to accomplish the reconciliation of the theorist's shattered and divided community by introducing the ultimate truth into it is projected out of the theorist's *traumatic experience*. Working into the awareness of those afflicted by it insidiously, differently and unevenly, the community's traumatic constellation mobilizes some of its destabilized members to counteraction, primarily those most sensitive to its traumatizing impact. The carriers of this counteraction put themselves in abeyance by attaching themselves to the vague prospect of the truth expected to warrant them a large-scale historical existence, or at least assure them continuity amid the process of its brutal discontinuation. In the traumatic constellations characterized by heightened uncertainty, such passionate attachments to potential long-term collective benefits usually flourish at the expense of an orientation to short-term individual interests (Hanson 29).

Yet why should other members of the same community, who occupy different political, social, ethnic or gender positions in the same constellation, experience

this constellation in the same traumatic way as the theorist unreservedly committed to the redemptive prospect of the truth does? The traumatic constellation, as I interpret it, is a controversial knotting of heterogeneous perspectives and discourses that underpin, question and defy each other (Brunner 41–45). This is why the community's suspicion of the theorist's "foreign affairs," as analyzed by Blumenberg in the case of the old Greek *theōría*, must hold sway over early German Romanticism as well. The early Romanticist assimilation of antagonistic self-evidences in the international horizon of literature's truth is as equally problematic as was their domestic assimilation in the Greek polis. The sovereignty of the early Romanticist truth is, like the sovereignty of the Greek theoretical truth, a therapeutic phantasy exposed to communal attrition. However grandiose the aggregate envisaged by its cosmopolitan detour comes to be, this truth cannot but experience disaggregation by the forces excluded from it. It produces a compensatory heterotopia of sovereignty, elongating the time horizon of its carriers and their adherents. Because of that, we should treat this scenario of repair as a problem in its own right rather than attaching our hopes to it (Berlant 49) in the way that Gasché does.

In 1793, Herder stated that Germans should "appropriate the best of all the peoples and in such a way become among them what man became among the fellow and co-creatures (*Neben- und Mitgeschöpfe*) from which he learned his skills (*Künste*). He came at the end, took from everybody his art and now *he surpasses and rules all of them*" (Herder, *Briefezu Beföderung der Humanität* 551 [emphasis mine]). Several years later Novalis in an equally cosmopolitan project *Christendom or Europe* (1799) suggested that whereas other European countries were "occupied by war, speculation and partisanship (*Parthey-Geist*), the German builds himself with all diligence into an associate (*Genosse*) of a higher epoch of culture. This preliminary step *must give him in the course of time great predominance* (eingroßes Uebergewicht) *over the others*" (Novalis 519[emphasis mine]). In the same self-fostering vein, Goethe entrusted German language with the role of the medium of permanent translation of one into another literature. It is called upon to set the course for everybody's national currency (*Münzsorten*) through "the take up and complete appropriation (*das völligeAneignen*) of the foreign" (Goethe 238). If such "complete appropriation" is the true background of the early Romanticists' generous world reconciliation (*Weltversöhnung*), then there is something other than "pure humanity" (*reineMenschlichkeit*) behind Weimar's esthetic program which tried to "unite again the politically divided world under the banner of truth and beauty" (*die politischgeteilte Welt unter der Fahne der Wahrheit und*

Schönheitwiederzuvereinigen) (Schiller 109). When August Schlegel, the key figure of Gasché's cosmopolitan argument, stated "that the moment is not so remote when German will become a general organ of communication for all educated nations" (Schlegel 27), allocating to the Germans the mission "to unite all the advantages of most various nationalities" in order "to create a cosmopolitan midpoint for the human spirit" (Schlegel 36), he was merely expressing the common view of the time. Novalis's typically pregnant formulation in a letter to him from 1797 reflects the same cosmopolitan patriotism: "Germanness is cosmopolitanism mixed with the most powerful individuality" (*DeutschheitistKosmopolitismusmit der kräftigstenIndividualitätgemischt*) (Fink 39). As this was obviously a compensatory response to the deep-seated inferiority feeling of Germans at that time, we must agree with Manfred Koch that such megalomaniac statements "strike us today as extravagant, if not explicitly funny" (235). Contrary to Gasché's claim, therefore, the early German Romanticist cosmopolitan literary theory was dedicated to the self-consoling glorification of the German self. If early Romanticists took the latter to be the very epitome of universal human spirit, what obliges us today, equipped as we unfortunately are with the privilege of retrospection, to endorse their opinion?

In his genealogy of modern literary theory (*The Honor of Thinking: Critique, Theory, Philosophy*, 2007), Gasché uncritically resumes the early Romanticist gesture. Also in the title of his most recent book (*Europe or the Infinite Task*), inspired by the idea of Europe developed in the late work of Edmund Husserl, he uses the term "infinite task" and thus endorses the philosophical tradition embraced by Blumenberg in *Das Lachen der Thrakerin*. Husserl attempted to solve "the crisis of European humanity" in the same way as Blumenberg and Gasché do, by reattaching Europe to its genuine "task" of rescuing "universal humankind" by gradually suspending limitations caused by others. According to these thinkers, theory is an eminently European mission. Being open "toward transcendence, toward the other, and what is other than Europe" (Gasché, *Europe or the Infinite Task* 27), an inborn "interiorizer of exteriorities" so to speak, Europe is interpreted by Gasché to be the most reponsible representative of universal humankind (*Europe or the Infinite Task* 31). It is an epitome of theoretical behavior that never stops questioning itself. One of Gasché's spokespersons, Jan Patočka had this to say: "In contrast to ordinary life which confines itself to never questioned self-evidence and security, never aiming at anything beyond, spiritual man lives expressly from the negative" (Patočka 247). Associatingthis consistently self-interrogating life with the spiritual rather than historical or geographical Europeans, Gasché confronts every human being irrespective of location (*Europe or the Infinite Task* 27) with this

"common task." In the same way Kant confronted every man with the obligation to become a responsible person, forgetting that the great majority of humans, put under the long-term rule of Europeans, were made incapable of assuming such responsibility. As Walter Mignolo once put it: "Kant obviously was not thinking about the Amerindians, the Africans, or the Hindus as paradigmatic examples of his characterization" (Mignolo 734). If we subscribe uncritically to the idea of theory as the infinite task of suspending all material differences for the benefit of one spiritual truth, we are, advertently or otherwise, fostering the early Romanticists' remedial heroization of the self. It may be that Europe today desperately needs such consolation but, if theory is to maintain its democratic character, it must not strive toward a compensatory suspension but consistent reaffirmation of its non-theorizable "output." Since it is never so universal as it claims to be, the authority drawn from its "murky foreign affairs" ought to be unremittingly exposed to observation if it is to remain a dissensual *politics* and not pervert into a consensual *policing*. Not transfiguration, it is this perversion that the theory's cosmopolitanism has to be repeatedly defended against.

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