

TO KNOW THE WORLD IS TO ADVOCATE FOR IT

A Review Essay

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This review essay is a response to the graduate seminar on Cosmopolitan Anthropology convened by Kristin Kuutma at the University of Tartu, Estonia on the 14th and 15th of January 2015. The three presenters at the seminar were Nigel Rapport (University of St Andrews), Huon Wardle (University of St Andrews) and Andrew Irving (University of Manchester).

The websiteⁱⁱ for this graduate seminar promises an event that will introduce participants to cosmopolitanism as a theory and methodology that ‘cuts across disciplines engaged with the current issues of mobility, egalitarianism or free choice of identity’. The billing also advances a definition of cosmopolitanism as a project that ‘seeks an alternative to constraining classifications and coercive communitarianism such as nationalism or culturalism’. According to the billing, a cosmopolitan approach can ‘emancipate the individual and the human from symbols and structures that collectivize, homogenize and totalize’.

To me, this description elicited a series of contradictory images and inconsistent ideas. On the bus to Tartu, I imagined a subject jet-setting across the world in his or her own plane or yacht, perhaps accumulating mileage on the frequent flyer card, with membership in marinas and country clubs all over the world. I imagined an elite and consumerist subject, perhaps with multiple passports, multi-lingual, and whose alliances are more in line with a neo-liberal and consumerist agenda, a conspicuous consumer. I also imagined a collaged individual picking and choosing discourses and idioms to inform his consumption

habits; indexing multiple locations and fads, a pastiche of multiple references that cancel each other out, belonging to nowhere. I imagined a cynical, perhaps hypocritical, subject who changes alliances according to the opportunities at hand. I wondered if the activist that uses the vocabulary of hegemony in order to speak truth to power is a hypocrite.

I imagined a travelling musician, a bohemian perhaps, that strikes connections everywhere he or she goes, is constantly curious and open to the world. A hitch-hiker. Perhaps a sailor who makes different ports and relationships with ease, whose life-skill is to travel. I also imagined a trickster that is capable of mobilising irony, pitting multiple consciousnesses against each other for the furtherance of a goal. I imagined a confident subject that has achieved a sense of enlightenment that transcends attempts to collectivise and categorise his or her experience. A subject that has the awareness and agency to author a life-project in a simultaneous relation and opposition to pre-existing symbols and structures. Effectively, a liberated subject that, through their example, can stand as a model for true emancipation.

I imagined a series of conflicting characters that I can place in a room for cosmopolitans: missionaries, revolutionaries, imperialists, colonised, conformists, non-conformists, travellers, fascists, anarchists, slaves, and slave traders.

I wondered how does 'cosmopolitanism' speak to emancipation when, arguably, it can stand for the Soviet project of homogenising the individual or for proselytisers who carry out a propaganda campaign in promotion of an imagined higher goal? Is cosmopolitanism a kind of universalising theory and method for culture? Is there room for multiple cosmopolitanisms? What kind of consistency can it offer? Is it a straw figure to which we can attach any ideology and justify it as liberating? What room is there for radically different ontologies in a cosmopolitan project? Doesn't cosmopolitanism supplant one totalising ideology for another? How can anthropologists engage with contexts that are totalising and homogenising by design? By arguing against 'culturalisms'—nationalisms, symbolisms, and structures—is cosmopolitanism, fundamentally, an anti-science or an anti-

anthropology standing against the categories that define the discipline?

I was not expecting these issues to be resolved in a two-day event. I figured that the conveners were trying to be honest and more humble by framing the event as an introduction, something that would expose participants to the contours of cosmopolitanism and, if successful, some of the points would sink in and maybe creep up in our writings and future conversations.

The first day consisted of a series of one hour presentations by Rapport, Wardle, and Irving, each one followed by a Q&A. The second day was a round-table discussion with all the participants. What follows is a summary, an attempt to organise the notes I took during both days. These notes and fragments of ideas represent my own attempts to come to terms with what was discussed at the event and to reconcile the paradoxes that came up while reading the event outline. It is not meant to stand for what actually happened or was said during the event. As such, there are definite discrepancies between my account and my colleagues'. Misrepresentations are my own.

Nigel Rapport: 'Cosmopolitanism as Methodology'

'CosmoPolis'. First 'Cosmos'—which I initially take as standing for the universal, the constant, the global, the all-encompassing, pan-human, and transcendental. Perhaps it speaks to 'order' in the sense that it references a total system that functions in an orderly manner—akin to 'structure' in the anthropological sense. In the context of this event, I take it as 'humanity'.

& Second 'Polis'—which I took to refer to the status of the citizen, the individual, the political animal, the local, the unit that makes up the aggregate that sociologists study, the city, specific, the mundane, and the immanent. Maybe the polis approach is dis-orderly in the sense that it looks first at the elements in their uniqueness before they are concatenated, ordered, given meaning, and context. In the context of this event, I take it as the 'individual'.

For Rapport, the cosmopolitan agenda represents these two approaches as a relationship, a creative dialectic, a kind of creative fusion that seeks to bring together the cosmos and the polis. It is also a moral project and political programme, which seeks to connect theory and method into a liberal and humanitarian agenda that goes beyond structural markers of difference.

Some of the characteristics of this approach would include:

1. Striving towards openness – respectful of difference but not giving difference the ‘final say’.
2. An emphasis on the status of the world—which may suggest an eventual demise of the nation and the nation-state.
3. Valuing the creole subject and its multiple identities—whereby identity is not a fixed pre-determined fact, but is in a process of becoming.

‘Humanity’ is not accidental, Rapport states. It is not a choice in the same way as culture and identity are. Culture and nations are invented, produced, and reproduced through very specific historical processes. Markers of structure, such as identity and culture, are a crust or a surface, under which life flows and happens. For Rapport, structures of society and markers of identity are epiphenomenal and incidental to the existential condition of being a human. A cosmopolitan anthropology would direct its gaze at the happening of the flow of life and argue that while people live in these historical processes, to define and think of people as exclusively the result of these categories and processes is superficial and yields inconsistent results. Perhaps this accusation of superficiality comes from the observation that an anthropology that focuses on structures of society requires a methodology that is fundamentally based on incidental features of life, its by-products and not its actions. If nations, ethnicities, and races are invented then using them as categories to understand the world results in the reproduction of the conditions that gave them shape in the first place, leading to an uncreative and repetitive bind. A cosmopolitan

anthropology would argue that, at a very fundamental level, people are more than the structures they claim to be attached to.

Typing this up, I am reminded of fetish worshipping, as it has been described by Taussig (1992), Latour (2010), Marx (1970), and others. Fetish worshippers subject their sense of reality to an object that they created. The state, the notion of society, religious icons, religious texts, commodities, medicine, etc. are creations of people—some creations are haphazard others are carefully designed with a premeditated intention in mind. And yet, people imbue these objects with a supernatural power that ‘speaks back’ to its creator and dictate his or her decisions and sense of self. Could it be the case that Rapport is pointing to the fetishism of ‘culture’ and ‘society’, and that this specific kind of fetishism has created a false consciousness within anthropology, where we give value to epiphenomena, rather than life as actually lived?

Where then, I wonder, can we find this actual lived life? Where can I see the ‘humanity’ that Rapport keeps emphasising? Rapport references James Fernandez, who argues for the ‘sensorium’. A sensorium is a sensory space that is lived through individual embodiment. This kind of ethnography would produce a knowledge that looks at the particular embodiment of the individual in his or her space. Relationships and social lives are the result of a constellation of circumstances and events that an individual accrues in their life course. This constellation can be called a sensory space, which is mobile and always in transformation. Identity, from this perspective, is always in motion and it is not limited to its structural constraints – as in national, gendered, ethnic, and linguistic identity. It points more towards identity as an event that operates at a more existential and phenomenal level of the individual, who is continuously crafting a sensuous self.

To be ‘human’, from this perspective, is to have ‘capacity.’ It is a capability to author a unique life-trajectory through a field of circumstances, a capacity to have an impact in the world, and to contribute to its continuous making. I take it that capabilities are not always original, liberating, and empowering. Surely they can be a liability as well. I wonder whether this approach towards capability can

also speak to the capability humans have for harm, for subjecting others, and subjecting oneself to self-harm or to inconsistent fields of power.

If to be human is to have capacity then to be an individual is to 'substantiate'—to give substance, narrative presence, and activity to this capability. To me, Rapport suggests that cosmopolitan anthropologists can look at people's capacities and their substantiation as an alternative to an anthropology that is satisfied with describing relationships between categorical structures and symbols of power. An example of the dialectic relation between substantiation and capability is to look at 'home', making home, and the different ways in which to be at home-in-the-world is substantiated. Home-making, for Rapport, can offer insights into a morality and aesthetics of the individual. Making home could be a human capability—just like imagination or laughter.

I took the cosmopolitan connection to 'home' as something that does not necessarily replace 'culture' or 'society' as an object of study. Home is not a phenomena that lies outside of the individual and that dictates behaviour, morality, and body movements. The individual is embedded in the home-making process. He or she authors 'home' within a field of relations, creating a sensorium. Examining the process of home-making can produce insights into a morality and an aesthetics of the individual. Effectively, home is where the individual is more himself or herself, where capabilities are creatively substantiated.

The ethnographic analysis, in this instance, is not a declarative or argumentative analysis that the anthropologist offers to the world, but it is driven by a careful narrative that is constituted in a humble relationship with people. Judging when a capability is a liability is not necessarily the main goal of a cosmopolitan ethnography. One of the possible goals of cosmopolitan ethnography is to narrate how people construct a sense of home, the processes and activities through which home is constituted. The ethnography describes the habituation that is authored individually through a personal sensorium and holds cultural structures to be secondary.

The challenge, for me, lies in how much value I can give to categorisations and grand narratives that are part of the field through which capabilities are substantiated. How I am understanding it at the moment: habits are formed in a context, but habituation is lived in particular ways, embodied in specific ways, narrated and lived in particularly individual ways. From this standpoint, the categories should not be our ultimate determination.

Rapport acknowledges the utopian component of the cosmopolitan project—the long road and distance between the ideal and the current political circumstances. But he insists on the possibility that structural categories are not the end, the formula for understanding the world, but they can be seen as the results of choices.

Huon Wardle: 'Anthropology as a Cosmopolitan Vocation?'

Wardle shared his take on the history of ideas that characterises the cosmopolitan project and linked it to the anthropological intention. The effect of this presentation,ⁱⁱⁱ for me, was to consider that the collection of ideas, methods, approaches, ethics, and world-views associated with cosmopolitanism mirror those of anthropology. Effectively suggesting that cosmopolitanism has always been embedded in the programme of anthropology.

As a basic starting point to this argument, one could consider how the methodologies associated with anthropology entail different consciousnesses in conversation with each other, on their own terms. The ethnographic moment can then be cast as not necessarily a translation of world-views, but a meeting point, an event, exchange, or conversation. It acknowledges the presence of different consciousnesses (the inter-subjectivity of anthropologist, informant, and reader) who transact ideas and life-worlds through, perhaps, empathetic and mimetic faculties. When looked at from this perspective identity markers of difference are not solid objects, naturalised, and taken for granted but are used and deployed fluidly and inconsistently as facilitators of the ethnographic event. What I take from this idea is the reminder that identity is fluid and that it

shifts throughout a person's life. The cosmopolitan argument, it seems to me, takes this process as indicative of the capacity of individuals to appropriate and author a sense of identity throughout their lives.

Wardle began with Kant's argument for the imagination and for acknowledging the role and capacity of the imagination in coming to terms with anthropology, which Kant defined as the study of humans as free-acting beings. In this scheme, freedom is regarded as a human faculty, which is spontaneous and is the starting point of events that constitute culture. Freedom, then, represents a kind of second nature, the freedom to enact an event. In this kind of anthropology, people act out of spontaneous freedom or will.

In a Kantian cosmopolitan anthropology there is a case for a methodology or 'architectonics' where people can self-critique the structures they are born into by building their lives on their own individual terms. In this regard, cosmopolitanism suggests or engages with a risk, a risk, that comes into play within the kink between a commonality and an interaction with individual others. Concepts like the local, the global, structure, identity, economy, etc. are not the cause of culture. Rather, the cause is people's spontaneous action, their freedom to create culture. However, 20th century anthropology reverses this logic when it suggests that freedom occurs within a culture, hence freedom is contingent and subject to culture or to the structure – as in 'people are the result of their social context'.

What follows from this re-assessment of the anthropological project is to review ethnography itself, the practice of rendering culture. Wardle reviews three approaches:

1. Jakob Meloe: ethnography as an 'activity space'
2. Michel Foucault: an 'inexhaustible treasure-hoard of experiences and concepts' [but also to a] 'perpetual principle of... contestation of what may seem, in other respects, to be established'
3. Raymond Firth: 'Social scientists are usually said to study a society, a community, a culture. This is not what they observe. The material for their observation is human activity. They do not

even observe social relationships; they infer them from physical acts. The anthropologist as observer is a moving point in a flow of activity.'

These approaches bring attention, for me, to anthropology's practice of drawing concepts from daily experiences. Two ideas come to mind that point towards the creative tension that may give cosmopolitan ethnography its convincing register:

1. Ethnography begins with practice, with activities, and events. This recalls its empiricism, its corporeal connection, the embodied relationship, and the physicality of anthropology's methodology. It also recalls its locality, its connection to the immanent, the present, specificity, and the individual. However, ethnography is also expected to produce, rely, and contribute to transcendent concepts such as society, community kinship, class, and identity. Firth's quote puts the finger on the tension succinctly. He recalls that ethnography produces unobservable abstractions through an empirical methodology. In other words, anthropologists intend to produce abstract and transcendent knowledge through a local and immanent methodology. The bridge – the Kantian risk – between these two spheres is the anthropologist's inference, his or her speculation, and the creative connection drawn from intuition. From a cosmopolitan point of view, this does not present itself as a negative paradox, but rather as a creative tension from where anthropologists think from in order to produce their texts, films, policy papers, sonic ethnographies, and academic presentations.

2. What follows from this is that anthropology creates (invents) its own subject of study (culture) while claiming to be studying it empirically. In this scenario the complexity of the fetish power of concepts is mediated through 'ethnography'. For Foucault, in the above quote, ethnography is the site where conceptual and abstract knowledge—like the culture concept—is simultaneously

created and contested. The cosmopolitan anthropologist, from this perspective, produces his or her ethnography through a double consciousness that calls the 'bluff' of culture at the same time as it relies on it to produce a creative and convincing text. Thinking from these quotes and listening to Wardle made me wonder whether this tension can be seen as indicative of the creative tension that motivates cosmopolitan ethnography

For Wardle, the tensions elicited by this ethnographic ideal fit neatly into a cosmopolitan project. Some characteristics of how this cosmopolitan ethnography would look like:

1. Centring and peripheralizing
2. Homely (canny) and unhomely (uncanny)
3. Closure and openness
4. Social pattern and subjective divergence

The question that begins to creep up on me, at this stage, is the possibility of a tension that comes out from cosmopolitanism as a method, which may lead to a predisposition of the research while avoiding the powerful presence and importance that structuring categories have for people's daily lives. Does a cosmopolitan methodology, in fact, limit the possibility of research findings? How can a cosmopolitan approach be applied consistently in a racially-conscious context or a gender-conscious environment? Can cosmopolitan approaches actually limit liberation struggles by sidelining or denying the force of racial, gendered, and fascist thinking?

Wardle's ethnographic connection, and possible response to the questions posed above, came in the form of a quick biographical survey of John Brown. During the first decades of the 20th Century, Mr. Brown travelled extensively through his native Chicago, England, Central and South America. His sojourns in the Americas were particularly complex as he contended with multiple signifying practices that racially categorised people working in the construction of the Panama Canal and in surveying expeditions in the South

American Amazon. In these contexts, racial categories were central to allocating specific tasks to workers, their pay, their placement in the working context, essentially marking their person-hood. Race, in these instances, was not exclusively recognised as a biological category that could be measured through bodily features, but was cross-referenced through nationalities such as Italian, Spaniard, Martiniquan, Barbadian and through tasks such as chief or time-keeper. These cracks, contradictions, or spaces in-between created by cross-referencing must have presented themselves as opportunities for mobile subjects like Mr. Brown and others traversing through the area. In the case of Mr. Brown, he presented himself, alternatively, as an indigenous, a Barbadian, an Englishman, a Negro (sic), a worker, an explorer, a scientist, an interpreter, amongst other categorisations, in the process of engaging in different trades and voyages throughout his time in South America.

For me, John Brown does not only signify the multi-lingual cosmopolitan subject that 'feels at home' in multiple locations but can stand for more than that. Maybe he is not an anomaly? Maybe, I wondered, the racial system of categorisation had internal inconsistencies in its design that allowed for subjects to author their own path through it? Maybe there is no such thing as a totalitarian system or a total institution because people will always find ways to identify its internal contradictions through practice? Maybe the cosmopolitan approach enabled Wardle to see through and beyond the racial categorisations that are associated with the Americas and its colonisation? Could it be that Wardle was not satisfied with coming to terms with the hierarchical structuring of peoples according to pre-given concepts like race, but looked at how people contend, conform, and give meaning to these structures in their daily lives? Is there a political claim implicit in Wardle's take on Mr. Brown? Can Mr. Brown's story inform my political and moral dilemmas?

Cosmopolitanism, at this stage in the seminar, is starting to take the shape of something more than a category that can be used to describe the modernised, globalised, technologised, post-national subject. Cosmopolitanism can also be understood as a methodological

and epistemological approach with the potential to change the way we imagine ourselves and others in the world. Which takes me back to Kant and his argument for imagination as a means to come to terms with the complexities of the world. Wardle shared with us that for Hannah Arendt, ‘imagination ... is the only inner compass we have...’. We live in worlds of our own imagination, while simultaneously imagining an alternative world. This thought elicits a state of mind or a world-view that is simultaneously in peace and conflict with itself. It proposes a tension between conforming and contesting, of authoring an individuality at the same time as it acknowledges a common humanity, of contending and conforming to a clumsy system of categories. This paradoxical state is not so different from the Kantian view of humanity, which understands it as ‘a multitude of persons, existing successively and side by side, who cannot do without being together peacefully and yet cannot avoid constantly being objectionable to one another’.

Andrew Irving: ‘The Mackerel Economy’

Irving's presentation drew from his long-term intermittent relationship with United States based artist William Cullum.^{iv} The basic thrust of the presentation concerned itself with how to approach a body of creative work in its connection with the life of the artist. Irving asked, paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty, whether the work of art led to the artist's life, or is the work evidence instead of a creative process located in the biography of the artist? What kind of life does someone live in order to paint a given picture? Do artists and artisans really choose their creations? Every author, artisan, painter, and filmmaker will tell you that their objects are not authored exclusively by their agency, but that there are many other contingencies at stake that are out of control of the artist—editors, curators, trends, tools, contexts, the market, etc.

I am not going to fully review Irving's take on the extraordinary life of Mr. Cullum, but it is still important to highlight here the tensions that emerge when looking at a collection of art-work through a cosmopolitan epistemology.

Mr. Cullum's art can be viewed with the prior knowledge that he was diagnosed HIV positive in 1985, his life expectancy was pre-determined by the illness, and this could be held to account for the dark imagery that predominated his output during this time. His art can also be viewed with the knowledge that in 2004 he was convicted for drug dealing and incarcerated for seven years. This may lead some art critics to account for his change in palette and change in usage of symbols and formats. Since his release (perhaps rehabilitation?), Mr. Cullum has received appropriate care to prolong his life. This has coincided with a network of art galleries, distributors, and anthropologists who have taken an interest in his work, which has motivated him to start-up his blog and write his memoirs. Naturally, an art critic can inform his or her viewing of Mr. Cullum's recent output by the fact that is no longer dependent on drugs, has his HIV under control, and has found respect and credibility from the art community of New York City.

Irving's position on this is not necessarily in opposition to this, seemingly, straightforward approach but he offered points to suggest a more complex story. For Irving, the process of creating a work of art cannot be disconnected from the space of the artist's body. The multitude of sensoriums that reinstate people in their imagination. In effect, works are made through corporeal acts, not exclusively through mind or the eyes. Paintings in particular are the result of the intertwining of the body (strokes) and the imagination (intention). As such, the body sensorium of the artist is embedded in the work.

For me, this recalled Marx's writings on the processes associated with estranged labour in an industrial context and I wonder if Irving would agree:

It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a species-being. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of man's species-life: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in

reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created.^v

A kind of trans-substantiation is at stake here where the artist can be viewed as activating his or her sense of person-hood onto the world. This activation happens through an active mindful-body, rather than through a mechanical process that is pre-determined by the social environment. Still, we can ask what are the limits of the trans-substantiations and inter-subjectivities that are present in the work? How can we assess it? What is the level of awareness of the structures or rules when an artist is at work or when a subject is crafting their lives?

Mr. Cullum then joined the presentation via Skype. He shared with us, briefly, his experiences in prison and described the different ways in which the inmates carry out their daily lives. An issue that struck me was the different ways in which the prison institutionalised and organised the inmate's daily lives. For example, the prison system assigns numbers to the inmates and this number becomes their main form of identification, especially in relation to the prison bureaucracy. The inmates are assigned uniforms, schedules, and their daily lives are structured accordingly. Particularly interesting, for me, was the way in which the prison authorities would segregate the inmates according to their ethnicity and were allocated eating spaces, cells, and schedules accordingly. Crossing these ethnic lines was not encouraged by the prison authorities nor by the inmates. For Mr. Cullum, 'the guards had total control'.

And yet, there was still a lot room for individual liberties. Mr. Cullum described how the prison did not allow for prisoners to have money, purchases made in the commissary were made on credit. However, prisoners still engaged in economic practices such as gambling and exchanging of goods. In this scenario packets of mackerel became currency, the standard commodity through which debts and access to the social world of the prison was mediated. The mackerel packet becomes here metonym for that space in-between the otherwise tight prison system that regulates prisoner's daily lives.

Mackerel packets were hoarded, promised to, promised on, they allowed for prisoners to craft their own time, develop a person-hood, and were occasionally opened and eaten. During this time, of course, Mr. Cullum continued to paint.

From his blog:

His work is an investigation into the representation of (seemingly) concrete ages and situations as well as depictions and ideas that can only be realized in painting. By investigating this language on a meta-level, he creates with daily recognizable elements combined with historical iconography, an unprecedented situation in which the viewer is confronted with the conditioning of his own perception and has to reconsider his biased position.

(...)

It challenges the binaries we continually reconstruct between Self and Other, between our own 'cannibal' and 'civilized' selves. By putting the viewer on the wrong track, he makes work that deals with the documentation of events and the question of how they can be presented. The work tries to express this with the help of physics and technology but not by telling a specific story or creating a metaphor.

By rejecting an objective truth and global cultural narrative, he seduces the viewer into a world of ongoing equilibrium and the interval that articulates the stream of daily events. Moments are depicted that only exist to punctuate the human drama in order to clarify our existence and to find poetic meaning in everyday life.

And, in case you are wondering, he did make a painting of a mackerel packet.

Are all these instances of prisoners having 'freedom', resisting the system? Or are the activities embedded in the disciplining process of the prison? Are they spontaneous, expected, subversive, conformist,

does it matter? I walked away from this presentation wondering more about the art itself. It was as if the paintings were a meeting point of different consciousnesses, a series of relations between the artist, his inmates, the guards, the eating schedule, the viewer, the dealer, HIV, the withdrawal, the snitch, YouTube, the smell of the cell, the racism, as if it got somehow trans-substantiated into his work, his labour.

I would not know how or where to place the agency of Mr. Cullum's work. At the moment, I would figure that a cosmopolitan approach would consider the dialectic at play between the substantiation of the capacity of the artist versus the estrangement of the work from the artist and context.

If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong? To a being other than myself. Who is this being? The gods?^{vi}

Marx emphasises an alienating effect of industrial logic: how the object of labour becomes external to the artist, independent, something alien to him or her. It is also alien to the viewer. In an industrialised methodology the work of art is dis-embedded from the artist and the viewer, it takes on a power that confronts them as hostile: a product, not of an individual, but of capital, of social context, of structure, class, gender, ethnicity, history, etc. The worker, in this instance, places his life onto the object becomes a servant to the object, thereby objectifying the human and humanising the object. In effect, the result is an estrangement and alienation from his life-world. A cosmopolitan approach re-embeds the work as an extension of the agency of Mr. Cullum, it takes seriously the inter-subjectivities that constitute the work, it is humble towards the work, and respects the viewer.

Conclusions: Lessons Learned

Cosmopolitanism does not eliminate difference, as I had been thinking on the bus to Tartu. It is not a homogenising method or discourse—it does not provide difference as the main category of analysis.

I connect cosmopolitan studies with identity studies. Wardle pre-

circulated some of his writings-in-progress on the historical development of cosmopolitan thought from an anthropological perspective and, in the draft I read, he contextualises it in the developments of anthropology during the 1990s. I connect the 1990s as a moment in anthropology that concerned itself with the emerging effects of globalisation, new digital technologies, neo-liberal policy, transnationalism, amongst others, and its impact on identity. This anxiety took local forms as the Soviet Union collapsed resulting in shock capitalism with inconsistent results, the disenchantment with the labour movement in the West, the rise of New Labour in England, the re-aligning of the labour versus capital divide, the left's disenchantment with the administration of Bill Clinton in the United States, the post-modern character of the Chiapas Rebellion in Mexico, the challenges faced by the emerging elites of sub-Saharan African second generation nation-builders, performative theory, queer theory, post-structuralism, etc. From where I stood, as an anthropologist interested in the Caribbean, the work of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Cultural Studies, African Diaspora studies, and research into new indigenous movements spoke to new cross-cutting dynamics and new appropriations that disrupted modern post-World War II categories.

Central to this anxiety, for me, was the desire to move away or move forward from binary oppositions. Particularly, the binary opposition implicated and suggested in identity discourse. I am reminded of the 2006 conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (ASA). The topic was 'Cosmopolitanism' and the keynote was a conversation between Stuart Hall and Pnina Werbner, the conference convener.^{vii} Recalling that interview, I sense an anxiety between how to acknowledge a common planetary humanity, while maintaining a sense of difference, a sense of self, a specificity, and a sense of place in world. In this context, difference and acceptance of difference has a democratising effect. To be different, radically different, has a revolutionary potential: the subaltern, the indigenous, the liminal, and un-categorisable subjects have been presented as some kind of champions of an alternative to Western hegemony. However, it is not

such a clear cut story. The global nomad can be construed as a character of Western global capitalist interest and/or a counter hegemonic possibility. The same can be said of the stable and static subject.

I confront a similar confusion when I acknowledge that my personal moral persuasion would like to accept the case that categorisations such as the indigenous, the local, static, mobile, liminal, the gendered subject, etc. are rhetorical fictions, narratives that are incidental and epiphenomenal distractions. However, my stumbling block is that these fictions and rhetorical devices still have a very strong presence and are very important for many people that we work with, especially in the Americas where race and ethnicity has been a consistent theme for over 500 years. As I walk away from the seminar in Tartu, I am wondering whether cosmopolitan anthropology tries to engage with these complexities in creative and productive ways, to move away or transcend the bind created by static oppositions.

My difficulty with cosmopolitanism—as it was presented in this workshop—is that it presents a different set of questions, it twists questions in a different way to that which I have been habituated by normative social science. Its emphasis on agency rather than structure, power of the individual rather than the masses, the case study over the trend or representativeness, power of narrative over data, the uncertain and aleatory rather than the certain and reproducible result, and the processual and fluid rather than the fixed, present a very different picture to the kind of anthropology that I was introduced to when I began my studies. Its challenge speaks to the possibility of creating an arena where I am to deploy a multiple consciousness that takes my informant seriously and we speak with, meet, and share these experiences with a third – the reader of my ethnography.

However, when it comes to the political and moral programme of cosmopolitan anthropology, I think that it still presents itself as an open qualifier, a loose set of ideals that can be deployed at the whim of the anthropologist. It acknowledges that the world is made through cross-cutting identities and conflicted capabilities, which according to the context can be characterised as liabilities. It sets up a series of

tension between method, political agenda, theory, morality, politics, and practise. In pursuing individual narratives it shows that there are multiple cosmopolitanisms that necessarily contradict one another. It has been used to describe imperialism and movements of national liberation, an elitist cause as well as a subaltern possibility, as peaceful and violent, aesthetic and pragmatic, and so on and so forth. In the midst of all this mess, what holds, what remains, for me, is the case for ethnography. For producing creative work that is:

1. Humble to the world
2. Fascinated by it
3. In observance of it
4. But has a responsibility to author it, because the author is embedded in that world.

After all, we author the world. We do not pretend that our ethnographies are a re-presentation, a one-to-one translation of reality or of our take on reality. Our ethnographies are mediated through a long list of conditions, which question any direct line of authorship. Perhaps a more productive way would be to address our ethnographies not as mirror images of the world, bare descriptions, analyses of the world, or the products of our society, but to see them as constitutive elements of world. That what we offer to our readers is not an exegesis of the world but an appropriation of it, the proposal of a context rather than an illustration of a pre-existing one.

If there is a lesson for me from this seminar experience it is the possibility that the world is made of itself and we are constitutive parts of it. As such, to know the world is to acknowledge it and advocate for it.

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ⁱ Talinn University

ⁱⁱ <http://ktdk.edu.ee/event/intensive-seminarworkshop-in-cosmopolitan-anthropology/?lang=en>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.academia.edu/10348538/Anthropology_as_a_Cosmopolitan_Vocation

^{iv} See William Cullum's blog: <https://williamcullum.wordpress.com>

^v <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/about.htm>

^{vi} <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

^{vii} <https://blackatlanticresource.wordpress.com/2012/03/19/video-stuart-hall-on-the-limits-and-possibilities-of-cosmopolitanism/>