

# COSMOPOLITAN CHALLENGES

## INTRODUCTION

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The idea of a meeting in ethics and political philosophy is a cosmopolitan notion itself. It is supposed to congregate an international array of relentless inquirers to discuss each other's work. To be sure, the practice always falls short of the regulative ideal. Some geographic and academic areas are under-represented and dissent has frequently the air of those family discussions. In this sixth iteration of our Meeting series we have decided to keep the general and open dimension of the encounter but to create also a special section with a convergent topic for our keynote speakers. The chosen topic has been "Cosmopolitan Challenges", brilliantly addressed by Samuel Scheffler and Simon Caney.

In the opening lecture, Scheffler shook our comfortable conviction about what's worth in our very particular lives and bonds under a hypothetical scenario of human extinction. Caney closed our sessions exploring the grounds for a cosmopolitan right to resistance to the global order. Between the dawn of apocalypse and the horizon of human oppression we managed to pack some very challenging perspectives on cosmopolitanism. The five papers selected reflect some unusual takes on cosmopolitanism. Instead of presenting new problems that would demand cosmopolitan solutions, these papers put cosmopolitanism under challenge from different traditions and sources. We are grateful to the authors that let us reproduce their texts as a sample of the open debate that the meetings aspire to be.

In the opening paper, Ali Emre Benli presents a surprisingly bold approach to global justice. First, he analyses three alternative models for

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global taxes. Global Taxation is perhaps the flagship and most ambitious project of the cosmopolitan tradition, which aspires to institutionalize redistributive justice at global scale. Then, Benli proceeds to adapt Amartya Sen's work on social choice to compare and select the hybrid project for global taxation that would be more consistent with our values. Bear in mind that Sen's recent defense of the social choice approach is presented as an alternative to what he dubs a "transcendental" style in institutional thinking. In contrast, he defends modest approaches of open impartiality, non-parochial deliberation, public scrutiny, and a comparative evaluation of paired alternatives. Benli's proposal turns Sen's criticism over its head in a clever way. The paper scales up the comparative method to track the converging values that would support an ideal model of global taxation to address the most urgent injustices that affect humankind.

In a perhaps similar way, Blondine Desbiolles explores the cosmopolitan tensions in Thomas Nagel's work. Nagel has penned one of the most consequential articles to frame the contemporary debate about global distributive justice. Nagel's critical view has also led a revival of a statist trend in the academia. "The Problem of Global Justice" has played a remarkable role in stimulating the cosmopolitan debate and in pushing for further clarification what are the presuppositions for valid claims of egalitarian redistributive justice. Desbiolles proposal drives the debate back home and tries to reconstruct the cosmopolitan conception latent in Nagel's state-centric criticism.

The following contributions challenge the state-centric frame by digging in the conceptual tools of two very unlikely sources: Heidegger's notion of the people (*Volk*) and Schelling's conception of fraternity of humankind.

Miguel Ángel Cordon's take on Schelling is a very interesting continuation of Nagel's argument. We have seen that "The Problem of Global Justice" restricted relations of egalitarian justice to the state community. For Nagel this is the scope of common subjection to a legal order of coercive authority that speaks in our name. Coercive cooperation is what makes us political equals. In contrast, Cordon's paper rescues Schelling's conception of the state, as a coercive structure to be transcended for the equal enjoyment of absolute freedom. For Schelling the state and the law are necessary but transitional moments for the moral education of humankind. The natural evolution of the state is to create the conditions for its extinction. Once the individuals have internalized this moral dimension in their collective life under common laws, the state would have made itself redundant. Legal relations would dissolve spontaneously to give way to uncoerced bonds

of ethical fraternity. Eventually, the artificial equality under the common law would be transcended by a new natural law of absolute freedom. This idealist vision of the state-transcending bonds of humanity contrasts with Nagel's characterization of our basic humanitarian duties of assistance. Schelling's project presents an idealist picture of thick fraternal solidarity and a shared ethos of universal freedom around a non-coercive church of humanity. Nagel does not deny the possibility of a historical path conducive to the realization of cosmopolitan equality. The difference lies in that for Nagel, this requires a Hobbesian process of deep institutional integration in global coercive structures.

Fernando Gilabert's paper taps into Heidegger's work for the reconstruction of the scope of the political community. His critical reading of Heidegger proceeds from a diagnosis of what went wrong in a project premised on the constitutive condition of being-with (*Mit-sein*) that ended up supporting a totalitarian and genocidal regime. In Gilabert's reconstruction, the starting ground for a political theory is the notion of a people, as the plurality that shares constitutive conditions of communication (language), a meaningful world (tradition), and the possibility of a project (spirit). Where Scheffler explores the horizon of a finite humanity as a normative reference to re-evaluate our personal projects and attachments, Gilabert takes the notion of people (*Volk*) as the constitutive reference for one's self-understanding. For Gilabert this shared ground opens the way to express solidarity and to take care of a common world in a community of interdependency. Nothing in principle prevents that different peoples could converge in a project of peaceful cohabitation, although Gilabert's thesis seems to imply some limits to any cosmopolitan integration. The paper defends that only a political order that is respectful of the constitutive conditions of *peopleness* (language, tradition, and spirit) can also respect the constitutive structure of the individual that always finds itself being-with. Therefore, any acceptable cosmopolitan order should allow for multinational accommodation. This project opens the way to explore the difficult relations between the people, the state and the cosmopolitan order in conditions of non-alienated life.

Pilar López-Cantero's paper is a natural continuation and perfect culmination of this thread. She examines the tension between the demands of cosmopolitan impartiality and the constitutive partialities that nurture a realistic moral psychology. This project shares with Gilabert's the concern about the conditions for a non-alienated life, for the promotion of an ethos of care towards significant others, and for the protection of meaningful

social environments. Drawing on a variety of sources, López-Cantero rescues the Hellenistic image of the concentric circles of concern to reinterpret the agent-neutral demands of cosmopolitanism. The stoic model of the concentric circles is also a normative model that demands that one should try to bring those in the outer circle as close to the core of ours concerns as possible. Lopez-Cantero rejects this unrealistic moral psychology and instead defends some egalitarian grounds for the protection of flourishing moral personalities. For her, the cosmopolitan project should be conceived as the universal right to have special relationships in the same degree, with the correlative duty to treat everybody according to her rightful place in the moral universe. This is – according to López-Cantero; a realistic moral cosmos where nobody would suffer illegitimate discriminations.

This collection of papers, which ranges from global taxes to the right to special relationships, shows that the cosmopolitan ideal is still a resilient and thought-provoking project. We are grateful to the authors for their critical contributions; and to Samuel Scheffler and Simon Caney for providing innovative grounds for a meeting of minds.