Cosmopolitanism and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense

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Republican Citizenship and Public Use of Reason from a Cosmopolitan Point of View

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I. Introduction

Here is a simple thought. It is true that nowadays globalization either in economics, culture or environment is considered to be a mere fact. Civilization and technology have contributed a lot to such a thing. Yet, what has not been globalized, in fact, what has been rather fiercely pushed away, is politics. How can we experience a globalized world – ‘one world’, according to Peter Singer – nevertheless, remain politically in a situation of nation-states still trying to negotiate their own sovereignty? A globalized world is not at the same time a cosmopolitan one, and a cosmopolitan world does not ipso facto entail the abolition of all state boundaries. On the contrary, the argument of the present essay will be that cosmopolitanism provides the conditions of the possibility of forming a democratic – in

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Kant’s own terms a ‘republican’ – state. Such a thing cannot be based on the narrow state logic of exercising self-determination, a Westphalian world already left behind, but on a higher political structure being in place, that is, a cosmopolitan civil society, which indirectly and non-coercively could influence internal state constitution absent direct representation. After I present what I take it to be Kant’s cosmopolitan concept of philosophy, I will focus on what it means to make a public use of one’s reason and what it means to enjoy the status of republican citizenship. I will try to argue that both should have a cosmopolitan scope, although they should be limited to a certain dimension, what I will call, following Philip Pettit’s use of the term, the ‘editorial’ dimension of democracy: the capacity to challenge and contest.

II. Kant’s cosmopolitanism

Immanuel Kant’s philosophy famously rests on a conception of reason that in principle demands a cosmopolitan in scope political framework in order to be realized. This is not just Kant’s idiosyncratic view of reason, but reflects his distinct idea of a cosmopolitan concept of philosophy itself, something rarely mentioned in literature. In his Lectures on Logic Kant draws the distinction between the scholastic and the worldly concepts of philosophy [in sensu cosmico]. Philosophy, according to the scholastic concept can turn out to be an intellectual game, for it is merely ‘a doctrine of skill’, whereas, according to the worldly concept it is a ‘doctrine of wisdom’ or a ‘science of the highest maxim for the use of our reason.’ This is further clarified in the Critique of Pure Reason, where he turns from this scholastic concept [Schulbegriff] in its sense of ‘a system of cognition [...] as a science’ to the cosmopolitan concept [Weltbegriff] of philosophy as ‘the science of the relation of all cognition to the essential ends of human reason’. Reason for Kant is a matter
The reference to the ‘essential ends of human reason’ might invite fierce criticism from anti-metaphysical thinkers, yet, one should stress here that what is important is not some kind of metaphysically objective ends, but freedom. On the one hand, ends are not given in things in themselves, but in agreement with the Copernican revolution, issue from subjectivity itself. Given that, there remains the relation to freedom. There can be no science of (natural) human ends, but, instead, the widest possible scope of freedom to use reason.

Freedom [carries] with it the right to submit openly for discussion the thoughts and doubts with which we find ourselves unable to deal, and to do so without being decried as troublesome and dangerous citizens. This is one of the original rights of human reason, which recognize no other judge than that universal human reason in which everyone has his say. And since all improvement of which our state is capable must be obtained from this source, such a right is sacred and must not be curtailed.

What is then required for people to learn to think for themselves is the freedom to make public use of reason. But what does public use might mean? In his famous essay ‘An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?’ one of Kant’s own examples refers to tax officials who command: ‘Don’t argue, but pay!’ Such an example though implies that tax officials make a private instead of a public use of reason, not because they communicate their message in private, in fact their command is public, but because they are ‘employed to expound in a prescribed manner and in the name of another’, that is, the state’s own authority. The same counts for the clergyman example who delivers his catechism and says ‘Do
not argue, but believe!’. By comparison, making a public use of reason means the opposite: using one’s own reason freely means trying to express one’s own conviction about the truth of a matter. Moreover, if one believes she has found the truth (Kant calls it ‘inner religion’ in the clergyman example) she would have to resign from his office!\(^9\) Making a private use of reason here has to do with the form of the relationship between guardian and ward rather than the content of one’s views. The authority exercised by the guardians encourages the habitual abandonment of critical thinking.

I have argued elsewhere that this form is partly, albeit essentially triggered by reason’s feeling of its own need, reason’s insight into its own lack of objective grounds for guiding judgment when it leaves experience, something that applies to moral law as well through the feeling of respect. Ultimately, reason is not given to itself as an object, but needs to present itself to itself in the process of gaining clarity. In that sense it disconnects subjectivity from a fixed, historical conception of identity, which comes along with a certain motivational baggage. Publicity then is equivalent to also giving form to subjectivity by making a public use of our reason, instead of taking such a need as a rational insight into the essence of things, something that can cause enthusiasm or make one ‘superstitious’ through reliance on facts. The latter is true of our contingent identities – in our example here attached to or already constituted by a particular statist logic or religious authority.\(^10\) Therefore, even reasoning publicly within the bounded society of a single state might constitute a private use of reason. Kant argues then that reason’s need applies to all finite rational beings and should therefore be opened up to the ‘world at large’. The scope of the public use of reason cannot be a closed, or a bounded society, but ‘a complete commonwealth or even a cosmopolitan society’.\(^11\)
Therefore, Kant’s cosmopolitan concept of philosophy referring to wisdom is linked to the public use of reason. It is through publicity that freedom is basically structured, it does not obey objective meta-rules, and is not based on what is called common sense. The latter choice of common sense belongs to John Rawls’s supposedly Kantian conception of public reason. Rawls’s conception of public reason is based on the concept of ‘reasonableness’ defined as ‘a willingness to listen to what others have to say and being ready to accept reasonable accommodations or alterations in one’s own view’,¹² but which already presupposes a democratic culture, a common sense as part of the content of public reason, that serves to apply substantive principles properly and identify laws and policies that match them.¹³ There is no coincidence therefore that Rawls’s conception is explicitly anti-cosmopolitan and confines his theory within a bounded, democratic society when he talks about the use of public reason, whereas Kant is preoccupied with the public use of reason.¹⁴ Even his account of ‘global public reason’ is simply an extension of his theory of the liberal state, because it once again presupposes a minimal catalogue of human rights.

Now, a significant part of Kant’s focus on the public use of reason rather than public reason as a special category of reason is that reason’s need carries with itself a right [Recht des Bedürfnisses], that is, the right of reason’s need as a subjective ground for presupposing and assuming something which reason cannot know through objective grounds, nevertheless it has to be communicated for we need a criterium veritatis externum. Now this claim is a juridical and not a teleological or prudential one. Kant argues that ‘[t]he claim of reason is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens, each of whom must be able to express his reservations, indeed, even his veto, without holding back’.¹⁵ In other words, Kant recognizes a right
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to dissent, to contest as an essential, although negative way of testing maxims. Dissent and disagreement mark a difference in orientation and unveil through being made public the principle of making a judgment, involve, in other words, the principle of self-reflection, the mode of reflection.¹⁶ Such a juridical transformation of reason’s own need marks a fundamental aspect of the use of public reason in a cosmopolitan frame for a number of reasons. For such a conception of public reason to be realized we have to take seriously Kant’s reference to a republican concept of citizenship. What does such a reference require from us?

III. The content of republican citizenship

In the previous section we acknowledged, along with Kant, that the public use of reason involves our self-reflection and the constitution of our subjectivity unveiled in reason’s need. One of the essential aspects of publicity is exactly our capacity to dissent, to even express one’s veto on decisions made or policies proposed by others. Such a capacity though is inextricably linked with one’s membership in a democratic polity, one’s membership in a commonwealth as a citizen. And citizenship entails equal standing. This is absolutely crucial if one is to use her reason publicly, that is, also autonomously. What does this mean? In this section I will try to argue that essentially Kant’s reference to citizenship requires a specific version of cosmopolitanism, which I will call ‘republican cosmopolitanism’.¹⁷ Making public use of reason presupposes having equal standing or being free in a republican sense.

What does being free in a republican sense mean? On Kant’s own view, public reason and enlightenment are interconnected. One place to see this is Kant’s famous dictum Sapere aude!, which means to have courage to use your own understanding, or to think for yourself at all times, something that can be done only
when communicating our thoughts to others. Enlightenment is an other-directed activity, a social process. Now, Kant’s public use of reason is a demand, which, together with its crucial role it plays in exercising one’s autonomy, that is, her internal freedom, is a mark of a political relation towards others. In other words, it points to the form we ought to stand to one another as citizens in a polity. In that sense it involves what Kant calls our external freedom. To have courage means not to be afraid to express who one is in public, fearing that she might be accused of being dangerous or unreasonable. Getting courage now is inextricably linked with having a particular standing, the standing of being a full and equal member of a commonwealth.

Such a standing corresponds to the standing of citizen of a republican state, defended by Kant, but also recently elaborated by Philip Pettit.\(^\text{18}\) Kant’s reference to the standing of a citizen is mainly based on the much neglected *Metaphysics of Morals*, especially his *Doctrine of Right*, where he refers to the *one* innate right as “*[f]reedom (independence from being constrained by another’s choice), insofar as it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law, is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity*”. Such a right carries also “innate *equality*, that is, independence from being bound by others to more than one can in turn bind them; hence a human being’s quality of being his own master (*sui iuris*) […] and finally, his being authorized to do to others anything that does not in itself diminish what is theirs […] such things as merely communicating his thoughts to them”.\(^\text{19}\) Now, this innate right to freedom is a right one has by virtue of one’s humanity, that is, her capacity to set and pursue ends of one’s own, and is grounded on our in principle interdependence regarding freedom itself, not de facto interdependence.
To make clear, such a right to freedom should be interpreted neither as mere absence of interference (negative freedom), nor only as self-determination within a bounded society (positive freedom). It is structured around the idea that to be free is not to owe one’s existence to another person’s arbitrary power, which may or may not be exercised. For example, one is still under domination/slavery if, because of his master’s kindly disposition, ends up doing whatever the latter pleases. This would be a condition of servitude, dependence or else domination.\(^{20}\) Therefore, on the one hand, non-interference is simply not enough to guarantee freedom when others could interfere at their pleasure – there is no need of actual interference, possible interference is simply enough. On the other hand, self-determination within a state might already presuppose and prescribe a certain mode of reflection through a common identity, for example Rousseau’s general will acting as a collective agent. For Kant political freedom conceived as ‘independence’ can be realized only within a system where we have established relations of right. For Kant what is a priori presupposed is not a catalogue of natural rights but citizenship in a community. The thrust of the argument here focuses not on natural rights, but on citizenship, the status of equal membership. Kant’s talk of innate right has the meaning of having the right to have rights.\(^{21}\)

I now want to argue that the scope of such a republican citizenship should be cosmopolitan. Nowadays, the interdependent nature of global social interaction means that it is no longer possible to demarcate political communities as self-legislating or enjoying freedom as self-rule or self-determination. There is a sense that republican freedom points to the obligation to establish relations of Right with all peoples and individuals, wherever they happen to be located on the earth’s spherical surface, which is not unlimited, but closed [\textit{globus terraqueus}].\(^{22}\)
Kant’s talk then of innate right as the right to have rights refers to membership in the world at large. It also explains better Kant’s cosmopolitan right to hospitality in its current context, which, points exactly towards a cosmopolitan public sphere that forms the conditions of possibility for constituting a republican state/people, or so I would argue.

IV. The cosmopolitan scope of citizenship and the importance of contestation

*Quod omnes tangit ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet*²³

Contrary to common assumptions republican citizenship does not necessarily have to be attached to bounded or national citizenship, but, if public reason has to address the ‘world at large’ the scope needs to be cosmopolitan. Now, if one dismisses the prospect of establishing a world republic by dissolving current states, a prospect Kant also rejects, cosmopolitan citizenship makes sense only within a cosmopolitan public sphere. This is what Kant means by cosmopolitan law [*Weltbürgerrecht*] as the third category of public law. Such a category refers to the right of hospitality, which involves the right to present oneself to others and to try to establish contact with other people, something that involves free communication and free trade through the status of individuals in their dealings with states of which they are not citizens. This is not a novel claim, but it has been defended by quite a few thinkers on many grounds.²⁴ Andrew Linklater, for example, thinks that cosmopolitan citizenship is linked to the notion of a dialogical community, that is, a global public sphere of critical judgment and deliberation, something already established through a global web of digital technologies that cross boundaries and a global web of commercial and cultural exchanges.²⁵ Yet,
although Kantian in spirit, such a view of public sphere, which conceives of public reason as being merely dialogical, misses the point, for we need more than simple dialogue of already constituted subjectivities on a cosmopolitan level – we need to engage our modes of reflection. This is because the public use of reason is not only dialogical, that is a product of actual dialogue, but self-reflective (reflexive).

Staying within our previous analysis of the public use of reason the cosmopolitan scope of republican citizenship would entail the following things:

1. The public use of reason, as we have seen above, carries with itself the right of reason’s need, which is translated into a right to dissent. Such a juridical right should have a cosmopolitan scope for it does not presuppose a bounded society of democratic self-determination. It rather corresponds to cosmopolitan democratic institutions that allow people to contest decisions that affect their freedom as rational agents. First, it has to be noted that republican citizenship based on non-domination corresponds to a democratic system that has two dimensions, one authorial and the other editorial, according to Pettit. On the one hand, the authorial dimension gives citizens an electoral control of government’s decisions, it demands a single agent and sees citizenship as active control through voting, that is, self-legislating. On the other hand, the editorial dimension corresponds to something like a virtual control of what is proposed as a law or policy. The distinction describes roughly the different, yet interconnected roles of both author and editor – the latter can reject what is written by the former. The lesson of this two-dimensional structure of democracy is that people have to be able to determine both the content of
the policies and the modes of policy implementation. Therefore, Pettit talks about a crucial link between republican citizenship and contestation.

There is of course a crucial question to be answered here. Does the editorial dimension presuppose the authorial/electoral dimension or, in other words, does giving one’s explicit consent – trying to establish agreement – lie at the basis of the public use of reason, making contestation only a secondary issue in relation to such an effort? Citizenship, for example, is akin to the right to vote. Nevertheless, voting or the authorial/electoral dimension presupposes the status of non-domination, of being independent in the sense of not being at the mercy of anyone else. If this presupposition does not exist voting itself might be seriously compromised, because one might still be the mouthpiece of others. The two dimensions correspond to will and reflection respectively. Therefore, there is a sense the editorial dimension, that is, self-reflection, comes prior to the authorial one, that is, the expression of the will. There is finally a last question: what are the limits of contestation? Kant even talked about using one’s veto power, as we saw above, although Pettit thinks it is a too strong and infeasible mode of public decision-making not allowing for the possibility of compromise.

Now, this authorial dimension corresponds to freedom conceived as self-legislation and is attached to its having territorial bounds, the existence of a general will legislating in one voice. Presupposing a collective subject through global legislation, that is authorial or electoral democratization at a global level, is indeed both infeasible and undesirable, therefore has to be rejected. But the editorial dimension, i.e. contestation, should and could have a cosmopolitan scope, for enjoying the standing to contest policies or imposed obligations does not necessarily entail the presence of a global state, but of a public
sphere, which is meant to be the negative substitute for the infeasibility of coercive civil law at such a level.\textsuperscript{32} What we need is an effective public sphere where one could exercise virtual control as editor who can amend or reject what is written or passed as a law or policy. The Roman legal maxim mentioned at the beginning does not therefore mean that what affects all ought to be decided by all, only that what affects all ought to elicit the considered approval of all.

2. The effective exercise of such a right to dissent must be based on the status of enjoying basic non-domination as being a world citizen. We should therefore pursue the distributive aim of securing the capability of democratic citizenship at least in this negative dimension of the right to contest. For this people should enjoy whatever capabilities are necessary to enable them to avoid domination, that is, to have access to sufficient resources to assure adequate levels of nutrition, education, housing, health care and access to information.\textsuperscript{33}

3. There have been a number of proposals regarding the institutionalization of cosmopolitan republican citizenship. One of them is the creation of a second civil assembly integrated into the UN structure, which would create a political forum for contestation. This would be based not on appointed by national governments representatives, but on directly elected ones. Such an assembly would potentially challenge the statist logic of most intergovernmental relations in the Security Council and elsewhere in relation to human rights or, for example, WTO agreements that impose obligations. From a cosmopolitan point of view that might also be of great interest is the activity of transnational advocacy
networks. Such networks link activists all over the world interested in human rights or environment. Domestic activists when faced with unresponsive or corrupted governments can work together and put pressure on their home governments, which in turn can put pressure on the originally unresponsive states.34

To recapitulate and conclude: contrary to both communitarians and liberals, the scope of such a republican citizenship should be cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitan republican citizenship ought not to be a matter of all the peoples of the world finally coming to have enough similar beliefs and a unified culture or common identity to enter into a world republic. It should be a matter of achieving the conditions under which a plurality of persons can inhabit a common space of independence. It also explains better Kant’s cosmopolitan right of hospitality, which, points exactly towards a cosmopolitan public sphere that forms the conditions of possibility for constituting a republican state/people. To be sure, this is not an empirical claim. Most people nowadays argue that insofar as globalization extends the scheme of cooperation beyond the nation-state we should also extend the concept of citizenship on a global scale. However, Kant’s claim is not empirical, but is based on putting forward the a priori conditions for perpetual peace. Perpetual peace is not a goal to be achieved by a confederation of sovereign states, whatever their constitution, but of a federation of republican – democratic in our sense – states. But the conditions of their possibility should not again be based on the narrow state logic of exercising self-determination, which Kant claimed could entail a private use of reason, but on global civil society, which indirectly and non-coercively influences government absent direct representation. Kant’s conception of freedom conceived as non-domination provides
the normative basis for an interactive universalism in that it establishes the right of communication and the capacity of outsiders to contest and initiate deliberation in the public spheres of separate states. Let us remind ourselves that public use of reason is reflexive, that is self-correcting.

One last remark should be made here about the public use of reason and the cosmopolitan concept of philosophy itself. The distinction between private and public use is not a distinction between individual and community, but a distinction between one’s prescribed identity and one’s openness to change through public self-disclosure at the world at large. The cosmopolitan concept of philosophy has the task, I think, not to provide us with solutions to already prescribed questions - and prescribed questions can dominate more than prescribed answers. On the contrary, it is about formulating the proper questions, and the proper questions can be formulated when one is testing publicly, that is also from a cosmopolitan point of view, assumed authorities, given identities, and fixed boundaries.35
NOTES

1 Many thanks to the participants of the ‘Cosmopolitanism and Philosophy in a Cosmopolitan Sense’ conference in Bucharest for providing an ideal forum for discussion and to Ioannis Natsinas for written comments on an early draft.


7 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, op. cit., A752/B780 emphasis added.


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13 Ibid., pp. 223-227.
15 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, op. cit., B766f.
16 See Koukouzelis, “Rawls and Kant”, op. cit., p. 856ff for a more detailed account of this argument.
21 For such an interpretation of Kant see also Hodgson, “Kant on the Right to Freedom”, op. cit., p. 817.
A secular Roman legal maxim: “what concerns all must be discussed and approved by all”.

For this interpretation of Kant see Kleingeld P., “Kant’s Cosmopolitan Law: World Citizenship for a Global Order” in Kantian Review, Vol. 2, 1998, pp. 72-90 at 80. Kleingeld stresses the fact that, according to Kant, when communicating one’s thoughts to others it is up to them whether to accept or reject what is being said. However, one can derive the right to present oneself to others, which still leaves the addressee at liberty to refuse the request.


Actually this is true of Kant as well; See Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, op. cit., p. 458, (Vol. 6, p. 314).

One could argue that we are talking about deliberation here, when we are talking about the editorial dimension. Bohman is explicit when equating deliberation or the ‘right to initiate deliberation’ with self-reflection (reflexivity) and regarding it as the essence of communicative freedom. However, he disagrees with Pettit’s insistence on contestation arguing that contestation is based on the more fundamental power to initiate deliberation. Although I do think that the power to initiate deliberation is inclusive of contestation, the latter still is analytically distinct and comes prior, making deliberation possible; see Bohman, Democracy across Borders, op. cit., p. 53-54. J. Dryzek talks about the importance of contestation at a transnational level; See Dryzek J., Deliberative Democracy and Beyond, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 74-80


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33 See Bertram C., “Global justice, moral development, and democracy” in G. Brock and H. Brighouse (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, esp. pp. 80-84. In the case of information, lacking the infrastructure in one’s country to enjoy access to the internet leaves one almost illiterate. Yet, one should be clear here that for Kant public use of reason is not information gathering.

34 See Ellis, *Kant’s Politics*, op. cit., p. 155ff.