

Kant's Cosmopolitanism. Historical Context and its Implications for Today

El cosmopolitismo de Kant. Contexto histórico e implicaciones actuales

SANDRA ZÁKUTNÁ¹

University of Prešov, Slovakia

Review of Georg Cavallar, *Kant's Embedded Cosmopolitanism. History, Philosophy and Education for World Citizens*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2015, 215 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-043849-9

In his book *Kant's Embedded Cosmopolitanism. History, Philosophy and Education for World Citizens*, Georg Cavallar attempts to show that Kant's theory of cosmopolitanism is a result of his systematically developed practical philosophy. Cavallar wants to avoid one-sided or anachronistic interpretations and he aims to explore Kant's cosmopolitanism in its historical context. At the same time he focuses on the republican and pedagogical context of cosmopolitanism which has been neglected for a long time. According to Cavallar, Kant's cosmopolitanism is "embedded" in several ways. Each individual is part of a particular community; Kant aimed at forming a synthesis of republican patriotism, republicanism and moral cosmopolitanism; and he understood the tension between embedded, local attachments and cosmopolitan obligations in dynamic terms. Cavallar states that "Kant posited duties to promote the legal, moral and religious communities, to establish common laws or cosmopolitan institutions, and to develop a cosmopolitan disposition" (p. 2).

Reconstructing Kant's cosmopolitanism, Cavallar starts with a summary of Kant's position, according to which "we are not equal in terms of our cultivated prudence, of cultural development, skin colour, talents, perhaps not even in terms of moral capacities.

¹ Lecturer at the Institute of Philosophy of the Faculty of Arts, University of Prešov, Slovakia. Contact email address: sandra.zakutna@unipo.sk.

However, we are equal in terms of humanity or dignity and our moral vocation.” (p. 12). According to Cavallar, Kant’s cosmopolitanism has three basic features – it is embedded, dynamic and pedagogical. Cavallar explains its embeddedness as a part of Rousseau’s heritage and it is also present in Kant’s cosmopolitan right. The dynamic element is connected with the final aim of the human species as a basis for cosmopolitanism. Cavallar claims that this is present in Kant’s understanding of formation (*Bildung*) as the key means through which individuals, as well as the human species as such, approach their ultimate end of their existence. This is their moral vocation (*Bestimmung*), the development of their natural predispositions proportionally and purposively. Cavallar argues that while the education of an individual is the subject of pedagogy, the education of human species is also the subject of Kant’s philosophy of history and religion, and can be achieved only in a “cosmopolitan manner”.

These basic ideas open up a space for further analysis in the eight chapters of the book (Introduction being Chapter 1). The second chapter “Cosmopolitanisms in Kant’s philosophy” and the third “Kant’s right of world citizens: a historical interpretation” offer a systematic interpretation of Kant’s cosmopolitanism as an integral part of his practical philosophy. It is not surprising that Cavallar speaks about several types of cosmopolitanism as he has been dealing with them for some time and the distinction of its various forms, e.g. legal, moral, religious or economic cosmopolitanisms, seems to be a valid basis for further analysis. This distinction does not mean that these cosmopolitanisms are incompatible, in fact, they all are parts of Kant’s complex system. Both chapters focus on historical contextualisation of cosmopolitan law (*Weltbürgerrecht*) in Kant’s cosmopolitan theory. The author explores how the highest political good in the world comes about. He focuses on Kant’s philosophy of history, about which he asks whether it is manipulation (by nature), the education or self-education of humankind. The tension between the human species as manipulated by nature (Nature as a “moral facilitator”, preparing “the ground for genuine morality”, p. 42) and humans as autonomous agents with their own history understood as a collective learning process offer a basis for Cavallar’s interpretation. He characterizes Kant’s philosophy of history as the possible transition from culture and civilization to moralization (p. 44), deals with the issue of the ethical commonwealth and tries to show that Kant’s cosmopolitanism includes the religious as well as regulative idea of a transcendent unconditioned totality. The third chapter “Kant’s right of world citizens: a historical interpretation” focuses on Kant’s commercial cosmopolitanism and Cavallar deals with international legal theory as well as other issues that were discussed by 18th-century philosophers (apart from Kant, Cavallar refers to Hume, Smith or Rousseau, among others): the spirit of commerce, *doux commerce*, global integration, or mutual self-interest. Cavallar states that Kant’s “hope that the spirit of commerce would guarantee cosmopolitan right was perhaps too optimistic: commercial interaction normally leads to exclusive hospitality rights, without extending to *all* humans. Implementation of cosmopolitan right currently depends on states, their interests, and their power, thus is often arbitrary and selective” (p. 73). One may agree with

Cavallar's argument in the third chapter that Kant's cosmopolitan right does not stand for a cosmopolitan democracy or a democratic civil society. Cosmopolitan right has two functions, it is the third segment of Kant's juridical framework, "a universal cosmopolitan condition", and it has a moral significance because it is part of an educational process preparing the ground for moral formation.

The next two chapters, "Educating Émile: Rousseau on embedded cosmopolitanism" and "Sources of Kant's cosmopolitanism: Basedow, Rousseau, and cosmopolitan education" focus in greater detail on the historical background of cosmopolitanism with an emphasis on educational theories of the 18th century. Cavallar claims that the Enlightenment philosophers were more cosmopolitan than the generations of philosophers before or after them, that they were more interested in other cultures, that they compared various nations and that the era in general was characterized by many different ideas. *Émile* represents a strong influential source for Kant's cosmopolitanism. Cavallar interprets the work as an example of the formation (*Bildung*) of moral and sensible cosmopolitan people and tries to present Rousseau's vision of cosmopolitan education. At the same time, however, he mentions the limitations of Rousseau's approach – "[his] utopianism, the thin dividing line between nationalism, patriotism, and republican patriotism, Rousseau's pessimistic philosophy of history and the tensions in Rousseau's writings between communitarian and individualistic elements" (p. 88). The fifth chapter, "Sources of Kant's cosmopolitanism: Basedow, Rousseau, and cosmopolitan education", is an innovative attempt to analyse the influence of Johann Bernhard Basedow on Kant's cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan education. Basedow, a fairly unknown Enlightenment educational reformer who opened his experimental school *Philanthropinum* in Dessau, was appreciated and supported by Kant. Cavallar shows that the parallel between Basedow and Kant is worth examining. Cavallar considers Basedow to be one of the authors who influenced Kant's concept of cosmopolitan education and he is interested in Kant's assessment of Basedow's educational theory. The second part of the chapter describes the relationship of Kant and Rousseau in the context of cosmopolitan education and the influence of Rousseau on Kant. The issues analysed by Cavallar are Rousseau's and Kant's different views on teleology, their philosophies of history, the role of Christianity, and moral formation.

The chapters "Taking a detour: Kant's theory of moral cosmopolitan formation" and "Res publica: Kant on cosmopolitical formation" are fully devoted to cosmopolitan formation or education in Kant's system, characterized by the key term *Bildung*. Cavallar thoroughly discusses not only *Lectures on Pedagogy* but he also analyses Kant's short essays and *The Critique of Practical Reason* while focusing on the differences in Kant's ideas in the 1780s and 1790s. Kant's educational theory is introduced as cosmopolitan in its character and Cavallar emphasizes the importance of moral formation (*Bildung*) "as an end in itself irrespective of its usefulness" in Kant's educational theory. That is why Cavallar calls it a *detour*. He claims that, compared to most contemporary theories, Kant's approach is designed in the form of an ideal where moral formation would coincide with cosmopolitan formation.

The seventh chapter, “Res publica: Kant on cosmopolitical formation” argues that a widespread interpretation of Kant as a typical early liberal is mistaken. Cavallar sees Kant as close to the republican tradition, although he did not share some of its key features. “Kant’s pedagogy is indeed distinct from the educational theories of the civic republicans: Above all, moral self-legislation and self-motivation ultimately aim at a cosmopolitan conduct of thought (*Denkungsart*) and a cosmopolitan comportment of mind or disposition (*Gesinnung*), thus going beyond the civic humanism’s focus on one’s own republic” (p. 19). As Cavallar continues, in Kant’s moral theory, cosmopolitan values are not simply instilled in pupils and a cosmopolitan disposition is a long-term result of helping adolescents to form their own moral characters and for this purpose the republican form of government is considered the proper basis of moral formation – although the republican form of government is also valuable in itself. Cosmopolitan education – based on Kant’s embedded and dynamic cosmopolitanism – is being critically analysed by Cavallar and the chapter offers a complex view on Kant’s vision of progress in the form of a genuine republic. Cavallar advocates Kant’s idea and his emphasis on moral formation (*Bildung*) that has been almost left behind in today’s era. However, he also clearly explains why he does not fully share Kant’s optimism concerning progress in ethical didactics and republican governments as well as Kant’s optimism that the periods of time for the realization of progress will always get shorter and shorter.

The final section “Conclusion: From Kant to the present” offers a discussion of the merits and shortcomings of Kant’s theory, also in the context of contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism and educational theories. Cavallar starts with a chapter on debates on cosmopolitanism in German-speaking countries which lead to discussions about nation states. He analyses Schiller, Novalis, Fichte, Hegel and Herbart to continue with Kant’s cosmopolitanism as a historical phenomenon. In the context of the new cosmopolitanism, Cavallar offers a critical analysis of contemporary understandings of the term and deals with the importance of Kant’s legacy in great detail. Cavallar manages to show that although “Kant’s didactics are at odds with many trends in contemporary educational culture of Western societies” (p. 175), it is worth exploring the overall system of cosmopolitanism. Kant’s cosmopolitan theory is presented in Cavallar’s book as a complex theory with three dimensions – embedded, dynamic and pedagogical –, and this is what makes it unique and inspiratory.

The book *Kant’s Embedded Cosmopolitanism. History, Philosophy and Education for World Citizens* is an ambitious project which both deals with Kant’s cosmopolitanism in the context of the late eighteenth century and analyses the uniqueness of Kant’s cosmopolitan theory and its differences from contemporary trends. A demanding aim of the book was to directly connect Kant’s ideas on cosmopolitanism with the theme of cosmopolitan education. Cavallar not only succeeds in situating Kant in today’s philosophical and educational debates but also in presenting Kant’s cosmopolitanism as an original endeavour which should not be “used” only when needed or “offered” for short-

term solutions. It has to be studied in its complexity, especially with its essential republican and educational dimension.

