

The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism.

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How shall cosmopolitanism be conceived in relation to globalization, capitalism, and modernity? The geopolitical imaginary nourished by the term and processes of globalization lays claim to the homogeneity of the planet from above—economically, politically, and culturally. The term *cosmopolitanism* is, instead, used as a counter to globalization, although not necessarily in the sense of globalization from below. Globalization from below invokes, rather, the reactions to globalization from those populations and geohistorical areas of the planet that suffer the consequences of the global economy. There are, then, local histories that plan and project global designs and others that have to live with them. Cosmopolitanism is not easily aligned to either side of globalization, although the term implies a global project. How shall we understand cosmopolitanism in relation to these alternatives?

Let's assume then that globalization is a set of designs to manage the world while cosmopolitanism is a set of projects toward planetary conviviality. The first global design of the modern world was Christianity, a cause and a consequence of the incorporation of the Americas into the global vision of an *orbis christianus*. It preceded the civilizing mission, the intent to civilize the world under the model of the modern European nation-states. The global design of Christianity was part **[End Page 721]** of the European Renaissance and was constitutive of modernity and of its darker side, coloniality. The global design of the civilizing mission was part of the European Enlightenment and of a new configuration of modernity/coloniality. The cosmopolitan project corresponding to Christianity's global design was mainly articulated by Francisco de Vitoria at the University of Salamanca while the civilizing global design was mainly articulated by Immanuel Kant at the University of Königsberg.

In other words, cosmopolitan projects, albeit with significant differences, have been at work during both moments of modernity. The first was a religious project; the second was secular. Both, however, were linked to coloniality and to the emergence of the modern/colonial world. Coloniality, in other words, is the hidden face of modernity and its very condition of possibility. The colonization of the Americas in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, and of Africa and Asia in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, consolidated an idea of the West: a geopolitical image that exhibits chronological movement. Three overlapping macronarratives emerge from this image. In the first narrative, the West originates temporally in Greece and moves northwest of the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic. In the second narrative, the West is defined by the modern world that originated with the Renaissance and with the expansion of capitalism through the Atlantic commercial circuit. In the third narrative, Western modernity is located in Northern Europe, where it bears the distinctive trademark of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. While the first narrative emphasizes the geographical marker *West* as the keyword of its ideological formation, the second and third link the West more strongly with modernity. Coloniality as the constitutive side of modernity emerges from these latter two narratives, which, in consequence, link cosmopolitanism intrinsically to coloniality. By this I do not mean that it is improper to conceive and analyze cosmopolitan projects beyond these parameters, as Sheldon Pollock does in this issue of *Public Culture*. I am stating simply that I will look at cosmopolitan projects within the scope of the modern/colonial world—that is, located chronologically in the 1500s and spatially in the northwest Mediterranean and the North Atlantic. While it is possible to imagine a history that, like Hegel's, begins with the origin of humanity, it is also possible to tell stories with different beginnings, which is no less arbitrary than to proclaim the beginning with the origin of humanity or of Western civilization. The crucial point is not when the beginning is located but why and from where. That is: What are the geohistorical and ideological formations that shape the frame of such a macronarrative? Narratives of..

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