Cosmopolitanism, sociology and the otherness of the other

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the 'cosmopolitan turn' in sociology and examines the ways in which the discipline attempts to come to terms with the otherness of the other as a corrective to its own Eurocentrism. It examines in particular the pluralisation of the notion of modernity and argues that although this strategy allows sociology to maintain its disciplinary identity, it falls short of the aim of transforming the discipline into a cosmopolitan discourse. More broadly, the paper argues that cosmopolitanism is not a possible object of experience. Like other idealisations, it is plagued by what Derrida calls 'autoimmunity'—the tendency to self-destruct.

Keywords

Cosmopolitanism, sociology, otherness, modernity, 'autoimmunity'

In the last few decades there has been an increasingly influential movement in sociology that seeks to reform the discipline and broaden its intellectual and cultural horizons. As the proponents of this move argue, the aim is to transform sociology into a cosmopolitan discipline—open-minded, open to the world beyond Europe and the West, receptive to cultural difference, respectful of the otherness of the other. In short, this would be a

discipline that would pull 'down the walls of Euro-centrism' (Beck and Grande 2010: 411) and save the rest of the world from the calumny of cultural inferiority.[1] My aim in this paper is to explore the prospects of this fundamental change.

To sketch the wider context of this investigation, let us note that this sort of salvation intent is nothing new and certainly not restricted to sociology.[2] Nor has it ever been a purely academic affair. In the not-too-distant past enlightened colonizers sought to save the rest of the world from itself—from ignorance, poverty and disease, as the colonial lexicon would have it. Cosmopolitanism, in sociology and elsewhere, wishes to save it from Western misrepresentation, misrecognition and exclusion. The two are not the same, but the underlying structure appears very similar: the West saves the Rest and by saving it, it saves itself as well and confirms itself in its superior moral and cultural position—a theodicy of good fortune, as Max Weber would say. For it should not be assumed that this is something disinterested, an act of generosity, a free gift without a return. There is no such thing. As Derrida (1994) has shown, for reasons that have to do with the structure of things rather than with individual intention, giving is always taking with a certain capitalisation.[3]

I will, then, approach cosmopolitan sociology's salvation intent from a critical, postcolonial perspective, even though my aim is not to argue for the pluralisation of the notion of cosmopolitanism as postcolonial scholarship often does (e.g. Pollock et al, 2000; Spivak, 2012). It is, rather, to subject this notion to a rigorous deconstructive examination. For this reason the perspective employed here cannot be that of postcolonial sociology either.[4] The latter takes for granted and uses as a key analytical category the highly problematic notion of modernity—highly problematic because, among other problems, it requires a devalued and excluded other to have any meaning and to make sense, namely, the pre-modern and the traditional. Rather, the perspective used here is more akin to the

anthropological theorisation of cultural diversity and difference—the perspective, let us say, of a postcolonial anthropology.

To be sure, cosmopolitan sociology's salvation intent is not always clearly visible in accounts of the new discipline. It is often downplayed or hidden behind the façade of positive, value-free science. Yet there is no doubt that it is there behind the scenes, orchestrates the whole effort and points to where all such intentions ultimately point to: the end of history hence also the beginning, the 'time' before the fall into history and time and a state of pure humanity or human purity and innocence. Putting the matter in this way—highlighting, that is, cosmopolitan sociology's metaphysical intention—the new discipline emerges as a lost cause. Yet it is one thing to posit its impossibility axiomatically and another to demonstrate it in practice. Accordingly, I will follow closely cosmopolitan sociology's argumentation and try to identify the dilemmas, contradictions, impasses that it runs into all by itself. The discussion will be guided by two interrelated questions. Given the cultural diversity and difference in the world, can sociology become cosmopolitan and remain sociology—a discipline premised on the idea of modernity and the teleology of progress? Secondly, and thinking beyond particular disciplines, is cosmopolitanism understood as the inclusion of the otherness of the other in the sameness of the self itself possible? Can it ever appear in the empirical world, in society and history and become an object of experience, or is it simply a figment of a certain type of imagination—the imagination of (largely) Western 'frequent travellers' and academics (Calhoun, 2002, 2010), for example?

Preliminary questions

I shall begin, in a preliminary fashion, with what I have already announced—hiding cosmopolitan sociology's salvation intent behind the façade of a positive, scientific

discipline—and the problems that this leads to. What I have in mind is Ulrich Beck, arguably one of the most influential figures of cosmopolitan sociology, and the distinction he makes between cosmopolitanism in philosophy and the 'cosmopolitan realism' of a 'value-free' sociology. The former, Beck says, is normative, the latter 'descriptive-analytic' or 'analytic-empirical'. Accordingly, 'it sees the increased interdependence of social actors across national boundaries as an unintended and unforeseen *side effect* of actions that have no normative "cosmopolitan intent"' (2004: 132). In this version, cosmopolitan sociology is concerned not with prescription—the tearing down the walls of Eurocentrism—but with description and analysis. It should be clear that Beck wishes to maintain the impression of a value-free, positive science but for a new discipline this is a rather old strategy. As Inglis argues, it is the strategy that Durkheim himself employed more than a century ago. In a paper concerned with highlighting the presumed cosmopolitanism of classical sociology, Inglis (2013: 14-15) says that Durkheim's aim was 'not just to unite the normative and the empirical realms, but [also] to ground the former in the latter, in order to avoid accusations of abstraction and utopianism'. It seems that this is precisely what Beck wishes to avoid as well.

Durkheim may have been able to get away with his positivism, but things are much more difficult for Beck. This is not only because the times have changed and positivism is no longer fashionable but also because it undermines his project of cosmopolitan sociology. The problem is one of 'epistemological nationalism' or 'methodological parochialism'—to paraphrase one of Beck's key terms—a parochial epistemology that pretends to be universal. To put this into perspective, we should take a quick look at the kind of inclusiveness that Beck envisions for cosmopolitan sociology. It seems that it would be an all-inclusive discourse. Beyond the otherness of the other, it intends to include the 'otherness of *nature*'

as well as the 'otherness of the *future*'. And this is only with regard to the 'external' dimensions of cosmopolitanism. There are also the 'internal' dimensions which refer to the inclusion of the 'otherness of the *object*' and 'overcoming the (state) mastery of (scientific, linear) rationalization' (Beck, 2002: 18).

There is a crowding of 'othernesses' in Beck's schema but here I will be concerned only with the otherness of nature. We know of many societies in which nature is not other but the same, 'societies of nature' as Descola (1996) calls them, such as the tribal societies of the Amazon or tribes of the Arctic like the Inuit (Ingold, 2000). These societies do not distinguish between society and nature. Nature is society, the animals that inhabit it persons endowed with will and intentions like human beings. This is no doubt an ontology far removed from the Western rationalist paradigm and the idea of the disenchantment of the world. How then, can Beck reconcile a positive social science with a cosmopolitan sociology that encourages the inclusion of the otherness of nature? How can he reconcile it with the inclusion of the otherness of the other when a key aspect of this otherness is the fact that for these others nature is not other but the same? Beck does not seem to have even considered such questions.

Let us note here another kind of parochialism in which cosmopolitan sociology is enmeshed—'disciplinary parochialism', as Inglis (2013: 16) says, which is to say, the lack of communication with other disciplines. Although Inglis does not mention anthropology in this respect—itself a disciplinary parochialism of the first order—lack of communication with this discipline is especially problematic. For it is the discipline of cultural difference and otherness par excellence. Even so, and beyond the occasional name dropping, there is no recognition of anthropology's contribution, neither of the discipline's conceptual tools and

method nor of the immense body of literature on non-Western societies it has generated. Anthropology and its (disciplinary) otherness are excluded by cosmopolitan sociology.

Inglis thinks that sociology's disciplinary parochialism can be overcome. 'It is time', he says, 'to make *cosmopolitanism studies* itself more cosmopolitan' (2013: 16; my emphasis). Perhaps it can be overcome, but we should be clear on the potential costs. Without a certain degree of disciplinary parochialism or conservatism, without lines to separate them into distinct entities, disciplines would fuse into another and lose their identity. Hence sociology has a choice (of sorts). It can become fully cosmopolitan but run the risk of fusing into 'cosmopolitanism studies', even becoming some sort of anthropology; or it can retain its identity as sociology but remain parochial, at least in disciplinary terms. In the former case, it would no longer be sociology, in the latter, it would not be cosmopolitan.

As I have already suggested, there is little danger of sociology losing its disciplinary identity and certainly no danger of it lapsing into anthropology. Unlike the latter, which treats cultural diversity as so many experiments in being human, sociology posits a specific ontology: to be (a human being or a human society) is to be modern. Although its professed intention is to recognise the otherness of the other, cosmopolitan sociology is not prepared to abandon this master category.

So far we have been discussing in a preliminary fashion the prospects of cosmopolitan sociology. As I have suggested however, there is an even broader question that concerns the prospect of cosmopolitanism as such, whether sociological, anthropological, or of any other kind.[5] This question is raised by Calhoun in a set of essays critical of cosmopolitan sociology, even if the implications of the critique are not pursued and fully drawn. Calhoun (2002: 873) observes, among other things, that the 'advocates [of cosmopolitanism] offer a claim to being without determinate social bases that is reminiscent

of Mannheim's idea of the free-floating intellectual'. We no longer believe in the existence of the free-floating intellectual who can be objective. Can we believe in the existence of the free-floating individual who can be cosmopolitan? Calhoun suggests that we cannot. 'In offering a seeming "view from nowhere", cosmopolitans commonly offer a view from Brussels … or from Davos … or from the university'. There is no such thing as a view from nowhere. Everyone is situated somewhere—historically, socially, culturally—and has a view of the world accessible from that particular position. A view from somewhere can only be partial, which is to say, limited and subjective; a view from Brussels, or Davos, or the university can only be parochial. As we have seen, Beck's sociology strives to be both a value-free, objective science and a cosmopolitan discourse. It is already beginning to become apparent that it can be neither.

Reformation

What can one expect from a cosmopolitan sociology? And how does it propose to achieve what it sets out to do? As we have seen, its aim is nothing less than to eliminate all those Eurocentric distinctions that traditional sociology or the sociology of 'first modernity', as Beck says, has been using to structure the world: the modern and the traditional, developed and underdeveloped societies, First and Third world, centre and periphery. 'The categories of framing world society—the distinction between highly developed and underdeveloped countries, between tradition and modernity—are collapsing. In the cosmopolitan paradigm … the non-Western societies share the same time and space horizon with the West'. The reference to time (if not space) has to do with the practice, long identified in anthropology as evolutionism, of placing non-European societies in the European past. In sociology too, or at least cosmopolitan sociology, this practice is now itself in the past. In the past, Beck says,

'the non-Western societies were defined by their foreignness and otherness, their "traditional", "extra-modern" or "pre-modern" character'. This is no longer the case. 'Now strangeness is replaced by the amazement at the similarities' (Beck, 2000: 88).

Beyond criticising traditional sociology for dividing the world, cosmopolitan sociology has been critical of a certain kind of cosmopolitanism for over-unifying it. This is the universalistic cosmopolitanism of philosophy and political theory (Delanty, 2006) which fails to recognise cultural diversity and accord other ways of life due respect. 'The time has come to move beyond the latent Eurocentrism that persists in cosmopolitan thought', Delanty points out. Cosmopolitanism 'as a normative idea, in the most general sense … is about the value of taking into account the perspective of the other and placing oneself within a wider whole, which can generally be taken to be the world' (Delanty, 2014: 2). Delanty highlights four universalistic, Eurocentric tendencies in cosmopolitanism: '*Civilizational universalism*', namely, the 'claim that Europe or the West is … superior either intellectually, morally or politically to the rest of the world'; '*analytical universalism*', which is the 'lesser claim that European patterns of societal development provide the basic model for understanding the rest of the world' (2014: 5); '*European exceptionalism*', which is 'the more moderate claim … that the rise of Europe can be explained more or less exclusively by reference to endogenous processes of development without any consideration of the positive contribution of the non-European world'; and finally, an even 'weaker form of Eurocentrism' is '*conceptual Europeanism*', which is the 'application of concepts, categories and theories of European origin to the non-European world' (2014: 6).

To replace all this Delanty proposes a 'critical cosmopolitanism' which, he says, is a 'mid-way position' between universalism and particularism. Is such a position possible however? It should be clear that what Delanty and other like-minded sociologists want is the

best of both worlds, hence an ideal world, a world in which a discourse can be both universalistic and particularistic at the same time—'half' universalistic and 'half' particularistic to be precise—universalistic but not to the extent that it effaces particularism and particularistic but not to the extent that it prevents universalisation. In short, they want a world in which it would be possible to have one's cake and eat it or, as we shall see, to square the circle.

To return to the critique of first modernity and its Eurocentric sociological discourse: Beck makes a distinction between 'methodological nationalism' and 'methodological cosmopolitanism'. The first, he argues, is the result of conflating the national with the social and applying the categories developed for making sense of the former to global phenomena. By contrast, methodological cosmopolitanism recognises that much of contemporary social reality transcends the confines of the nation-state and cannot be understood with the existing categories.

> To me the 'cosmopolitanization thesis' is a methodological concept which helps to overcome methodological nationalism…. The central defining characteristic of a cosmopolitan perspective is the '*dialogic* imagination'…. The national perspective is a monologic imagination, which excludes the otherness of the other. The cosmopolitan perspective is … an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities which include the otherness of the other (Beck, 2002: 18).

To an anthropologist, all this—recognition of the otherness of the other, celebration of cultural difference, the critique of Eurocentrism—sounds very familiar. As I have suggested, such things have been the key concerns of anthropology for almost a century. But there is more, which goes beyond anthropology. Cosmopolitan sociology appears so determined to

include the otherness of the other in the sameness of the self that it has devised a new logic, an all-inclusive 'cosmo-logic', so flexible that it can accommodate even the most radical of oppositions.

> Methodological cosmopolitanism rejects the either-or principle and assembles the this-as-well-as-that principle…. What the 'cosmo-logic' signifies is its thinking and living in terms of *inclusive oppositions* … and rejecting the logic of exclusive oppositions, which characterizes methodological nationalism and first modernity sociology…. Cosmopolitanism means: *rooted* cosmopolitanism,[6] having 'roots' and 'wings' at the same time. So it rejects the dominant opposition between cosmopolitans and locals as well: there is no cosmopolitanism without localism (Beck, 2002: 19).

There is much to say about this new 'logic' and whether it is logical at all, and I shall return to it in the next section. For the moment let us note that this sort of cosmopolitan rhetoric may be responsible for generating images of sociology that can hardly be defended. One example of hyperbolism is the claim that sociology has been cosmopolitan from the outset, since its inception as an academic discipline in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (e.g. Inglis, 2013); another, that it has been operating with an ethical hermeneutic receptive to the otherness of the other. Here I will examine briefly a paper that makes both claims, Turner's (2006) 'critical defence of the social'.

For Turner the way that sociology has been developed by Durkheim 'points towards a cosmopolitan epistemology of a shared reality' (Turner, 2006: 140). Durkheim, he argues, followed Kant in seeking what makes us all human, 'an attitude [which] is the foundation of cosmopolitan virtue' (2006: 141). Turner appears to be in agreement with this attitude. It is therefore rather ironic that in the next section of his paper he will not proceed to develop a

cosmopolitan sociology (one of the essay's aims) along Kantian and Durkheim lines. It may be ironic but it should not be surprising. As we have seen, a universalistic cosmopolitanism of the Kantian type is too visibly Eurocentric to be acceptable. What Turner will do instead is to turn to Max Weber and his *verstehende soziologie*. And here he will present an image of sociology almost indistinguishable from anthropology.

Turner proposes an ethical hermeneutic which, he says, is consistent with Weber's philosophy of the social sciences. 'Understanding the Other requires a careful construction of their meanings and values in social interaction; it requires value clarification and description'. This hermeneutic labour, we may add, presupposes the assumption that however strange, exotic, or irrational a native practice or belief may seem from the outside, it does make sense in its own cultural context and is meaningful to the people involved. Turner's claim is that sociology 'tended' to operate precisely on the basis of this fundamental assumption. 'Sociological understanding *tended* to exclude the idea of irrationality in action, preferring to argue for the meaningfulness of actions in their context…. Sociology sought plausible accounts of the actions of others in terms of their own meaning systems' (Turner, 2006: 145; my emphasis). I do not know whether sociologists would recognise themselves in what Turner says, but I am quite certain that anthropologists would. His description of what sociology supposedly 'tended' to do—but no longer does?—fits exactly what anthropology has actually been doing for almost a century—seeking to understand 'the native's point of view', as Malinowski would have it.

Yet this imaginary sociology will not be allowed to become anthropology, not even in the imagination. Unlike anthropology, Turner will argue, sociology has room for judgment and criticism. '*Recognition involves recognition of the Other* [my emphasis], but it does not necessarily require an uncritical acceptance of their values *in toto*' (Turner, 2006: 144).

Although sociology has been trying to understand the other's point of view, being 'a critical science, left open the possibility for criticism of other's actions'. This sharply distinguishes it from 'anthropological descriptive relativism and from epistemological disinterest, because these anthropological positions rule out any judgement' (Turner, 2006: 145).

The tautology I have highlighted above shows a certain degree of uncertainty as to what recognition of the other should mean. Turner assumes that in anthropology it means uncritical acceptance of the values of other societies, but this is hardly the case. Cultural relativism and epistemological disinterest, anthropologists would point out, are methodological tools, ways of bracketing off the preconceptions of their society in the hope of gaining a less biased understanding of the culture in question. In light of the fact that, as Beck's example shows, sociology presents itself even today as a value-free, objective discipline, it is rather ironic that this strategy is misunderstood. It is also dangerous. Without this strategy it is hardly possible to develop what Turner claims sociology has been seeking to develop—'plausible accounts of the actions of others in terms of their own meaning systems'. Instead, one would be constructing such accounts on the basis of *one's own* meaning system. What is more, and more problematic, it would be on the basis of these highly compromised accounts that one would criticise the other's actions, claiming all along that they are nothing other than 'critical science'.

Turner would no doubt say that criticism is not, and should be the monopoly of the West. 'Mutual recognition has to be able to incorporate mutual criticism' (Turner, 2006: 144). The example he uses to illustrate this is highly significant because it shows that criticism between us and them is 'mutual' only in name. What is to be criticised as well as the means of critique only serve to highlight the asymmetrical relations between us as these are encapsulated in the distinction between the modern and the pre-modern or the

traditional. The example concerns religion and more specifically Islam. Muslims, Turner says, are free to criticise 'Christian Trinitarianism [as being] incompatible with a theology of monotheism'. We are in turn free to criticise the lack of 'personal autonomy' in Muslim theology (2006: 144) or, for that matter, holy war. 'Sociological understanding should not prevent us from engaging in critical recognition and evaluation of other cultures including notions of *jihad* and crusade' (Turner, 2006: 145). It should be clear that the hypothetical topic of the Muslim critique is self-victimising: it places Muslims in the European past. They are still concerned with something—organised religion and its theological subtleties—which to us (secular Europeans) is hardly relevant and meaningful. As Beck (2010) says in *A God of One's Own* in Western societies religion is not a given but fashioned by the individual to meet personal need. This is in contrast to the 'absolute faith' of other religions—the sort of faith, Beck says, that breeds intolerance and violence.[7]

Similar considerations apply to our choice of critique. Personal autonomy (if there is such a thing) is the mark of modern society, while in criticising '*jihad* and crusade' we are reiterating that they still live in the European past—the Middle Ages. For, they are still engaged in the kind of war that we also fought but eight centuries ago. Finally, note that the same asymmetry reproduces itself when it comes to the means of critique. It is on the basis of religious belief that they will criticise us. We, on the other hand, will criticise them on the basis of social scientific knowledge.

It seems then, that cosmopolitan sociology is not prepared to abandon the idea of modernity, not even when it imagines itself to be operating much like anthropology. As a result it ends up reproducing all the divisions it sets out to eliminate—between the modern and the traditional, developed and underdeveloped societies, centre and periphery, First and Third world. If it could abandon this idea, the discipline would perhaps become a

cosmopolitan discourse. Yet it would no longer be sociology. But perhaps not everything is lost. Perhaps cosmopolitan sociology is still possible. It may be possible to pluralise modernity and share it with the rest of the world. Sociology, in other words, could come to recognise that although different, non-Western societies are as modern as Western societies—modern in their own way.

Multi-modernism

We will have to return to Beck for the pluralisation of modernity since he is once again the leading proponent of this move. As we have seen, for Beck the aim of methodological cosmopolitanism is to pull down the walls of Eurocentrism. This will be achieved, he says, by pluralising the 'theory of *the* society in the *singular*' and making it a 'theory of societies in the *plural*'. Let us note here, partly to highlight again sociology's disciplinary parochialism and partly to avoid misunderstanding, that what is to be pluralised is not the theory but society—'*plural* refers to the very different paths and contexts of modernization processes'. Since sociologically speaking there is only one type of society worthy of serious consideration—'sociological theory from its very beginning has been concerned to formulate a *general* theory of (modern) society' (Beck and Grande, 2010: 411)—what is to be pluralised is modernity itself. It does not seem to have occurred to Beck and Grande to question this assumption and consider other theories of social reality. Sociological theory may be revised to refer to societies in the plural but these would still be modern societies. Everything else would presumably fall through the net.

The point of the cosmopolitan turn in sociology, Beck and Grande argue, 'is to open up to the possibility of a variety of different and autonomous interlinked modernities ("plurality of modernities")' (2010: 413). Let us note, to begin with, that 'plurality of

modernities' does not refer to what Beck has been calling 'first' and 'second' modernity. As Beck and Grande point out, 'a reformulated theory of reflexive modernization *must* argue that nowadays we all live in a Second, Cosmopolitan Modernity—regardless of whether we have experienced First Modernity or not' (2010: 418; my emphasis). Not only are we all modern, but we all live in the second age of modernity. This *must* be argued, the authors say, but the argument is contradicted two pages earlier when they consider, among other variables of different modernization processes, the result—'the result: "*successful*" vs. "*failed*"'. As they go on to explain, there is a 'path of "*failed*" modernization—where the establishment of the institutions of the First Modernity (like the nation-state) or the transformation into the Second Modernity ends in failure'. This is contrasted with the successful paths: 'the *Western* path …unintended [and] temporally stretched'; the path of an 'active, "*compressed*" modernization driven by a developmental state'; and '*post-colonialism* as the project of a reactive, enforced modernization' (2010: 416). We do not know which countries are to be placed under the failed category as the authors mention no names. But we do know at least some of the countries of the 'active and compressed' path—'Korea and China'—while elsewhere Beck (2002: 22) speaks of 'alternative visions of Asian, Chinese, Latin American modernities'. The point, in any case, is that as this typology makes clear—and as the exclusion of Africa from the list of 'alternative' modernities suggests—we do not all live in second modernity after all. There are some who have failed to reach it and presumably live in the age of first modernity. And there are some who have not even make it into first modernity and presumably still live in pre-modern society. It seems that the plan to pull down the walls of Eurocentrism without abandoning the idea of modernity is slowly beginning to unravel.

This conclusion is reinforced by other considerations. To begin with, there is a level of social reality which the notion of modernity, whether first or second, fails to capture but which is highly significant when it comes to dealing with the otherness of the other. It was Calhoun (2010) who noted the irony with the empirical studies of Asian countries which Beck and Grande's essay (2010) was meant to introduce. Although they professed 'methodological cosmopolitanism', all of them focused on national cases. It was also Calhoun who noted that 'if we seek a more cosmopolitan sociology it will need to include a variety of accounts focused on other analytic objects' (2010: 617). Calhoun does not specify what these analytic objects might be, but from the context of the discussion one can surmise that he means analytic objects over and above the nation-state. Since my aim is to problematize the prospects of a cosmopolitan sociology, I wish to make a case for the contrary—the need to focus on analytic objects that appear below rather than above the national level. What I have in mind is what one might call 'local culture', the beliefs and practices of ordinary people manifested in everyday life. As I have already suggested, this level is highly significant because it is here, unmediated by the state and its institutions that the otherness of the other emerges fully, that is, as radical cultural difference. We have already looked briefly at 'societies of nature' and the ways in which animals are understood. Here I will mention equally briefly a different example, the case of South Africa, arguably a modern nation-state by Beck and Grande's typology. How then is cosmopolitan sociology to deal with the emergence of what Jean and John Comaroff (1999) call 'occult economies', that is, the deployment of magic and witchcraft for material gain? How will it deal with practices such as selling body parts, said to bring good luck and aid fertility, or the appearance of zombies, the dead brought back to life by witches to work for them for free? Is the plurality of modernity plural enough to accommodate such beliefs and practices or

would they be dismissed in the usual arrogant modernist way—as pre-modern, tribal superstitions?

These empirical considerations point to a broader theoretical issue. Cosmopolitan sociology cannot pluralise modernity to such an extent as to include all forms of cultural difference because if it did, it would become meaningless, an empty signifier. As we have noted already, to be something modernity must not be everything, to have any meaning and make sense it must be different from its others (and no doubt deferred). Thus, although it is possible to 'expand the circumference of the circle to include [others]' (Beck and Grande, 2010: 417), there are limits to this expansion. A telling example of this limitation is Beck's distinction between cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism and his rejection of the latter—a move which to some postcolonial critics appears as a contradiction in Beck's overall schema. Yet, as we shall see shortly, there is no contradiction here; Beck is being consistent in his thinking. In his understanding, multiculturalism undermines modernity's fundamental principles. It must therefore be excluded. Let us first turn to the critique.

> A […] significant problem with Beck's call for more appropriate sociological concepts is that his version of cosmopolitanism is at odds with the global age he describes. To the extent that multiple modernities, as the contemporary condition of the global world, are predicated on cultural inflections of modernity, then the world *has to be* understood as a multicultural world. Beck's version of cosmopolitanism, however, is set out in both explicit and implicit opposition, if not downright hostility, to understandings of multiculturalism (Bhambra, 2011: 317; my emphasis).

Contrary to what Bhambra suggests, a multi-modern world 'does not have to be' understood as a multicultural world, as the two are by no means equivalent. Multiculturalism's point of departure is cultural diversity, multi-modernism's the diversity of

modernity. The latter is 'a *form* of global multiculturalism', (Bhambra, 2011: 318; my emphasis), and this is precisely the point: it is a kind of multiculturalism and a rather limited one at that. For example, it appears unable to accommodate the veiling of Muslim women in European societies as an acceptable cultural manifestation. As Bhambra herself notes, 'there appears to be little recognition of the potential discrimination against those subject to the face veil ban … in France and other European countries' (2011: 318).

That there is no contradiction in Beck's rejection of multiculturalism, that he is being consistent as a modernist becomes apparent when one considers how he understands multiculturalism—in terms of the traditional sociological definition of the traditional. For Beck multiculturalism cannot be accepted precisely because its philosophy of the social is at 'loggerheads' with modernity's philosophy.

> Multiculturalism … fosters a collective image of humanity in which the individual remains dependent on his cultural sphere. He (or she) is the product of the language, the traditions, the convictions, the customs and landscapes in which he came into the world and in which he grew up…. In this sense multiculturalism is at loggerheads with individualization. According to the multicultural premise the individual does not exist…. Cosmopolitanism argues the reverse and *presupposes* individualization (Beck, 2002: 36-37).

Anyone trained in the social sciences will not fail to recognise in this quotation Durkheim's distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. Multiculturalism is presented as an example of the former, cosmopolitanism of the latter. Cosmopolitanism presupposes individualization because it presupposes modernity. Any society or culture seen to depart form this prescription must be excluded if the modern in the multi-modern is to have any meaning and make any sense.

Bhambra concludes her critique by pointing out that 'Beck's version of cosmopolitanism is an expression of cultural Eurocentrism masquerading as potential global inclusivity (2011: 325). I am in agreement with this view. I am also sympathetic to Bhambra's vision of cosmopolitan sociology: 'A cosmopolitan sociology that was open to different voices would be one that *provincialized* European understandings, not one based on the perpetuation of "triumphalist" ideas of Europe's contribution to world society' (2011: 325). No doubt, but if Europe's understanding of itself and of the rest of the world is shaped fundamentally by the idea of modernity, should not this idea be the very first thing to be 'provincialized'? And if the resulting discourse succeeds in being cosmopolitan—which is not at all certain—would it still be 'sociology'?

This brings me to another problematic aspect of Beck's cosmopolitan sociology—its 'cosmo-logic'. As we have seen, this logic is meant to replace the 'either-or principle' with the more inclusive 'this-as-well-as-that principle'. As an example of this latter principle Beck mentions '*rooted* cosmopolitanism', having 'roots' and 'wings' at the same time, as he says. Our analysis has shown that such a creature can only be a figment of the imagination, that far from rejecting 'the dominant opposition between cosmopolitans and locals', Beck's cosmopolitan sociology reproduces it. This is precisely what the distinction between cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism does. The latter, as Beck describes it—treating the person as 'the product of the language, the traditions, the convictions, the customs and landscapes in which he came into the world and in which he grew up'—is another word for the local.

Beck denies his 'cosmo-logic' in another, related context. The discussion is about 'the *universalist-pluralist* dilemma' and the question raised is whether 'there is a *single* cosmopolitanism or *several*?' Beck is of the opinion that 'there is not one language of

cosmopolitanism, but many languages, tongues, grammars'. Nonetheless, as he rightly points out, 'where there are many cosmopolitanisms, perhaps *none is left*, because there are no generalizable characteristics which allow it to be clearly distinguished, for example, from multiculturalism' (Beck, 2002: 35; my emphasis). Cosmopolitanism then, much like modernity (or anything else for that matter), cannot be this-as-well-as-that. If it could be, it would not be—'none would be left'. It can only be either this or that, that is, something specific—which brings me to the last question that I wish to address in this paper. Is cosmopolitanism this or that? Is it anything at all?

'Autoimmunity': To be is not to be

In the foregoing discussion I have tried to show that turning sociology into a cosmopolitan discipline is not a viable proposition. On the one hand, the idea of modernity is in the way—even when it is pluralised—on the other, without this idea sociology would not be itself, not the discipline that we have come to recognise by that name. In this final section of the paper I will consider cosmopolitanism itself, beyond or above any specific discipline.

We have already noted Calhoun's perceptive comment on sociology's attempt to become cosmopolitan—that it presupposes the same impossible persona as positive sociology, the free-floating individual. I will not however, use this argument in the analysis that follows. Rather, I will turn to Beck once again and follow him as he attempts to manage some rather difficult questions that, to his credit, he himself raises. Let us go back to the 'universalist-pluralist dilemma' and in particular the preoccupation with 'squaring the circle of abstract universalism by emphasising respect for the particularity of human diversity' (Beck and Grande, 2010: 417). The problem, as Beck sees it, is the following.

Universalism posits equality axiomatically, as a matter of principle, hence in general and in the abstract, by virtue of the fact that others are human beings like us. By doing so however, it neglects the equally indisputable fact that human beings are also empirical creatures, concrete individuals who live in society and history and have developed different ways of dealing with life. As a result, cultural difference emerges, at best as insignificant, at worse as inferior ways of life that need to be corrected (through outside imposition if necessary). Universalism then, is self-contradictory. It denies at the empirical level the equality it posits axiomatically. The reverse strategy however, Beck goes on to say, is not any better: 'relativism and contextualism are likewise self-contradictory'. The emphasis on particularity 'has its source in an impulse to recognize the otherness of the other'. To appreciate other ways of life and show the necessary respect, one needs to adopt the other's perspective, to see the world from the native's point of view, as Malinowski said. When cultural difference is conceived in absolute terms however, this change in perspective becomes impossible. The claim 'that perspectives cannot be compared [is] a claim that amounts to irremediable mutual ignorance' (Beck, 2004: 431). In other words, the 'impulse' for recognition and appreciation of the otherness of the other is denied by the impossibility of understanding what this otherness might be.

This is the 'circle to be squared'. As we have seen, what is required to square it is a universalism that is universalistic enough to secure the existence of certain fundamental principles across the board but not universalistic to the extent that it dismisses cultural difference. Alternatively, the circle could also be squared if it would be possible to develop a cultural relativism that was relativistic enough to secure recognition of, and respect for cultural difference but not relativistic to the extent that it denies the existence of any common ground among cultures. In short, what is required is the best of both worlds, an

ideal world in which universalism and relativism exist in harmony, not in opposition. Is there a discourse capable of achieving such a feat—to square the circle? Beck thinks there is. It is 'realistic cosmopolitanism', he says, a discourse which 'presupposes a universalist minimum that includes a number of inviolable substantive norms' (Beck, 2004: 431). Let us note here before proceeding any further that another word for this 'realistic cosmopolitanism' is 'Western universalism', insofar at least as the latter 'promotes the principles of liberty and equality throughout the world'. For, these principles are the universalist minimum that Beck has in mind. As he says, 'it is not possible to proclaim global human rights, on the one hand, and to have a Muslim, African, Jewish, Christian, or Asian charter of human rights, on the other' (Beck, 2004: 435). It is not possible presumably because the (secular) Western understanding of what it means to be human and to have rights is universal and non-negotiable.

We shall look into the meaning of the world-wide 'promotion' of 'realistic cosmopolitanism'/ 'Western universalism' in a minute. For the moment, let us return to the claim that 'realistic cosmopolitanism' can square the circle of cultural universalism and particularism, sameness and difference. It seems that there are limits to what it can do after all, and Beck calls on his readers to 'embrace' this 'painful' limitation and the contradiction in which it is implicated.

> Realistic cosmopolitanism must … confront the painful question of its own *limits*: should recognition of the other's freedom apply equally to despots and democrats, predators and prey? *Realistic cosmopolitans* … must come to terms with the idea that, in making respect for the other the heart of their program, cosmopolitanism produces enemies who can be checked only by force. The *contradiction* must be embraced that, in order to *protect*

> one's basic principles (the defence of *civil rights* and difference), it may in some circumstances be necessary to *violate* them (Beck, 2004: 431; my emphases).

I have highlighted the term 'civil rights' as this is a sudden shift in terminology—the term used before and after this statement is 'human', not 'civil' rights. But perhaps this change was necessary to make the violation of human rights (albeit of the enemies of cosmopolitanism) more palatable and to render less contradictory hence less painful and more 'embraceable' the contradiction involved in the violation. Whatever the case, it is clear from what Beck says that he expects his readers to embrace the contradiction with or without his coaxing. As far as he is concerned, the contradiction signifies the limits of cosmopolitanism, not its impossibility. The people who must embrace the contradiction are already cosmopolitans—'realistic cosmopolitans'. It is true that sometimes they must behave in non-cosmopolitan ways, for example, when they are forced to violate the 'civil rights' of the enemies of cosmopolitanism, 'despots' and 'predators'. But even then, it is for the sake of human rights that the violation occurs. One may choose to call this violation 'humanitarian intervention' or, critically, colonialism, but if so this is a 'human rights colonialism' (Beck, 2004: 435). The violation, then, does not mean that the violators are not cosmopolitan. They are—as much as anyone can be in an imperfect world. One could say perhaps that they are cosmopolitan for the most part or most of the time, that although cosmopolitanism may not exist in a pure state, this does not mean that it does not exist at all.

Yet the conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism as something partial, a matter of degree rather than kind is nothing more than illusion. There is no time for anyone to be cosmopolitan, whether most of the time, some of the time, or in the meantime. There is no

time because, as it has been said many times over and over a very long period of time—from Aristotle to St Augustine to Kant to Heidegger and Derrida—time as such does not exist. As soon as cosmopolitanism appears on the scene, at the same moment non-cosmopolitanism makes its appearance as well. As soon as there are cosmopolitans, there are also enemies of cosmopolitanism. It is inevitable that they appear at the same time. Without its reverse, cosmopolitanism would have no meaning or reason to exist; without despots, predators, nationalists, in a word, enemies of cosmopolitanism, there would be no need for cosmopolitans either. What this means is that the contradiction that Beck identifies in systemic or endemic—a pandemic. It means that cosmopolitanism is always already plagued by it. It is not the case, as Beck says, that to protect the basic principles of cosmopolitanism it may in 'some circumstances' be necessary to violate them. It is always necessary to violate them in all circumstances. For, they are always already and by definition violated by despots and predators.

Thus, we are faced with the following impossible situation—for we are dealing with an impossible being. If we do not protect our basic principles—human rights, freedom, equality, respect for cultural difference and so on—they are destroyed by the enemies of cosmopolitanism. If we do protect them, we destroy them ourselves since protection necessitates that we deny these principles to the enemies of cosmopolitanism—a predicament that, as we have seen, Derrida calls 'autoimmunity'.[8] Either way, cosmopolitanism is nowhere to be found. As soon as it appears on the scene, at the same time it disappears. It is destroyed both by its enemies and by its friends. It turns out that to be, cosmopolitanism must not be, that its protection amounts to its violation and its violation to its protection. It turns out that the only 'realistic cosmopolitanism' is the

unrealistic one that Beck hides behind the façade of positive, value-free sociology—the idealistic, utopian kind.

In closing this paper, it may be worthwhile to reiterate what it is not about. It is not about criticising Beck (or anyone else for that matter) for being a modernist. It is about showing the incompatibility between modernism and cosmopolitanism, between a particular way of life, no matter how pluralised, and cultural diversity. Nor is this paper meant to showcase anthropology at the expense of sociology. Cosmopolitanism is as much of an unachievable aim for the former as it is for the latter. It simply attempts to restore anthropology's visibility as a discipline for which the otherness of the other has long been a key preoccupation—one that has generated an enormous amount of scholarship, which, regrettably, cosmopolitan sociology disregards almost completely. Finally, the paper is not about criticising modernity understood as the way of life of what we may broadly call 'Western' societies. Unlike sociology that conceptualises itself as a 'critical science', anthropology merely strives to understand 'the native's point of view'—ideally at least. If there is anything to be criticised it is not modernity per se but the claim that it is a superior—rather than just another—way of life. What is to be criticised, if at all, is the assumption that modernity is beyond or outside culture, that its fictions—cosmopolitanism, for example—are not local myths that may be good to think with and live by, but universal scientific principles and realities in the making. Yet in a paradoxical sort of way, even this cannot be criticised. The assumption is itself part of the mythology and to debunk it as a myth would be tantamount to suggesting that modernists can lead lives without fictions—which is to reproduce the myth inadvertently oneself. Anyway one looks at it, then, it seems that understanding is the only available option.

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Notes

[1] Sadly Ulrich Beck died on the 1st of January 2015. He was a prolific writer and continued working on the question of cosmopolitanism well beyond 2010. Examples include Beck (2011), Beck and Sznaider (2011) and Beck and Levy (2013).

[2] Elsewhere (author 2002) I have argued that saving the other for the calumny of cultural inferiority has been the primary motivation of anthropological discourse. Sociology is a newcomer in this respect.

[3] I have used this insight to reflect on the question of objectivity and autonomy (author 2013).

[4] For representative works see Go (2013), Bhambra (2013) and Steinmertz (2014). For a critique see McLennan (2014).

[5] For an early and highly influential work in anthropology see Hannerz (1996).

[6] The term is borrowed form Appaiah (1997).

[7] This sort of othering is no doubt carried out for the sake of tolerance, peace, respect and similar values encapsulated by the notion of cosmopolitanism. Yet, as we shall see, this is precisely the point. Cosmopolitanism must not be cosmopolitan. It cannot afford to tolerate those perceived as enemies—a process of self-destruction that Derrida calls 'autoimmunity'.

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