

# Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany

*Pauline Kleingeld*

---

In part as a response to the current resurgence of nationalist sentiment in many parts of the world, several authors have recently sought to revive the legacy of cosmopolitanism.<sup>1</sup> They frequently appeal to eighteenth-century cosmopolitans, especially Immanuel Kant, and to their notions of the moral equality of all human beings, the existence of a set of human rights, and the urgency of establishing the political institution of a league of nations. But the full complexity of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism has not yet been explored. Defenders and critics of cosmopolitanism agree that it is a form of universalism. It is the view that all human beings share certain essential features that unite or should unite them in a global order that transcends national borders and warrants their designation as "citizens of the world." But few scholars have examined the precise content of the various cosmopolitan theories of the time to determine just what these features are and what form this global order takes. While typologies and histories of nationalism abound, cosmopolitanism has so far remained largely unexplored territory.<sup>2</sup> At most, one finds a distinction drawn between *moral*

<sup>1</sup> Martha Nussbaum defends a moral version of cosmopolitanism in her "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston, 1996), 3-17. For authors such as Thomas Pogge, David Held, and Jürgen Habermas cosmopolitanism is more clearly a political (rather than or in addition to being a moral) matter. See Habermas, "Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace, with the Benefit of Two Hundred Years' Hind-sight," *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal*, eds. James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 113-53; Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, 1995); Pogge, "Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty," *Ethics*, 103 (1992), 48-75; also Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative," *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, 25 (1992), 751-93.

<sup>2</sup> Exceptions are the study by Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought: Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694-1790* (Notre Dame, 1977) and Albert Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers: Cosmopolitisme et*

cosmopolitanism, the view that all human beings belong to a single moral community, and *political* cosmopolitanism, the attempt to establish a world-wide legal and political order. But there are important further distinctions to draw, for both historical and contemporary purposes.

In this paper I present a segment of the history of cosmopolitanism by focusing on late eighteenth-century German cosmopolitan theory (roughly, 1780-1800).<sup>3</sup> During this relatively brief period the public debate about cosmopolitanism, nationhood, and patriotism intensified enormously and led to a wider spectrum of positions than elsewhere, until around the turn of the century, nationalism became dominant and the cosmopolitan voices died down. Since then this debate has not been the subject of very much research.<sup>4</sup>

The central aim of this paper is to show that in late eighteenth-century Germany cosmopolitanism was not a single encompassing idea but rather came in at least six different varieties: moral cosmopolitanism; proposals for reform of the international political and legal order; cultural cosmopolitanism, which emphasizes the value of global cultural pluralism; economic cosmopolitanism, which aims at establishing a global free market where all humans are equal potential trading partners; and the romantic cosmopolitan ideal of humanity as united by faith and love. These six kinds of cosmopolitanism are by no means mutually exclusive, and I shall clarify the relationships among them.

By highlighting these six different versions of cosmopolitanism I do not mean to suggest that cosmopolitanism was the only or even the dominant view in Germany at the time. It was a significant and respectable view, however, defended by such influential authors as Kant and Wieland; and it remained so until the intellectual climate grew increasingly nationalist in the early nineteenth century. I do not, however, attempt to provide a historical explanation of the rise and fall of cosmopolitanism during these two decades. Obviously, any such explanation would include reference to the fact that Germany was not a nation-state, but a precise historical account lies beyond the scope of this essay. I focus instead on the different incarnations of the idea of cosmopolitanism.

---

*défense nationale* (Paris, 1918). But Mathiez discusses only French cosmopolitanism, and Schlereth focusses on cosmopolitanism as a form of life and on what different cosmopolitans had in common, rather than on cosmopolitan theories and the differences between them. Karen O'Brien's valuable study, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997), focuses on the idea of a European civilization and as such does not discuss cosmopolitanism in the sense in which the term is used in this essay.

<sup>3</sup> I do not discuss the history of the word and its various meanings, which range from "traveler" to "traitor," from "freemason" to "francophile."

<sup>4</sup> The only general discussions of German cosmopolitanism are found in works with a nationalist bias. See Edmund Pfeleiderer, *Kosmopolitismus und Patriotismus* (Berlin, 1874) and Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, tr. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton, 1970 [German orig. 1907]).

Moral Cosmopolitanism

Moral cosmopolitanism is the view that all human beings are members of a single moral community and that they have moral obligations to all other human beings regardless of their nationality, language, religion, customs, etc. Its defenders regard all humans as worthy of equal moral concern and advocate impartiality and tolerance. Within this broad definition, moral cosmopolitanism can take different forms, depending on how one views the nature of morality.

The root form of this view is the cosmopolitanism of the ancient Cynics and the Stoics. While for the Cynics, cosmopolitanism was more a critique of parochialism than a positive theory, the Stoics developed it into an articulate moral doctrine. In their view all humans deserve our respect and moral recognition, because they share with us a common rationality and moral capacity. All human beings should be regarded as “fellow citizens and neighbors” (Plutarch) regardless of their national, ethnic, religious, or other particular affiliations. This talk of world citizenship should be read metaphorically, however, because the Stoics did not go so far as to propose reforms of the existing political world order. It refers to moral “citizenship” in a moral community rather than to political citizenship in a transnational state.<sup>5</sup>

This ancient metaphorical notion of moral citizenship is central in much of eighteenth-century German moral cosmopolitanism. A good representative is Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813).<sup>6</sup> As novelist and editor of the *Teutsche Merkur*, a leading vehicle for the German Enlightenment, Wieland was one of the most influential German intellectuals in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. He acquired the reputation of being a cultivated, moderate, reasonable, and tolerant man, yet one who was able to chastise with ridicule and biting sarcasm what he saw as old and new irrationalisms: the old forces of despotism and superstition and the new forces of an emerging German nationalism.

Wieland made cosmopolitanism the explicit theme of a series of essays in the 1780s, most notably, “Das Geheimniß des Kosmopoliten-Ordens” (1788). In Wieland’s view cosmopolitans strive to promote the well-being of all humans, wherever they may be. Not affected by partiality or prejudice, they strive “to reduce the sum of evils that weigh upon humanity, insofar as they can do this

<sup>5</sup> See Eric Brown, *Stoic Cosmopolitanism and the Political Life* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> See Irntraut Sahmland, *Christoph Martin Wieland und die deutsche Nation: Zwischen Patriotismus, Kosmopolitismus und Griechentum* (Tübingen, 1990), and Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought 1790-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 335-62; also Johan van der Zande, “In the Image of Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant,” *JHI*, 56 (1995), 419-42.

without wreaking havoc themselves, and to increase the sum of the good in the world, as well as they can.”<sup>7</sup> Wieland writes:

The cosmopolitans carry the designation *citizens of the world* in the most authentic and eminent sense. They regard *all peoples* of the earth as just so many *branches* of a *single family*, and the *universe* as a *state*, in which they [the cosmopolitans] are *citizens*, together with innumerable other rational beings, in order to promote the perfection of the *whole*.<sup>8</sup>

Here, as with the Stoics, the world is metaphorically “regarded as” a state in which all human beings are citizens. Wieland does not propose any radical reforms of the international political landscape. Rather, moral cosmopolitanism consists in fulfilling one’s moral duty as best as one can.

Yet Wieland’s moral cosmopolitanism is not apolitical or even antipolitical. While it does not include recommendations for reshaping the international political world order, it does entail political duties, insofar as morality provides guidelines for one’s actions in one’s capacity as citizen or politician. Wieland’s view is that one should promote reforms to abolish social and moral wrongs, whether they be within or outside one’s national borders. He himself, for example, regards it as his cosmopolitan duty to appeal publicly to the French national assembly in hopes of convincing the French to change their course by paying more respect to the monarchy and going less far in the direction of radical democracy (“Kosmopolitische Adresse an die französische Nationalversammlung,” October 1789). Thus, even though he does not propose an alternative to the existing world order, he does think cosmopolitanism implies moral action aimed at improving the situation abroad.<sup>9</sup>

But for Wieland all cosmopolitan efforts should aim at reforms, not revolution. Not brute force but the rational force of the better argument is what promises to yield long-lasting and beneficial results without the dangerous side-effects of revolutions. The best strategy for cosmopolitans is to use “the weapons of reason.”<sup>10</sup>

Wieland does not conceive of morality as providing a clear and sharp blueprint for action or a set of readily applicable principles. Rather, moral cosmopolitanism requires us to judge each situation in context. The true cosmopolitan is the sage, the person who has grown wise through experience and reflection and who knows what is most reasonable to do in given circumstances.

<sup>7</sup> *Wielands Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Deutsche Kommission der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1909-), XV, 216.

<sup>8</sup> Sahmland (264-66) mischaracterizes Wieland’s cosmopolitanism as politically passive and merely a matter of individual self-development; Beiser (349-50) argues against such a quietistic interpretation of Wieland’s political philosophy.

<sup>9</sup> *Wielands Gesammelte Schriften*, XV, 212-13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, XV, 219.

The emphasis on the sage points to an elitist element in Wieland's moral cosmopolitanism, an element he shares with many Stoics. While he conceives of the *scope* of the action of cosmopolitans as universal, he does not hold that all humans are cosmopolitans. In fact Wieland draws a distinction between "world dwellers" and "world citizens": only sages are world citizens, and the vast majority of people are mere world dwellers.<sup>11</sup>

But this elitism is not a necessary element of moral cosmopolitanism. Immanuel Kant, for example, defends a version of moral cosmopolitanism according to which all humans are regarded as "citizens" of a moral community, as "citizen[s] of a supersensible world."<sup>12</sup> Kant also rejects the idea that one needs special wisdom to discern what is morally demanded. He holds that ordinary human beings are usually perfectly able to do so (even if they do not always act accordingly).

Moral cosmopolitans differ on the question of whether all humans qualify as citizens of the moral community and on the nature of morality. But they agree on the moral equality of all humans as objects of moral concern, and on the concomitant ideal of impartiality. Although they see our moral duties as extending beyond national borders, this does not by itself commit them to a political ideal of a reshaped world order. But as I show in the next section, some moral cosmopolitans also defend such a political ideal. They give the phrase "world citizenship" a literal sense by aiming at a world-wide legal and political order that unites all human individuals into one political body. This view constitutes political cosmopolitanism, which comes in two versions, as discussed in the next two sections.

### International Federative Cosmopolitanism

Some late eighteenth-century philosophers add to their moral cosmopolitanism a political theory advocating a federation of states. The idea of such a federation was not new, as there are well-known older proposals, for example, the Abbé de Saint Pierre's *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe* (1713-6). But whereas many peace proposals, like that of the Abbé, have an explicit focus on Europe only, the cosmopolitan proposals have a world-wide scope. Although such authors as Kant, Fichte, and Schlegel attribute a special status to Europe as the crystallization point for their envisioned new world order, their ultimate scope is global.

International federative cosmopolitanism comes in weak and strong versions, where "weak" and "strong" refer to the degree of the internal cohesion of the federation of states required by the theory. Those who hold the weak view

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, XV, 214.

<sup>12</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden in Kants Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin, 1902- ), VIII, 350 n. Hereafter ZeF, followed by volume and page.

advocate the formation of a league of states without coercive powers (Kant); those who hold the strong view advocate either the establishment of a league with the authority to enforce federal law (Fichte) or the romantic ideal of a non-coercive democratic world republic of republics (Schlegel). Both weak and strong versions involve the continued existence of a plurality of states. To my knowledge, no one in Germany defended the more radical ideal of the abolishment of all existing states and the establishment of a single world state under which all human individuals would be directly subsumed. This ideal was defended in France by Anacharsis Cloots (Jean-Baptiste du Val-de-Grace, baron de Cloots, 1755-94). Prussian by birth, self-proclaimed citizen of the world, and living in Paris during the French revolutionary years, Cloots rose to fame and power in the Jacobin movement by advocating a single, world-encompassing "republic of united individuals."<sup>13</sup>

Kant adds to his moral cosmopolitanism a cosmopolitan political theory. He started out defending the strong view and only later modified it into the weak position. In his essay, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht" (1784), Kant advocates a "cosmopolitan situation" that would arise if states formed a federation "similar to a civil commonwealth"<sup>14</sup> and submit themselves to common laws and a common authority to enforce these laws. He calls such a league a "great political body," in which every member state receives its security and its rights from a "united power and from decisions in accordance with the laws of a united will."<sup>15</sup>

Later, in *Zum ewigen Frieden* and the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, Kant still argues that states ought to submit to common laws by joining a league of states that promotes peace.<sup>16</sup> But he no longer argues that the league should have coercive power to enforce those laws. He now advocates allowing states to retain their full independence and requires only that they comply with the laws voluntarily. He becomes less optimistic regarding the possibility of the *complete* realization of peace. He rejects the establishment of a "state of states" as conceptually incoherent. Many states within one state would form only *one* state, abolishing the statehood of these states in their act of joining.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See *La république universelle ou adresse aux tyrannicides* (1792); *Bases constitutionnelles de la république du genre humain* (1793). In Anacharsis Cloots, *Oeuvres* (3 vols., Munich, 1980), III.

<sup>14</sup> ZcF, VIII, 25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 28.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 356. See James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (eds.), *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997); Volker Bialas and Hans-Jürgen Häßler (eds.), *200 Jahre Kants Entwurf "Zum ewigen Frieden"* (Würzburg, 1996); Otfried Höffe (ed.), *Immanuel Kant, Zum ewigen Frieden* (Berlin, 1995); Klaus-Michael Kodalle (ed.), *Der Vernunftfrieden: Kants Entwurf im Widerstreit* (Würzburg, 1996); Reinhard Merkel and Roland Wittmann (eds.), *Zum ewigen Frieden: Grundlage, Aktualität und Aussichten einer Idee von Immanuel Kant* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> ZcF, VIII, 354-55, 367.

But this reason for rejecting the strong position has often been criticized as inconsistent. His critics point out that his argument is invalid because it neglects the possibility that states transfer only *part* of their sovereignty to the federal level, namely, only the part regarding their relations to each other, while retaining sovereignty in internal affairs. Thus, some of the early reviewers of *Zum ewigen Frieden* attack Kant's view on the league of nations, most notably Fichte and Schlegel.<sup>18</sup> They argue that the only consistent position for Kant to defend is that we should strive for the establishment of a state of states with coercive power (Fichte) or a non-coercive republic of republics (Schlegel). Like Kant they oppose the formation of a single world-state to which all individuals on earth would be directly subsumed, but they argue for a stronger form of international union than does Kant.<sup>19</sup>

In his review Fichte regards the league of states as merely an intermediate stage on the way to a state of states (*Völkerstaat*).<sup>20</sup> Just as local alliances for mutual protection preceded the formation of states, he says, the league (*Bund*) can precede the formation of the state of states.<sup>21</sup> States ought to join a "state of nations [states], in which conflicts are adjudicated in accordance with positive laws,"<sup>22</sup> because there is no other means to end warfare. In the *Grundlage des Naturrechts*, also published in 1796, Fichte drops the talk of a "state" of states in favor of "league." He supports this by saying that states should not be forced to join this federation, which is better conveyed by the term "league."<sup>23</sup> But his essential difference with Kant remains in Fichte's insistence that this league should have coercive powers. Member states in the league ought to recognize each other through treaties, regard each other as equals, and treat each other's citizens lawfully. In Fichte's view, if one state violates a treaty or refuses to recognize another state, this is ground for war. But because the power of individual states does not necessarily correspond to how much they are in the right, it is the task of the league "to destroy with united powers that state—be it part of the league or not—which does not recognize the independence of one of [the member states], or which breaks a treaty that exists between one of [them] and itself."<sup>24</sup> Thus, the league must be in a position to enforce its legal judgments through war and be armed or have the option to arm itself when necessary.

<sup>18</sup> See also Georg Samuel Albert Mellin, *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Rechte oder der positiven Gesetzgebung: Ein Versuch über die ersten Gründe des Naturrechts* (Züllichau, 1796), 159-62.

<sup>19</sup> See also Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, "Kant's Idea of Peace and the Philosophical Conception of a World Republic," in *Perpetual Peace*, 59-77.

<sup>20</sup> On Fichte's cosmopolitanism, see Ives Radrizzani, "Ist Fichtes Modell des Kosmopolitismus pluralistisch?" *Fichte-Studien*, 2 (1990), 7-19.

<sup>21</sup> *Fichtes Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte (Berlin, 1971), VIII, 433.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Fichtes Werke*, III, 380.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

This raises the question of what ensures that a Fichtean league of states will be just. Fichte in fact concedes that it is not possible to prove that the league will be just but only that it makes unjust outcomes of war less likely. This concession shows, however, that his prediction that a league with coercive power *will* bring about perpetual peace is less than fully justified.<sup>25</sup>

Friedrich Schlegel, too, argues that it is possible to conceive of a state of states without all individual states merging into one.<sup>26</sup> He begins his criticism of Kant by considering the role that empirical assumptions play in Kant's allegedly pure political theory. Kant assumes, says Schlegel, that humans will never act fully in accordance with the moral law and this assumption grounds the coercive authority of the state. But this assumption is merely empirical and as such is not necessarily true: "The opposite is at least conceivable." Therefore, a truly pure concept of the state should not depend on the assertion that people will act against the law. This in turn means that the ideal state cannot include "political power and dependence,"<sup>27</sup> for these are introduced into the concept of the state only because of the assumption that people violate the law. "Therefore, not *every* state includes the relationship between a superior and a subordinate, but only the state that is empirically determined by that actual fact." The ideal state, then—that is, the state as conceived in abstraction from any factual human flaws—is a state in which there is total equality: a state of "absolute equality of rights and obligations of the citizens of the state," which "puts an end to all power and dependence."<sup>28</sup>

Schlegel goes on to argue that the same argument that leads to the ideal of the non-authoritarian state also applies to the relationship between different states. It is possible to conceive of a state of states that does not include the relationship of power and dependence, that is, a society of states that is characterized by the freedom and equality of all individual members (states). This would be a non-coercive republic of republics, which he calls a "world republic." By this he means neither a single republic into which all other states merge by giving up their independence nor a state of states with coercive powers. Rather, it is a non-hierarchical, fraternal commonwealth of free and equal republics.<sup>29</sup> Because these republics are united by obeying common laws and by a strong fraternal bond, Schlegel's ideal of a republic of republics qualifies as a version of international federative cosmopolitanism.

From Kantian and Fichtean perspectives, however, Schlegel's objection to granting the state and the world republic coercive powers misses the mark. In

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Johann Adam Bergk, *Briefe über Immanuel Kant's Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre, enthaltend Erläuterungen, Prüfung und Einwürfe* (Leipzig, 1797).

<sup>26</sup> "Versuch über den Begriff des Republikanismus" in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler (Munich, 1966), III, 13, cf. 23.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, perhaps even in response to Schlegel, Kant points out that it is “not experience” that necessitates the coercive powers of the state, but merely the *possibility* that people will violate each other’s spheres of freedom. In Kant’s own view—a view also endorsed by Fichte—this possibility is implicit in the very concept of freedom.<sup>30</sup>

Despite their disagreement over the character of the federation of states, however, international federative cosmopolitans agree on the importance of establishing peace among states and on the necessity of radically reforming how states interact in order to achieve peace.

International federative cosmopolitanism is not the only form of political cosmopolitanism. In addition, some authors defend the normative validity of a particular set of human rights, which Kant terms “cosmopolitan rights.” Kant is most likely the first to have introduced the category of cosmopolitan law as a special category of public law; and it had some prominence, especially in Kantian circles, until the early nineteenth century. Although authors defending cosmopolitan law usually also defend a version of international federative cosmopolitanism, the reverse is not true. Therefore, I discuss the two as different types of cosmopolitanism.

### Cosmopolitan Law

According to the traditional view held by Kant, international law is the law between states. In contrast cosmopolitan law regulates the interaction between states and individuals of foreign states insofar as their interaction is not regulated by legitimate treaties between those states.<sup>31</sup> The core of cosmopolitan law (*Weltbürgerrecht*) is that states and individuals have the right to attempt to establish relations with other states and their citizens, but not a right to enter foreign territory. States have the right to refuse visitors, but not violently and not if doing so results in their death.<sup>32</sup>

Cosmopolitan law is concerned with international commerce in the broadest sense, including any kind of communication, interaction, trade, or business across borders. It applies to travel, emigration, and intellectual exchange as well as to commercial endeavors. The content of cosmopolitan law is the right to “hospitality.” This hospitality right is defined negatively, as “the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility because of his arrival on someone else’s soil.”<sup>33</sup> It is merely a right to visit, which Kant understands as the right to present oneself

<sup>30</sup> Kant, *MdS*, VI, 312; cf. *Fichtes Werke*, III, 92-95.

<sup>31</sup> See Reinhard Brandt, “Vom Weltbürgerrecht,” in Höffe, *Immanuel Kant*, 133-48, and my “Kant’s Cosmopolitan Law: World Citizenship for a Global Order,” *Kantian Review*, 2 (1998), 72-90.

<sup>32</sup> *ZeF*, VIII, 358.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

and to *try* to establish contacts with people and states in other parts of the world. Thus, the term “hospitality right” does not imply a right to be treated as a guest. A state has the right to deny a visit as long as it does so by peaceful means.<sup>34</sup> As Kant puts it in *Zum ewigen Frieden*: strangers have a right of “approach,” not “entry” (“*Zugang*,” not “*Eingang*”).<sup>35</sup> They do not have a general right to be supported, to be taken in, or to be tolerated by a foreign state any longer than it takes them to turn around and leave.

This implies that no one has a right to *settle* on the soil of another people, except when permitted through a treaty. Much of Kant’s discussion of cosmopolitan law is a strong critique of colonialism. Moreover, in rejecting a right to settle on another people’s soil, Kant stands out amidst eighteenth-century philosophers who discuss the question whether “savages” are capable of forming treaties at all. Any human being is the potential subject of covenants and the bearer of certain basic rights.<sup>36</sup>

Limiting the content of cosmopolitan law to the right to hospitality seems to make it very limited indeed, but in fact the implications of this right are quite significant. It is not clear whether Kant intends this, but here he defends a right that under certain circumstances is even broader than a right to political asylum, including protection from starvation and from fatal disease. He argues that a state is permitted to refuse a visitor only “when it can happen without his death,”<sup>37</sup> which implies that whenever refusing a person at the border is impossible without the person being killed, admission is obligatory. There are places in the *Nachlass* where Kant draws this implication by mentioning that people who are forced by circumstances outside their control to arrive on another state’s territory should be allowed to stay at least until the circumstances are favorable for their return. He gives the example of sailors on a ship seeking refuge from a storm, thus in effect stating that cosmopolitan law implies the right to a safe haven.<sup>38</sup> Thus Kant’s conception of cosmopolitan law contains the building blocks for a justification of many of the refugee rights that have been established in the twentieth century.<sup>39</sup>

In the *Grundlage des Naturrechts*, published between Kant’s *Zum ewigen Frieden* and the *Metaphysik der Sitten*, Fichte takes over Kant’s concept of cosmopolitan law but transforms its content into the most basic human right—the right to have and acquire rights. All positive rights are grounded in a specific treaty. Strangers, upon arrival on foreign territory, have not concluded any trea-

<sup>34</sup> MdS, VI, 352.

<sup>35</sup> ZeF, VIII, 359.

<sup>36</sup> See also Howard Williams, *Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1983), 260.

<sup>37</sup> ZeF, VIII, 358.

<sup>38</sup> *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, XXIII, 173.

<sup>39</sup> See my “Kant’s Cosmopolitan Law,” and on refugee rights, Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law* (Oxford, 1996<sup>2</sup>).

ties with the state visited or its subjects yet, but that does not mean they have no rights at all. They have the original human right that antecedes all treaties and makes them possible: a stranger has “*the right to have all human beings presuppose that they can enter into a legal relationship with him through treaties.*”<sup>40</sup> Cosmopolitan law also includes the conditions for the possibility of requesting entrance into a legal relationship.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, cosmopolitan law includes the right to travel around freely on the face of the earth. Like Kant, Fichte limits this right by the provision that states have the right to send strangers away if they do not want to enter into a relationship with them, as long as they do so non-violently and without causing their death.<sup>42</sup>

Not all cosmopolitans with visions of humankind united across the globe couch their views in political-legal terms, however. Three different approaches remain to be discussed here. The first is the view that different cultures are all manifestations of one common humanity. The second is oriented around the idea of a free world-wide market; and the third, around a globally shared love and faith.

### Cultural Cosmopolitanism

Cultural cosmopolitanism is the view that humanity expresses itself in a rich variety of cultural forms, that we should recognize different cultures in their particularity, and that attempts to achieve cultural uniformity lead to cultural impoverishment. Eighteenth-century cultural cosmopolitans are neither relativists nor ethnocentrists. They want to have it both ways: they wish to preserve open-minded engagement with other cultures in a way that takes their particularity seriously, and yet they reject relativism. They do this by grounding the standard for evaluation in a common humanity that underlies all cultural forms. The spirit of cultural cosmopolitanism is implicit in many German Enlightenment philosophers’ ardent interest in comparative anthropology and in their self-understanding as belonging to an impartial, anti-parochial movement that defends the fundamental equality of all human beings.

The best representative of German cultural cosmopolitanism is Georg Forster (1754-94).<sup>43</sup> Forster became a well-known naturalist and anthropologist in Germany (and elsewhere) through the publication of his travel reports about his voyage with Captain Cook (1772-75). His ideal in his description of the cultures

<sup>40</sup> Kant, *Grundlage des Naturrechts* in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, III, 384.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> See also Johann Heinrich Tieftrunk, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Privat- und öffentliche Recht zur Erläuterung und Beurtheilung der metaphysischen Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre vom Herrn Prof. Immanuel Kant* (Halle, 1798), 583-84.

<sup>43</sup> *Georg Forsters Werke*, ed. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin, 1958-); and see Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, 154-85.

he encountered is to provide a comprehensive, unprejudiced account of each of them. He is interested not in gathering collections of curiosities but rather in a systematic investigation of the individual character of each culture as a whole. He investigates not only the material aspects of cultures (from clothing to household items to weapons) but also their social and political structure, religion, morals, and other customs.

Forster's main idea, expressed in later theoretical essays, is that all humans share the same essential natural predispositions (*Anlagen*) for reason, feeling, and imagination; but that these predispositions have developed differently in different regions of the world, depending on external circumstances, thus leading to different cultures. In "Über lokale und allgemeine Bildung" (1791) he says:

What man [*der Mensch*] could become, he has everywhere become in accordance with the local conditions. Climate, location of towns, height of mountains, direction of rivers,... have sometimes favored him from one side, sometimes limited him from another and influenced his physique as well as his moral behavior. In this way, he has nowhere become everything, but everywhere become something different.<sup>44</sup>

To think that there is one superior cultural model that applies universally is to neglect these different circumstances. Any attempt to equalize cultures artificially will lead to "destruction of all individuality," "mediocrity," and "emptiness."<sup>45</sup> Forster describes cultural pluralism in aesthetic terms: as a bouquet of different flowers, as a harp with different strings on which many more harmonies can be played than if the strings were all of equal length.<sup>46</sup> But more than Johann Gottfried Herder, who similarly emphasizes cultural pluralism, Forster stresses the underlying human equality.

According to Forster, all humans have the same "fundamental predispositions, however different their relative intension and their extensive richness."<sup>47</sup> Whatever differences there are between cultures should be explained by reference to the different circumstances under which they developed. He opposes racist assumptions about the natural inferiority of non-Europeans:

Reason, feeling, and imagination, united in the most beautiful dance, are the Graces of life.... Oh, how has anybody dared to accuse nature of

<sup>44</sup> *Georg Forsters Werke*, VII, 45.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 52, 56.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

denying this beautiful harmony of predispositions to nine-tenths of our brothers!<sup>48</sup> For the point of agreement of all nations lies in the core of their essence.<sup>49</sup>

For Forster pluralism does not imply the impossibility of intercultural comparisons and assessments. His accounts are filled with evaluative statements and with comparisons between foreign and European cultures. While he intends to write without prejudice, he does not mean to abstain from judging: "All peoples of the earth have equal claims to my good will..., and my praise and blame are independent of national prejudices."<sup>50</sup>

The crucial question of course is where the standard for evaluation and comparison of different cultures comes from. Forster is in effect using two criteria. First, he thinks that one can evaluate different cultures in terms of how far they have developed, meaning something like the degree of their inner richness and differentiation. For example, he thinks it is beyond dispute that European cultures are more highly developed than the culture found on Tierra del Fuego; but he says that is because the people in that area live under such dire circumstances that their entire life is taken up by the struggle for survival, which leaves them no opportunities for further cultural development.<sup>51</sup> He does not wish to assess cultural development against a fixed moral yardstick or a specific cultural model, but rather, in terms of their relative inner growth and articulation.

Second, Forster assesses cultural practices in moral terms by using their level of respect for human rights and the moral equality of all human beings as a standard. He blames cultures if they include practices of slavery, and he praises them if they let individuals flourish; he blames oppressive practices and praises practices that allow for diversity and creativity. Thus, he vehemently criticizes slavery, slave-trade, war, and despotic forms of government, whether in Europe or elsewhere.

In doing so Forster does not display more methodological sophistication than one would expect from an anthropologist of his time. He does not ask if his own evaluative standards might themselves be products of a particular culture. He does realize, however, that his own perspective colors the way he describes other cultures. He admits that complete freedom from prejudice is an ideal more than a reality and that he himself sometimes falls short of it,<sup>52</sup> but he describes his occasional prejudice as the result of a general *human* weakness, not as the

<sup>48</sup> In the writings of many cosmopolitans, one finds a marked tension between their gender-neutral talk of "humans," on the one hand, and gender specific references such as this one, leaving the status of women in these cosmopolitan theories quite unclear.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>50</sup> *Georg Forsters Werke*, II, 13-14.

<sup>51</sup> *Georg Forsters Werke*, VII, 48.

<sup>52</sup> *Georg Forsters Werke*, II, 13.

result of a particular culturally determined European conception of reason. The full force of this last possibility would not be felt until well into the next century.

Cultural cosmopolitanism, insofar as it is based on the essential moral equality of all human beings, implies a form of moral cosmopolitanism. But whereas moral cosmopolitanism focuses on individuals, cultural cosmopolitanism focuses on the value of collectives (cultures), and because it values cultural pluralism positively, cultural cosmopolitanism has some political implications of its own. It implies that states, peoples, and ethnic groups, in their dealings with each other, should value and tolerate cultural differences (provided no basic moral norms are being violated). Furthermore, cultural cosmopolitanism is compatible with the formation of an international political order as proposed by international federative cosmopolitanism, as long as this order is hospitable to and protective of cultural pluralism. Because cultural cosmopolitanism defends a transcultural moral standard, it can in principle accept a “thin” global political system that protects human rights, provided this system is built only on this standard, and not on the particular features of a particular culture.

### Market Cosmopolitanism

Although market cosmopolitanism contains a strong political program, it would be misleading to regard it as a type of political cosmopolitanism, because its advocates actually seek to diminish the role of politics through a series of economic reforms. Market cosmopolitanism is the view that the economic market should become a single global sphere of free trade, and that this will promote world-wide peace while enhancing individual freedom and reducing the role of states.

This view emerged with the development of classical economic theory. It was by no means widely held in eighteenth-century Germany, which should be no surprise given that mercantilism was the predominant economic theory and practice there at the time. In part through the dissemination of the work of Adam Smith, however, anti-mercantilist views entered the discussion. In my view the most pronounced defender of market cosmopolitanism is the long-forgotten Dietrich Hermann Hegewisch (1746-1812), a prolific historian at the University of Kiel, who had a wide span of interests. He published two anonymous articles in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* of 1792 in which he discusses and attacks mercantilism. In a 1793 collection of philosophical essays (published under his own name), he adds a third essay.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> [Dietrich Hermann Hegewisch], “Welche von den europäischen Nationen hat das Merkantilssystem zuerst vollständig in Ausübung gebracht?,” *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 20 (1792), 401-13; “Über den wahren Grundsatz der Handelsgesetzgebung, und über die Vorbereitungsmittel, das Handelsverkehr unter allen Völkern zum möglich höchsten Grade zu erweitern und zu beleben,” *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 20 (1792), 502-35 (=ÜwG); “Neue

The central tenet of mercantilism is that the government should strive to maximize national wealth and power by tariffs and restrictions on the import of finished products, the promotion of exports, and strong government support of the national industry. Against this view, Hegewisch argues that it is more advantageous for everyone involved if a state imports those goods that are more expensive to produce domestically. Moreover, mercantilist protectionism is based on the false assumption that one's own state will profit if other states are unable to export their goods. Hegewisch argues that the situation is quite the contrary: if protectionism were abolished, other states would gain from their exports, reach a higher standard of living, and become even better trading partners, because it would allow them to import more, too. England does better when surrounded by prosperous countries than when surrounded by Siberias, yet the implicit aim of mercantilism is the production of more Siberias.<sup>54</sup>

Hegewisch realizes, however, that free trade can lead to significant shifts in production practices and that initially many people then lose their incomes as jobs supported by protectionism disappear. His solution to this problem is the free movement of labor: individuals should have the freedom to migrate, the freedom to choose their occupation, and they should be educated in such a way that they acquire multiple skills and are flexible enough to adapt to a changing job market.

In the world market people would move to where the jobs are. There would be borders but no thresholds. Over time, this would lead to a situation in which each country produces those goods that it is naturally best suited for. This would stimulate commerce between all regions of the world and lead to a higher standard of living for all human beings. Hegewisch emphasizes the important cosmopolitan point that this system works only if *all* states can and do participate.<sup>55</sup>

Hegewisch envisions market cosmopolitanism emerging through a process of gradual economic liberalization, with the state playing an important role during the transition period. Against Adam Smith he argues that the state has an obligation to take care of people who lose their jobs as a result of the initial changes and that the state should protect them from starvation.<sup>56</sup> But after the new system is fully in place, the importance of national governments diminishes dramatically. Because the main task of national governments is national defense and the protection of the livelihood of citizens, their future role will be at most

---

Betrachtungen über den nehmlichen Gegenstand," in Hegewisch, *Historische, philosophische, und literarische Schriften* (Hamburg, 1793), 249-56 (=NB). That Hegewisch is the author of the two anonymous articles I infer from the fact that "Über den wahren Grundsatz" was reprinted in his *Historische, philosophische, und literarische Schriften*, and that the other essay was reprinted in his *Historische und litterarische Aufsätze* (Kiel, 1801), 145-53.

<sup>54</sup> ÜwG, 529.

<sup>55</sup> NB, 255.

<sup>56</sup> ÜwG, 514-17.

auxiliary. In the ideal world-wide market, war is in no one's interest, and citizens do not need subsistence guarantees by the government because they simply move to jobs elsewhere whenever they have to. The freer the global market becomes, the smaller the role of the state will be. In his enthusiasm at the prospect of a free world market Hegewisch fails to pay attention to a number of probable side-effects. He neglects the issue of the psychological and personal costs of migration on a large scale, the question of the guarantee of a sufficient supply of living-wage jobs for all world citizens, and the problem of the detrimental effects of income disparities. He also fails to address the question of whether there might not be circumstances under which it would be profitable for some states to be protectionist. Thus, Hegewisch concludes:

As soon as those natural human rights, the right to emigrate and the right to choose one's occupation freely, are recognized and restored by the rulers of the peoples; as soon as [coercive regulations regarding land use, guilds, manufacturing, and trade] are lifted; as soon as the nations approach one another more than they part ways; as soon as they want to ground their prosperity more on perfectly friendly interaction than on isolation; then it will be made much easier for the fathers of the peoples to care for the preservation of their children, who, at least for the most part, have long been mature.<sup>57</sup>

Market cosmopolitanism contrasts with other forms of cosmopolitanism in several ways. Because of its advocates' strong belief in the self-regulative capacity of the market economy and because of their belief that enlightened self-interest will be enough to realize a free global market, market cosmopolitans regard as unnecessary all transnational institutions or laws other than the rules of the market. Market cosmopolitans do presuppose a very thin form of moral cosmopolitanism, insofar as they consider tolerance important, take all human beings as equal potential trading partners, and couch their ideal in terms of "natural human rights." Slavery, for example, means that slaves are denied freedom of movement and freedom to choose their occupation, and is thus wrong in the eyes of market cosmopolitans.

Market cosmopolitanism differs from cultural cosmopolitanism in that its advocates endorse perpetual mobility. The radical change of productive and economic practices that would be brought about by the global market would uproot communities and destroy their traditional ways. Cultural differences would be lost insofar as they depend on a habitat or economic system that would now become obsolete; and insofar as they are portable, they would lose their original moorings and be mixed in a global potpourri of cultural forms.

<sup>57</sup> NB, 256; cf. ÜwG, 531.



But the contrast between market cosmopolitanism and romantic cosmopolitanism is even starker. Whereas market cosmopolitanism reduces humanity to an aggregate of individuals pursuing their material benefit, the romantics defend a vision of humanity united in faith and love.

### Romantic Cosmopolitanism

The early German romantics criticize the Enlightenment for disregarding the most essential components of truly human life: love, emotional bonds, beauty, shared faith, and mutual trust. In their view Wieland's emphasis on reason, reform, and the perpetual imperfection of the world, Kant and Fichte's advocacy of principles and rights, Forster's scientific anthropological approach, and Hegewisch's defense of a global marketplace of uprooted individuals are all based on overlooking the most crucial aspects of human existence.

Although their approach makes for a very radical *Zeitkritik*, the early romantics are by no means reactionaries.<sup>58</sup> They endorse many of the ideals of the Enlightenment, especially the ideals of individuality, freedom, anti-authoritarianism, and equality. But they accuse the Enlightenment philosophers of having degraded these very ideals to atomistic individualism, rootlessness, self-interestedness, and abstract legalism; and they point to an alternative way of conceiving of these ideals. The romantics saw themselves as salvaging the core of Enlightenment ideas while transforming them by bringing out their deeper meanings.

I have already given one example of early German romantic cosmopolitanism: Friedrich Schlegel's defense of the ideal of a world-wide, non-coercive republic of republics. Schlegel evokes a vision of humanity as pure and good, but his presentation of this ideal is sketchy. Others have done more to develop romantic cosmopolitanism, especially Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801). The best example of romantic cosmopolitanism is his *Die Christenheit oder Europa*. This is a talk he gave to the romantic circle in Jena (1799). It was published posthumously and given this title by the editors.<sup>59</sup>

Novalis evokes an ideal that is to serve as an alternative to the Enlightenment. This ideal is centered on emotion, spirituality, and concrete connectedness of human beings to each other; and it is meant to replace the focus on rational knowledge, material goods, and abstract moral and legal principles. Characteristically romantic is the view that this ideal itself is not the result of a process of logical reasoning—this being one of the characteristics of the Enlightenment that are criticized—but of the creative imagination of the poet. In order to com-

<sup>58</sup> See Frederick Beiser, in his introduction to *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics* (Cambridge, 1996), xi-xix.

<sup>59</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, eds. Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart, 1960), III.

municate this ideal of the imagination, then, a romantic poet neither can nor wants to give an argument. Instead, he evokes the ideal through the use of a symbol.<sup>60</sup> Novalis here uses the image of the European medieval period, which he provocatively presents as a golden era to evoke the ideal of its Parousia, the cosmopolitan ideal of a global spiritual community.

The fact that Novalis uses medieval Europe as a symbol does not mean that the ideal cosmopolitan future is limited to Europe. Although he sees Europe as the place where the new era will start, he explicitly expands the scope of the ideal to cover the whole world: "The other parts of the world wait for Europe's reconciliation and resurrection to join with it and become fellow citizens of the kingdom of heaven."<sup>61</sup>

Few historians will recognize the historical Middle Ages in Novalis's description. That is because the empirical entity chosen to serve as symbol for the romantic ideal is itself transfigured ("romanticized") in the process. Medieval christian Europe serves as a symbol for an ideal humanity that is united in faith and love, but in the process Novalis's Middle Ages become unrecognizable to the (non-romantic) professional historian. Novalis intentionally confuses the chronology, blurs the distinction between the ideal and the real, provocatively eliminates any tensions (e.g., the oppression of Jews and of serfs), and depicts the Middle Ages in such a way that the era appears maximally beautiful and harmonious and maximally different from the Enlightenment.<sup>62</sup>

In his talk Novalis conjures up a sensual picture of the "beautiful, splendid times," during which all of Europe was united in one common religion and under one political ruler (the Holy Roman Emperor). Everyone acted on the decrees of the church, and ordinary people found "protection, respect, and audience" in the church when they needed it. The churches were full of beauty, music, smells, and mystery. Politically, Europe was a unity, and the religious and political powers were in harmony with each other. Peace, faith, beauty, and love united all.<sup>63</sup> Yet this idyllic state of affairs could not last. It was the childhood of humanity: "But humanity was not yet mature, not yet educated enough for this splendid realm."<sup>64</sup> The unavoidable development of humanity disrupted this primal unity.

Novalis's vision of the golden era functions as a contrast against which all the ills of the present are highlighted. The rise of individualism and market capitalism in the early modern period disrupts the community's unity of purpose and leads to social fragmentation. Individual interests become opposed to the social.

<sup>60</sup> See Charles Larmore, *The Romantic Legacy* (New York, 1996).

<sup>61</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, III, 524.

<sup>62</sup> On Novalis's idea of the golden era, see Hans-Joachim Mähl, *Die Idee des goldenen Zeitalters im Werk des Novalis: Studien zur Wesensbestimmung der frühromantischen Utopie und zu ihren ideengeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen* (Heidelberg, 1965).

<sup>63</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, III, 507.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 509.

Commercialization and materialism cause people to fail to cultivate their sense of the transcendent. They use their mental faculties for hedonistic purposes and for the technological satisfaction of an increasingly complex set of needs. Greedy human beings have no time for "quiet collection of the mind, the attentive consideration of the inner world."<sup>65</sup> The opposition between knowledge and faith sharpens. The contempt of religion expands to the imagination, feeling, morality, and the love of art and poetry. Thus, "faith and love" are slowly displaced by "having and knowing."<sup>66</sup>

Even what little is left of religion is not left intact: within the church, individualism gives rise to Protestantism, which introduces a split within Christianity. Moreover, the emancipation of the state from the church causes the opposition between religious and political spheres, and in the process, religion gets locked up inside the boundaries of states, which is the start of a gradual undermining of the "religious cosmopolitan interest" and its peaceful influence.<sup>67</sup> Politically, Europe has landed in a state of crisis and continued warfare. For Novalis, all these evils are facets of one development, namely, of the rupture of the original ties of love and faith. This leads to social fragmentation, antagonistic egoism, irreligious one-dimensionality, religious schisms, ecclesiastical territorialism, and continuous warfare. Because Novalis regards all of these as intimately linked, it would be unduly restrictive to characterize his view, as some commentators have done, as merely religious<sup>68</sup> or as a quietistic philosophy of history without relevance for political philosophy.<sup>69</sup>

Novalis expects a renewal before very long. But this renewal cannot come from more of the same, that is, not from more warfare, more atomistic individualism, more abstract rationality, more commerce. Only a spiritual power can bring about real change and lead to real peace and a new way for individuals to relate to each other. The current anarchy is the perfect seedbed for a new religion: "From the destruction of everything positive it lifts up its glorious head as the creator of a new world."<sup>70</sup> Novalis does not provide a determinate description of the new era. Rather, he intends the symbolic presentation of the romanticized middle ages to enable his audience to transcend the present and to evoke the cosmopolitan ideal of a global spiritual community.

With the exception of Friedrich Schlegel's version of international federative cosmopolitanism, early German romantic cosmopolitanism is radically opposed to the five other types of cosmopolitanism. It marks the end of the Enlight-

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 509.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 510.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 511-12.

<sup>68</sup> Mähl, *Die Idee des goldenen Zeitalters*, 373-74.

<sup>69</sup> Hans Wolfgang Kuhn, *Der Apokalyptiker und die Politik: Studien zur Staatsphilosophie des Novalis* (Freiburg i.B., 1961), 206-13.

<sup>70</sup> Novalis, *Schriften*, III, 517.

enment and the beginning of a new era, although early German Romanticism is not yet reactionary and nationalistic. But under the influence of the French war efforts this turn came soon. Napoleon's conquests provoked a surge of nationalisms, and the later romanticism was a leading movement in this respect. Novalis died in 1801 and so did not experience this change of climate. Schlegel, however, gave up his ideals of a new religion and a new world, converted to Roman Catholicism, and served as a conservative Restoration diplomat.

The other cosmopolitan voices died down, too. In the *Geschlossene Handelsstaat* (1800) Fichte retracted much of what he had written on cosmopolitan law, and turned increasingly nationalistic. Wieland withdrew from public life after 1800. He was hurt by Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, who publicly attacked him for his orientation toward world literature and for alleged unoriginality, and he was disillusioned by continued European warfare and the rise of nationalism. Hegewisch focussed on his historical writings. Forster died in 1794, and Kant died in 1804 after several years of dementia.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was a dramatic rise of nationalism, but there were also waves of cosmopolitanism, which led, for example, to the establishment of the League of Nations and the United Nations, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Now that cosmopolitanism seems on the rise again, the rich variety of cosmopolitan perspectives brought up in Germany two centuries ago deserves renewed attention both to illuminate the historical background of cosmopolitanism and to point out the many different forms cosmopolitanism can take.<sup>71</sup>

Washington University in St. Louis.

<sup>71</sup> I wish to thank Joel Anderson, Claire Baldwin, Eric Brown, Rebecca Messbarger, Thad Metz, and Red Watson, as well as Michael Carhart, an anonymous reader, and the editor of this journal, for helpful comments.