Cosmopolitanism and Identity

Sami Sener[1]

Abstract

Cosmopolitism is a complicated concept and has different properties. Pure tangible objects in the world are worth more than those mixed. This character distinguishes objects and gives them a special value. Is the same situation true in the spiritual and moral worlds?

Already, every object finds its value in their value world. In particular, this also applies in the real social world in general.

Social world has a meaning because of living with others. So, our world enriches with disparateness and this situation adds new values to our life. For this reason It is very importance to know how to keep different cultures together. In general, we mainly reserve a share in a narrow mentality for ourselves. But, when we look to the events from other people's perspectives we discern different realities.

Today, we face many chaos and social problems. The cause of it that we could not endure living together with others and do not have toleration culture about different groups. Such a behaviour stems from psychological weakness and keep ourselves in the forefront in ethnical issues.

---

[1] Professor, Dr., Istanbul Medeniyet University, samis843@gmail.com

Whereas all great success in the history has been obtained by civilizations and leaders who had understood the differentiations as richness. In this subject culture as life philosophy and value of law are quite important concepts.

Most important issues will lead us to success and understanding of law in this issue. With this approach we have to behave most suitable attitude to the life and human being without hegemonic or ethnic perspective.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, cultural identity, otherness.

Introduction

Nowadays Cosmopolitanism is thought to be a savior concept both by intellectuals and politicians. What is the cause of this kind of approach?

Especially in a time when many countries compete in political, economic and other fields, will it be possible to accept that cosmopolitan philosophy could put an end to such a race in theoretical basis.

It has been a long time since nations have sacrificed themselves in favor of other nations in international arena. Today it is not easy, especially in political field to impose something to another people because of their preference of national policies.

It is difficult to be sure on this matter because over the last decades there have not been good examples and so, it is not possible to predict about the future without feeling anxiety.

This subject is not only about one country or region, but also it is more a worldwide and global trend which all governments and peoples interested in to maintain their future.

In my paper I will try to explain, how cosmopolitan identity is multicultural and nationalistic world and how can we change some of our behaviors especially our exclusionary attitudes

Cosmopolitanism and its implications:

The word "cosmopolitan" comes from the Greek kosmos, 'world' and polis, 'city'. It goes back to the Greek philosopher Diogenes, who, upon being asked to give the name of the city-state in which he had been brought up, responded with the remark that he was "a citizen of the world". Cosmopolitans are ready to immerse themselves in other cultures, engage with difference, and acquire diverse cultural competence. Tolerance, understanding and respect are essential, for truly future generations of global citizens who share globally the four pillars of education: learn to know, learn to do, learn to be, and learn to live (http://e4gi.weebly.com/cosmopolitan-identities.html).

In previous examples it is apparently seen that peoples and politicians had faced some troubles but it is not clear that how cosmopolitan thought will ensure a new expansion to internal and international relations.

There is a fundamental question in this idea that how societies will adopt other people's cultures and life styles for the sake of Cosmopolitan mentality. Social values take a long time to be adopted and it does not leave peoples to accept any other behavior. So that, to change habits and the way of life with others is not easily acceptable.

Another point of view is that to prevent the violation of personal rights is one of the main aims of cosmopolitanism.

This kind of hospitality arises because "The peoples of the earth have thus entered with varying degrees into a universal community, and it has been evolved to the point where a violation of rights in one part of the world is felt everywhere. The idea of a cosmopolitan right is therefore not fantastic and overstrained; it is a necessary complement to the unwritten code of political and universal right, transforming it into a universal right of humanity.

As Waldron asks, "What if there has been nothing but mélange all the way down? What if cultures have always been implicated with one another, through trade, war, curiosity, and other forms of inter-communal relation? What if the mingling of cultures is as immemorial as cultural roots themselves? What if purity and homogeneity have always been myths? " And just as the identity of each necessarily cosmopolitan culture may be a shifting focus within overlapping influences, so the identity of the person may be a shifting focus within overlapping influences.

Recognizing that we adopt beliefs and self-understandings that we believe to be true, useful, interesting, moral, amusing, and so on from other persons, other cultures, and other languages is not shameful; it is just a recognition of reality (Palmer, 2013:11).

On the other hand, a global perspective does not refuse certain cultures while encourages co-existent citizenships of people of many cultural, religious, racial, and ethnic origins and identities (Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1978).

Articles like these hope that Cosmopolitanism will bring new ideas and cultural behavior and imply that international relations and all these developments could change restrictions and narrow perspectives in local and national level.

It is an important question that how cosmopolitanism could realize these superior targets if today's people are ready to implement these values in their life. Especially in a capitalist and pragmatist world, people have been facing lots of difficulties to preserve and keep alive their values. So some researchers give voice about their fears on this subject.

Whereas, writers who have different point of view think that cosmopolitanist understanding would neither reduce problems nor break nationalist ties.

Many critics of increasing freedom of trade and of movement, and the phenomena of cosmopolitanism and globalization that result from such freedom, insist that the consequence of greater trade and movement is a net loss of identity. Globalization is reliant on sharply delineated differences among cultures. Globalization has been identified with the emergence of a cosmopolis, or universal civilization that destroys all local differences and robs peoples and persons of their distinctive identities (Palmer, 2003:1-2).

Nussbaum calls our attention to the political relation and National implications of the cosmopolitan approach:

Rorty argues that we cannot criticize ourselves well unless we also "rejoice" in our identity and define ourselves fundamentally in terms of that identity.

America to the rest of the world. As with Rorty's piece, the primary contrast drawn in the project was between a politics based on ethnic and racial and religious difference and a politics based on a shared national identity. What we share as both rational and mutually dependent human beings was simply not on the agenda (Nussbaum, 1994: 2).

Same anxieties are expressed by Skey too. According to him, it seems rather obvious to state that some forms of identification will be much more salient at particular moments than

others but much of the literature fails to include a temporal dimension. As a result, we miss out on asking the key question; when do national affiliations trump those associated with class or gender or whatever? (Skey, 2011:3).

Sander also points out the importance of the shared values: Thus, each of us has certain "constitutive self-understandings" without which we would simply have no fixed identity, and those self-understandings are so connected with the "family or tribe or city or class or nation or people" that what is really identified is not a numerically and materially individuated human person, but a collective person.

Because shared understandings are necessary for our self-understanding, i.e., because they are asserted to be an epistemic criterion for self-knowledge, it is asserted that those shared understandings are constitutive of our identity, and that therefore "the bounds of the self are no longer fixed, individuated in advance and given prior to experience." (Sandel, 28) (quoted Palmer, 2003:9).

Even if cosmopolitanism tries to gather cultures and their characteristic specialties in a vacuum, this idea is not adopted by some writers and people groups. We clearly see that some European countries solidarity is not between various people groups.

Cosmopolitanism and Its National or Global dimensions:

How does cosmopolitanism explain itself and how it is comprehended by the nations of the world? Otherwise, is it a complementary part of them?

The extent to which cosmopolitanism (both as a political principle and a cultural commitment) is compatible with nationalism, that places a territorially based community and an emotional attachment to a collectivity underpinned by common symbolic resources at the heart of its ideological outlook has been the subject of an intense academic debate, having practical implications (Voronkova, 2010; 2).

At the same time, describing Europe at the present stage of integration as cosmopolitan carries the danger of confusing cosmopolitanism with supranationalism that is a form of nationalism existing above and beyond the nation (Grande, 2006:96).

In such a position, if cosmopolitanism is the high version of nationalism what kind advantage it will bring to the world, especially to Europe? If we will live a different version of nationalism why should we want to save its pressure? It is clearly evident that nationalist

movements caused many problems in the life of Nations. With Cosmopolitanism, if compatible with national affiliations, we can expose ourselves as a bad dream.

As Skey said, there is a lot of evidence that processes of globalization may actually strengthen people's attachments to the nation. For instance, in Western Europe, debates around multiculturalism, immigration and European integration continue to dominate media and political agendas and often point to the increasing resonance of national frameworks (Skey, 2011:5).

Multiculturalism and globalism had drawn good perspectives like cosmopolitanism: Discussions of multiculturalism should not be centered on the pathology of different communities as they often tend to do, but should also appreciate their virtues, rich insights into the human condition, and worthwhile values (Parekh, 2005).

Voronkova points out the definition of cosmopolitan mentality as a changeable character: On the other hand, reducing cosmopolitanism to mere acceptance of plurality makes it an extension of multiculturalism. Cosmopolitanism should be not simply about the coexistence of multiple identities but also about the interaction of the national and the global that transforms both in a positive way. The controversial nature of 'cosmopolitan Europe' highlights a major problem with the concept of cosmopolitanism itself, which also has implications for its relationship with nationalism its indeterminacy (Voronkova, 2010:7).

Other Effects on Cosmopolitanism

After technological development, media has been the most powerful determiner in shaping thoughts by reflecting new information and effective approaches. Naturally looking to the social matters, media play important roles.

"Early approaches, while both influential and important in foregrounding the crucial role of media/communications, tended to adopt a rather crude, top-down model whereby media inculcated national identities into relatively powerless audiences. Much of this work saw both the media and nations as homogeneous, failed to account for change and rarely provided much in the way of empirical evidence for their claims." (Skey, 2011:7).

Social studies in the new century made some differentiations in Western mind to find a basis of thought for their world views. "I and other" was the most clear and distinctive example of this attitude.

The notion of the 'Other' is used in various disciplines ranging from philosophy, psychoanalysis and postmodernists theories in anthropology. In postcolonial theory, which is my point of entrance here, it refers to 'the discursive/improper production of another' – a process typified symbol by the way in which Europe produces an Orient-as other direction, also described as 'othering' (Spivak 1985). There is a general tendency to consider 'others' as categorically and essentially different. In this idea of difference, are potentials for hierarchical and stereotypical thinking, which it is why the effect of othering bears resemblance to racism (Zizek, 1990) (quoted Bendixsen, 2013).

Cosmopolitanism and Identity

Identities are both ascribed by others and asserted by individuals. They are heavily influenced by social groups and historical circumstances, but they are also situational, flexible, and determined by individual choice. People define their identities in many ways, such as by gender, age, and ethnic, racial, religious, or other affiliations.

Many individuals have global, cosmopolitan, or multicultural belongings and identities. Some reside in more than one country or lead transnational lives going back and forth between countries (Case, 1993; Hanvey, 1978).

Another idea focused on some concepts of Cosmopolitanism can cause loosing identity.

We recognize moral obligations to the rest of the world that are real, and that otherwise would go unrecognized; and we make a consistent and coherent/and balanced argument based on distinctions we are really prepared to defend. The cosmopolitan is the one who puts right before country, and universal reason before the symbols of national belonging (Nussbaum, 1994:3).

Also there is some criticism to it. The communitarian approach implicitly denies that one's identity might be constituted by universalist, individualist, cosmopolitan self-understandings. The devout Moslem or Christian, for example, may very well see an attachment to a universalist religious faith as constitutive of identity in ways that being American, Albanian, or Arab is not. Such identities are quite common and therefore possible

and collectivist and communitarian theorists have offered little reason to believe that they are unhappier or poorer than are more localized identities.

As a result, strong national ties and their social and historic past could not remove the people their habits. Collective identities are at least partly conceptualized in European terms (Kohli, 2000: 125). However, they complement and coexist with national loyalties. Sociological studies have shown that the sentiment of belonging is not a 'zero-sum game', that is individual and collective identity can be constituted by a multiplicity of combined socio-territorial attachments and an increase in attachment to the global (or, in this case the European community) does not necessarily presuppose a corresponding decrease in loyalty to local or national communities.

In my point of view it is not right to see the local identities as a preventive or incompatible concept. If the cosmopolitan idea can cover all local identities as a general mentality, it does not pose any serious problems. But firstly we have to live this reality. Because cosmopolitan idea now only theoretic concept.

Lets test the cosmopolitan ideas beyond the Muslim identity as an example in Germany and France. Most large migrant groups are Turkish Muslims. Turkish Muslims have lived nearly for 70 years and they already have third or fourth generations in this country. Although Germans have not accepted their identity easily up to now.

Muslim integration is one of the most contentious issues in the immigration debate in Europe, and one that gets right to the heart of public anxieties about immigration. European countries are grappling with ways to accommodate Muslim minorities while upholding national values. Getting the balance right has not been easy. Some policies have drawn public support in some quarters but been criticized elsewhere as an attack on Islam, such as France's ban on the burqa and other face-covering headwear, and Switzerland's referendum banning the construction of new mosque minarets. Other policies have sought to smooth tensions between native-born and Muslim communities, such as the introduction of Muslim councils to help resolve conflicts over cultural practices (Nielsen, 2013:3).

There are psychological and economical causes under this kind opposite behaviors. Some of problems are as explained by researchers:

Just like other youth subcultures which have developed in the urban spaces throughout the years (see Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995) the turn to Islam can be considered as a response to socio-economic conditions. It is one possible way to create a space and place

within a lifeworld which does not offer many positive prospects for a socially and economically secure future. Identification with Islam can be seen as a possible solution towards discrimination (Cesari, 2003), a way out for youths who are more or less excluded or feel rejected from the society and search for a sense in life (Khosrokhavar 1997). In some ways, the 'Muslim' youths are searching to publicly articulate an 'authenticity', often through symbols, that represent their religious identity as a way to claim recognition from the larger society (cf. Fraser 2000) (quoted Bendixsen, 2011).

As the result of the research it is an interesting point that Muslim youth explains themselves not with nationalistic terms but religious ones:

Overall, the youths' emphasis on a 'pure' Islam has consequences; parents loose their role as authorities in Islam (cf. Jacobsen 2006, Roy 2004, Cesari 2004), and it de-ethicizes the youths' religious activities and identification. Turning to Islam is not making the youths feel more 'Turkish', but rather detach their ethnic identity from their religious identity. The 'Othering' processes from strangers on the street, politicians, teachers and the media, affect the difficulties many youths have in feeling as a 'German' (Bendixson, 2013:5).

It can be showed as an interesting point on the explanations of Parekh: For its part, British Christianity too is revitalized by the important spiritual sensibilities and insights of other religions. Although our moral and political life has proved more resistant to intercultural dialogue, it too is undergoing important changes in response to some of the commendable values drawn from ethnic minority traditions (Guardian, 21 January 2005).

In the Second Euroacademia Global Conference Europe Inside-Out, a Muslim speaker stressed the main cause of exclusionary attitudes of Europeans towards the Muslims in Europe. He explained main problem in this subject:

Islamic thought and concepts are clearly based on the revealed book, the Koran. So it is impossible to understand Islam without knowledge of the Koran. Without religious knowledge one cannot correctly interpret the immense richness of the traditions and cultures emerging from the Holy Book (Tekin, 2012:1).

I think main problem is the misunderstanding of the roots of identity of foreign peoples by Europeans. Because they think that the character of identity can be only nationalistic. For this reason some Europeans and politicians think that they need to defend their identities against other nationalities.

Koranic knowledge explains identity on religious base not nationalistic. Islam denies as a nationalistic identity for Muslims. But it does not accept fighting to other nationalities or religions without any assault to itself.

Conclusion

In some cultures, cultural concepts on identities are accepted by the society not by individual. Western culture put the individual to the center of society and societal acceptance has been settled second level. But some other cultures did not have such an experience. So, their identity comprehensions will naturally be different.

To clarify this complex matter we have to discuss different cultural values in a free and favorable arena and must think which values and norms should be beneficial without taking into account their sources.

Secondly global and multicultural experiences can give a light forth to predict realizing possibility of cosmopolitan thought. In this subject, I think we do not have consensus about their performance, especially for non-European countries and peoples.

In fact, Islam is widely open to Cosmopolitanism more than other religions and ideologies in its practical fulfillments. During the Islamic civilization period, openly and undisputed examples in Abbasid, Seljuk and Ottoman periods can be seen. I present only one example. In Darulaceze Instutition (Aged Care House) in Istanbul which was founded in Ottoman era, there are already three main prayer parts for Muslim, Christian and Jewish people. It shows that Islamic civilization has shown some life practices on this subject. We can develop this kind of model with new practices if we accept a civilized perspective towards other religions and nationalities not only verbal, but in practice.

Bibliography

Banks, James A. (2003). Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens in a Global World, Center for Multicultural Education, 2.

Bendixsen, Synnøve (2010). Islam as a New Urban Identity? Young Muslims in Berlin, Berlin, Germany Europäische Ethnologie Humboldt University and Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales , PhD thesis.

Cultural Convergence (2008). Citizens: National and cosmopolitan identities, Chapter.6, USA. Harward Kennedy School.

Freedman, Jonathan (2005). The Ethics of Identity': A Rooted Cosmopolitan Published: June 12, Jenkins, Henry (2006) Convergence Culture, NewYork University Press, NewYork.

Nielsen Anne Mark Meghan Benton (2013). Migration Policy Institute, Post-Doctoral Visiting Fellow. USA .Yale University.

Nussbaum, Martha (1994). Cosmopolitian identities, Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism. USA .From The Boston Review.

Palmer. Tom G. (2003). Globalization, Cosmopolitanism, and Personal Identity Cato Institute. Etica & Politica / Ethics & Politics, 2.

Parekh, Bhikhu (2005). The Guardian, January.

Prodi, Romano (2003). Integrating Europe's Muslim Minorities: Public Anxieties, Policy Responses. Conference of Muslim Leaders and Imams in Europe Graz, 13 June.

Sandel, Michael (1982). Liberalism and the Limits of Justice, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Skey, Michael (2011). Interview, National Identity, Multiculturalism, Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation, Selfhood Othernes. Belonging.html.Interview b, Leonhardt. Van Efferink, July.

Tekin, Beyza Ç. (2012). Re-negotiating European Identity at Times of Crisis ,Paper prepared for the Second Euroacademia Global Conference Europe Inside- Paris, 27 – 27 April. Out: Europe and Europeaness Exposed to Plural Observers,

Voronkova, Anastasia (2010). Are nationalism and cosmopolitanism compatible? E International Relations, The world's leading website for students of International Politics, November 25 Are nationalism and cosmopolitanism compatible?

http://e4gi.weebly.com/cosmopolitan-identities.html