Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism

Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives

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Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation and Diaspora[1]
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PW: I want to start by asking something about globalisation, because we talk a lot about globalisation and multiculturalism today but I think that cosmopolitanism is a little bit different from those two concepts, in the sense that it's a vision, some would say a utopian vision – for world citizenship, peace or human rights, but … so how do you see cosmopolitanism today in the world with all its apparently endemic, terrible conflicts, intractable…

SH: Well, I do think I understand cosmopolitanism principally as an ideal, a utopia. I'm not at all sure about 'world citizenship'. What I would say is that nowadays the concept is very closely related to globalisation. We are obliged to talk about the interdependencies across the globe in a planetary way, in which more or less everybody is in the swim of history and connected with one another. Of course, connected in deeply unequal ways – globalisation is a contradictory system, the product of what used to be called 'combined and uneven development'. Outside this uneven and unequal framework, cosmopolitanism is a very limited concept. It can only mean the capacity of certain elites to move around within very limited circles. Once our perspective becomes planetary, and there is a possibility of global citizenship, then cosmopolitanism as a utopia becomes potentially more possible. Of course the actual form that globalisation, – this interconnectedness – has taken, is exactly the opposite. It connects disjunctive histories, the very early and the very late, the too late and the too early, the developed, the developing and the underdeveloped, the colonised and the colonisers, the pre- and the post-colonial, etc. So whereas in the discourse of contemporary globalisation, we speak as though there was one space, one globe, and therefore potentially one citizenship, a universal human morality, the reality is precisely the reverse. Not that the interdependencies don't constitute something new. I think they constitute a profoundly new historical moment. They may even constitute the moment when such a universal vision of belonging is potentially realisable. But the reality of contemporary globalisation – interconnectedness – must be seen as, in fact, a

structure of power, a structure of global power, and therefore of global or trans-national inequalities and conflicts rather than the basis of a benign cosmopolitanism. The differences of power and resources override the interconnectedness. So I see contemporary globalisation as, realistically, opening not one but two quite different possibilities simultaneously: a world driven apart into warring differences or one driven into an overriding sameness and homogenisation, under the hegemony of those powerful enough to claim to be the universal instance, to represent the whole of civilisation. So contemporary cosmopolitanism – which, to give it its proper name, is really the latest phase capitalist modernity operating on a global scale, poses for me this double perspective.

PW: What you are saying about inequalities is also linked to the fact that we live in a world of massive transnational movements of refugees and economic migrants from one place to another. So the next question I was going to ask you has got to do with diasporas. Diasporas have always been seen as the archetypal, boundary-crossing strangers, and in that sense they are thought to epitomise cosmopolitanism. But, on the other hand, diasporas have also been accused of disloyalty to the nation, of not being rooted anywhere, of not having any commitments, and even these days of long-distance nationalism without responsibility, as Benedict Anderson has put it – where they support guns to the IRA, they support Jewish settlers on the West Bank or Hindu nationalists. So how do you see the role of diasporans in this globalised, cosmopolitanising world, perhaps?

SH: Before you get to diasporas I would say that we must insist on seeing globalisation as a deeply contradictory process. I see the tide of the trasnsnational movement of peoples – driven by civil war, by ethnic cleansing, famine, poverty and ecological disaster, as well as by the search for economic benefits and a better life, as a form of 'globalisation from below'. I think it is linked with the systems of inequality and power, both historical and contemporary, that we talked about before. And I think, just to put it simply, that there are two ways of life associated with it. There is a 'cosmopolitanism of the above' – global entrepreneurs following the pathways of global corporate power and the circuits of global investment and capital, who can't tell which airport they're in, because they all look the same, and who have apartments in three continents. This is global cosmopolitanism of a very limited kind but it is very different from 'cosmopolitanism from below' – people driven across borders, obliged to uproot themselves from home, place and family, living in transit camps or climbing on to the backs of lorries or leaky boats or the bottom of trains and airplanes, to get to somewhere else. Both of them are forms of globalisation and, in so far as they both interact within the same global sphere, are deeply interconnected with one another. But they don't constitute the basis of a 'global citizenship'.

PW: But does cosmopolitanism have to be an elite thing?

SH: No. I'm not saying that it has to be. Historically, there have been many forms of cosmopolitanism. What I am saying is that contemporary forms of globalisation enforce a 'cosmopolitan from below'; it bears down on people who have no choice as to whether or not to become cosmopolitans. They have to learn to live in two countries, to speak a new language and make a life in another place, not by choice but as a condition of survival. They have to acquire the same cosmopolitan skills of adaptation and innovation which an entrepreneur requires – but from a different place. They operate in different markets – illegal markets, black markets, markets in people, the markets for illegal papers and so on. So, culturally, they're living 'in translation' every day of their lives; what has been called elsewhere a 'vernacular cosmopolitanism': not the global life as a reward for status, education or wealth, but the global life as one of the necessities imposed by the disjunctures of modern globalisation. These new settlements are, of course, as a consequence of globalisation from below, diasporas, because they are made up of people from different cultural backgrounds, who have been obliged to live somewhere else but who remain in some deep ways also connected to their homes, cultures and places of origin, and consequently develop what I would call a diasporic form of consciousness and way of life . . . They are what, following the Jamaican anthropologist, David Scott, we should call 'conscripts of global modernity'.

The question then is: what is their position? What is their position in relation to the places they find themselves in, or to the places they came from, and what sense do they make of that experience of displacement and of themselves? Who are they now and where do they belong? This is the identity question, the diasporic dilemma, I'm interested in – identity in the context of the post-colonial era of globalisation and mass migration. How do you make sense of your self, and your life, if this movement between places, cultures, religions, languages, civilisations, histories, times, becomes your lived reality? How can you say, 'This is who I am', and what on earth do you mean by it? What I've tried to say is that this is inevitably the site of what DuBois called 'double consciousness', and of what, somewhat inadvisedly perhaps, I have elsewhere called 'hybridity'. I don't think identity is just a free-floating smorgasbord – you get up today and decide to be whoever you'd like to be: that's just a post-modern fantasy. Identity is always tied to history and place, to time, to narratives, to memory and ideologies. It requires material conditions of existence. You can't just move identity around as you choose. On the other hand, I think identity isn't inscribed, forever, in or transmitted by the genes. It is socially, historically, culturally constructed. So in that sense, identity is always, to some extent, an open question, always, as they say, 'in process': not because it is entirely self-constructed, a mere self-fashioning

of choice, and has no conditions of existence, but because, like meaning itself, it operates *ultimately* in relation to an open horizon, since it cannot be finally fixed. However the disjunctures between globalisation from above and below are resolved will affect what happens to identities in the diasporic conditions of dis-placement which these global process inevitably set in motion. If the prevailing outcome is to homogenise the world globally, militarily, technologically, economically or civilisationally, then of course either people are drawn willy-nilly into the process of assimilation – what in the UK New Labour is offering these days under the misleading title of 'social cohesion'. You can be accepted but only if you become like us. Otherwise, you are driven into the exact opposite alternative, which is to defend yourself against the loss of identity which wholesale assimilation as a strategy entails, and retreat defensively back to where you came from, into that sphere called 'tradition', as if that has remained the same, untouched by history.

PW: And either of those options is not really in a way cosmopolitan.

SH: No, of course not. These are both a retreat from cosmopolitanism, because they are a retreat from or a denial of those 'differences' which are the inevitable consequence of uneven and combined historical development. It polarises 'difference' into unbridgeable extremes. We are all completely different from one another, and the barriers between the differences are insurpassable. Inevitably, as an effect of the resistance to the pressure to assimilate, differences do become more rigid, more entrenched, politicised, emotionally charged and exclusive. The reaction to any variation from this norm of homogeneity is more and more punitive. We start to police those boundaries, to regulate any signs of cultural mixing. This resistance to change, to history, wherever it comes to predominate, is a form of cultural fundamentalism, a phenomenon by no means restricted to a certain strand within political Islam – indeed perfectly compatible with a certain version of western global modernity.

People who sometimes quote me on identity forget that I've always talked about the possibility that, if we don't move towards the more open horizon pioneered by 'cosmopolitanism from below', we will find ourselves driven either to homogenisation from above or to the retreat into the bunker and the war of all against all.

PW: And you in a way set a kind of aspiration for us in your work, in reaching out, in recognising both difference and the battle for equality as simultaneous struggles. You've come to England from far away, and colonised this country.

SH: That's kind of you. I wish I had. We used to think that difference and equality were mutually exclusive. But I think they are both necessary and set limits for

each other. Difference without equality is ultimately the war of all against all. Equality without difference is homogenization.

PW: So the question is – do you feel yourself to be a cosmopolitan?

SH: (Pause) You know, I hesitate every time I use the word. Because a certain view of cosmopolitanism was built into the Enlightenment and Kant's famous question, 'What is Enlightenment?' Kant is the architect of this universalist version of cosmopolitanism. And I resist that kind of cosmopolitanism, not because there weren't enlarging, 'universalising' elements in it, but because, as we know very well, it is a version of cosmopolitanism which represented itself as 'universal' but that universality inevitably became harnessed back to the West. 'We' were the enlightened ones, whose civilizational duty and burden it was to enlighten everybody else – the unenlightened, the non-cosmopolitan. This is the paradox at the heart of the Enlightenment – the particularism of its conception of universality. Inevitably, I'm a sort of child of the Enlightenment, in the sense that I believe in history, sometimes but not often in progress; I'm not religious (though I'm not a militant atheist either), I believe in science (but not scientism), in the rule of law, etc. But I'm not a child of the Enlightenment in the sense that everybody other than 'us' is consigned to what Locke called 'the childhood of Mankind' and only the West and Western civilisation are really the grown-ups. Which is what the Enlightenment, for all its intertest in the 'noble savage', really thought. These days I find myself recruited to many of the Enlightenment aspirations, but I have to remind myself that it never understood difference, never understood that it was underpinned by a particularly Western conception of reason, never came to terms with the supporting ideological underpinning of its 'liberalism', of this particular notion of cosmopolitanism, and of the way the claims to universalism were embedded in a certain form of historical particularity.

So if you ask me, am I a cosmopolitan, I'm not a cosmopolitan in that sense. But I am in the sense that I have never found myself in the position of being tied into identification with the notion of the nation, of nationhood, as the ultimate goal of the political process. I know the tremendous value that the idea of nationhood played, for example, in the moment of decolonisation. It was the driving idea which in a sense enabled us to liberate ourselves from Imperialism, from the degradation and exploitation of colonialism. So I can't undervalue that moment of national liberation but I see everywhere now the limits of nationhood as an all-encompassing point of identification. And it just happens that in my history I have sort-of evaded it because I left the Caribbean at the moment of decolonisation. So I'm not a part of that process when all the hopes were caught up with building the nation. In some sense I regret this, of course. Every diaspora has its regrets. Although you can never go back to the past, you do have a sense of loss of an

intimate connection with a history, a landscape, family, tradition, custom – the vernacular. In a sense, this is the fate of all modern people – we have to lose those connections, but we seem to require the myth, the illusion that we are going to go back to them.

So in my history, as it happens, my generation stayed at home and got deeply involved in the struggle for, and writing the history of, the nation. And I wasn't there. I was identified with it but also watching it from afar. But now I see the limits of that vision, when I look back at the Caribbean, and I see that they cannot move any further by trying to resolve their problems within the framework of the nation. Indeed, the nation is being driven by global forces which small nations without great economic resources don't have any leverage on.

When I came to England, I discovered I couldn't be a member of this nation either. Because of my colonial formation I was already displaced. Although I've chosen to live here, and marry into it, I'm not fundamentally part of the self-conception of the British or English nation. So I'm cosmopolitan by default. I have to find my way, like many of us, amongst many attachments, many identifications, none of them self-sufficient or complete. I have to recognise how limited that is. But it's obliged me to maintain what I would call an openness towards the horizon of that which I am not, the experiences I have not had – a sense of one's incompleteness, requiring for my own 'completeness' what is other to it.

Even in this global moment, there are so many experiences we know nothing about. So we can't close everything up around our own narratives. This may be a cosmopolitan moment, but there are other cosmopolitan worlds still to uncover. I don't want to make a fetish of Otherness but universalism only works, not as a state of being but as a constantly shifting horizon towards that point where we, our experience, our history ends, and another history begins; which is adjunct to us, which overlaps with us, which we know part of, but some aspects of which remain ineradicably different from us and which remind us that every positionality, far from, being self-sufficient, can only be fully defined by what it is not, by what is left out or excluded – by its constituitive outside.

I think of Palestine, you know, because although I've never written extensively about it, it's been at the centre of my political thinking for many years, partly through the privilege of my friendship with Edward Said. It's one of the worlds I can't let go of. I don't know it, I've never been there. I look at pictures of the West Bank, I look at the faces of young Palestinians on television, I look at Edward and Jean Mohr's beautiful book *After the Last Sky* – and I think, I know these people because I can identify with their hopes, dilemmas and tribulations. They're not 'my people', but I ought to know them better. I know something of their experience by reading their tragic history. but I ought to know more. I know what it's like to be colonised, to be occupied, excluded, defined by another power, I know what it's like not to be in your home, only to see your from home from

a distance, across a barrier. I share so much with them, not despite but because they come from another tradition, another world, another religious universe, another language, another literature. So they're not me – but I'm open in some ways to their existing now in, as part of, my global world. Is that a new kind of cosmopolitanism?

PW: You talked about the people you grew up with, who became the inscribers of the nation in Jamaica, in the Caribbean. Do you think you could be a cosmopolitan at home in Africa or the Caribbean? Do you have to be locked into that national vision or can you also be a cosmopolitan in your own country?

SH: That's a very hard question, and I'm not a good person to answer it because my experience may be too particular to generalise from. One reason is because the Caribbean is by definition cosmopolitan. The original inhabitants – Arawak Indians of the New World – don't exist any longer – they were wiped out by the Spanish conquistadors and by disease within a hundred years of the arrival of Western civilization. So everybody who is there came from somewhere else – the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, the enslaved Africans, the indentured Indians and Pakistanis, the Portugese Jews, the French expelled from Haiti, the Chinese and Lebanese traders … Everybody comes from somewhere else. This is really the true disaporic society. Perhaps, then, you're sort-of a 'natural' cosmopolitan, and the very distinctiveness of Caribbean culture – what is really indigenous today to the Caribbean – is creolisation, the cultural mix of different elements, which is a kind of 'comopolitanism at home'. Though predominantly a black society, the African presence exists 'in translation' with other cultural elements – it is not African but what 'Africa' has become in the New World.

In what sense, then, can you remain at home and be a cosmopolitan? I think that is difficult. But I think if you understand your history as always a history of movement, migration, conquest, translation, if you don't have some originary conception of your own culture as really, always the same – throbbing away there unchanged since the tribal past – you could become a cosmopolitan at home. If you don't have that originary conception of history, you see the degree to which who you are now and what your society has become, is the result of a long and disrupted process of formation which has been made and remade, and is being remade again by forces which are essentially global, which are external to you in some fundamental way.

But I think this is a different kind of cosmopolitanism from the one which is available to those who've travelled to live permanently in different places, out of choice or as a matter of expanding one's experience. The latter have been obliged to think of themselves not as all 'the same' but as different. They can't have an originary conception of culture because they know their own culture has

been transformed, historically. And they see other people like themselves being culturally transformed by new experiences.

I think that, for an anthropologist, my question is: are there then two or three different conceptions of culture? Or is it a fact that culture as such is *always* open to some degree, though cultures change at different paces – Lévi-Strauss divided them into 'hot' and 'cold' societies? And is the real question about those cultures which have remained relatively unchanged over long periods, which have not in recent times been colonized or invaded from outside, not had to absorb large numbers of people, whether they are exempt from my generalization? Won't it turn out that they, too, have been influenced by the outside, aren't self-sufficient, though of course, their sense of movement, of otherness and difference, is bound to be more limited? For those people like me who come from an already diasporic and creolized culture – I'm twice diaspora-ised! – it's easy for me to take on this concept of culture as always to some degree 'unfinished'.

PW: Modern anthropology would say that people, say in Africa, have already had a journey from that theoretically closed culture, which may or may not have once existed. So that they've already been on a journey. And part of that journey they've been on, especially, I suppose, the elite, but even the labour migrants who went into the city to work or whatever, part of their journey has been the making of the nation. And it's within national contours that one has to consider whether you are a cosmopolitan or not. I mean, that would be the question – if you are an African member of an elite, are you going to be a person who just embraces external globalisation, or espouses national homogenisation, or are you going to be somebody who believes in this kind of openness, in the Kantian Enlightenment?

SH: Well, I would agree with all of that. I like that way of thinking about it. They have already been remade by many forces, they are already part of a cosmopolitanising process, so really, it's more a question, not of ideology as such, but of how the culture understands itself – whether there is some impulsion to understand itself as an originary one to which the only really cultural 'progress' would be back towards the original. Or whether it understands itself as inevitably open, and then is working to try to strike a balance between tradition and innovation, between what needs to change, what needs to be let in, let in on what terms, and so on. In a sense, that is the big cultural question of our global times: as soon as the globe is sort of 'one' – not one because it's all the same, but because of the combination of inter-dependencies and the proliferation of differences – how porous should be the borders between cultures, between peoples and histories if they are to retain a sense of identity and specificity? How can they share a space with others who are not like them without demanding that the others become like them? This is 'the multi-cultural question'.

PW: The other side of the question – Can you be a cosmopolitan in your own country? – is can you be a cosmopolitan if you don't have commitments to a place, or people, or maybe even culture? Is it possible to be a cosmopolitan without this rootedness somewhere?

SH: Well, I would have said not. And I'm afraid of the word because sometimes it suggests that. It invokes a kind of cultureless, rootless image of a person who is free-floating, sampling all the cultures, you know, like my global entrepreneurs in the first-class waiting room of some airport, who loves Japanese cooking, a bit of Indian cooking here, French cuisine there. They sample everything, but nothing comes from an understanding of a particular cultural ecology, an attachment to a particular way of handling food, etc. These are the differences that don't make any difference. That doesn't mean you have to eat only one way all the time, but you sort of know what it is like to be attached to a particular cuisine. I think that, without that, the old Marxist jibe, 'rootless cosmopolitan', has some substance. In many ways this is where we encounter an interesting interface with one aspect of liberalism, which exactly thinks that we can only really calculate what individuals are like when we free them from all their attachments. No religion, no culture, nothing but free-floating atoms contracting with one another. I know why this arose – it is part of the Enlightenment desire to free mankind from the burden of tradition. However, I also think this is exactly one of the limitations of liberalism. It's never understood culture. In particular, it's never understood its own culture. This idea of the atomised individual has of course played its role. The idea of the rule of law depends on a certain abstraction of the individual from cultures and particularities, and so does the free exchange of the market. So it does have its value. But liberalism has never understood that it's underpinned by its own culture. There's no liberal democracy that doesn't have roots in a community.

PW: So you always fought your struggles – if they may be called cosmopolitan struggles – from a particular location.

SH: Yes, exactly. I believe in locatedness, in position, attachment, but I believe that these are never singular, never completely determining. Every culture has to be aware of its own 'outside'.

PW: There is a tendency to see cosmopolitans as individual travellers who move around and have, as you say, familiarity with different cultures and tastes, but maybe cosmopolitanism is a collective phenomenon? It's a coming together from many different places potentially to create something new. Maybe even a new culture. So I wondered how you would respond to that question?

SH: I think of it more as a collective phenomenon. I'm interested in certain parts of the world in an earlier period which seemed to have developed a certain kind of cosmopolitanism – the cosmopolitanism of trade. Many of these places are in the Mediterranean or the Middle East, because this was such a point of confluence between Europe and the East. Places like that I think are extremely interesting, because the different cultures don't merge into something entirely new, but they become known as places where many cultures coexist and there are many friend-ships and marriages across cultural lines. This cosmopolitanism is not driven by the harsh disciplines of the global labour market, of people searching for work, but by markets of a more local kind, with people following different routes, drawn together by the exchange of goods, markets, not The Market as a capitalist abstraction. Places like Beirut or the Lebanon, the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa or Muslim Spain – places where differences were tolerated, not places of race riots, ethnic cleansing or religious conversion. People had their attach-ments to particular ways of life, family traditions, and so on. But they were not evangelising societies, they were not trying to recruit people; there was not a crusading vision. These are utopian spots for me. There's a whole history there. Amitav Ghosh has written beautifully about such places. You would have to call them cosmopolitan. I suppose the 'multi-cultural question' is whether Western societies, exposed to the very different circumstances of global capitalism, can ever become 'cosmopolitan' in this vernacular way.

[In the hospital where I go for dialysis] I often sit beside a patient who speaks Russian, and doesn't have a word of English. He's thrilled when I tell him 'Goodbye' in Russian. He's teaching the Filipino nurses Russian phrases and they're teaching him their own language in return. He says to them: 'What are you teaching me?' 'Tagalog, of course', they reply, laughing. He's never heard of it! I think of this man, who is trying desperately to learn English, meanwhile holding on, as an Azerbaijani, to Russian, who can speak only to the Polish woman who is cleaning the ward because Russian is the only means of communication they share, though it is neither of their native languages …. Well, this NHS hospital in central London is a pretty polyglot, cosmopolitan sort of place.

PW: It is remarkable that there are such cosmopolitan sites, like little islands, in the middle of this country where we live.

SH: I think of them as sites rather than societies. It's hard to think of them with a polity, a structure. They are social sites where 'trade-routes' cross.

PW: And one of them is British hospitals in the twenty-first century.

I have one final question to you, which is a serious question but one to which I think to which there isn't a clear answer at the moment. Do you think we should impose cosmopolitan values on other people or places? Should we impose human rights or democracy? Can we impose them?

SH: First of all, I don't know that I would use cosmopolitanism in that way, interchangeably with democracy and human rights. I know that these ideas seem to belong to a common frame. Across the world, democracy is being imposed in the name of modernity, but really as part of a new imperial system. The more democracy is hollowed out in so-called liberal-democracies, the more everybody else is required to have it! People in Iraq or Afghanistan, who have travelled a very different path, historically, and will take a long time to develop a democratic culture which can genuinely underpin democratic institutions, are required to produce it overnight because the Americans need to leave behind a stable state. It also assumes that the forms of democracy in Iraq or Afghanistan will simply replicate Western liberal-democracy. This is not to say that I wouldn't like to see more societies moving towards genuine popular democracy: people developing ways of governing themselves, not being ruled by oligarchies, by elites, by a foreign country or a small political or economic class. In that sense, I think we could do with a lot more of this kind of democracy in this country. There is a genuine problem in the Middle East about the autocratic nature of the governments which have oppressed their people in different ways. But these are exactly the sorts of regimes the West has helped to prop up over the years – an irony not lost on Osama bin Laden. They could do with a good dose of democracy but whether they need it from the muzzle of an AK44 or at the dictate of an armed Hum-Vee is quite another question. I don't think The West can march around the world making people cosmopolitan. On the other hand, the more people can generally begin to hope and aspire in a cosmopolitan way, the less they will be driven to ethnically cleanse people who are not like them, to murder those whom they can't convert, to expel those who won't subscribe to the dominant way of life, etc.

PW: There are countries where almost miraculously, democracy returned, like in Spain, for example, in Poland, in South Africa, partly because of Mandela and de Klerk, so it is possible.

SH: Yes, of course it is possible. But you know, South Africa, in that sense, although it still has many problems to resolve, was extremely lucky that nobody decided to impose anti-apartheid from outside. They managed to do it for themselves, and do it in a way which didn't disable others from joining in, once they'd seen the light. This capacity to constantly enlarge and expand 'the imagined community' is the real ground of a democratic culture: the product of a truly democratic conception of the future. And, though it sounds very individualistic to say so, we know that it couldn't have happened in South Africa without the far-sightedness of people like

Mandela – and even de Klerk! But when things are not leading in that direction, they will take the opposite course: towards the entrenching of differences and the imposition of homogenisation at the barrel of a gun, rather than facilitating the discourse of a critical openness to others.

Which doesn't mean to say a simple-minded relativism – everything that other people do is right. It means saying what you think but being willing to negotiate difference, however difficult and dangerous that turns out to be. In this sense, I'm a child of the Enlightenment. I think one good thing the Enlightenment did understand was that democracy required a big argument, it required an open row, it required a lot of talking, a lot of polemical pamphlets against your opponent, and so on. Not stabbing them in the street. People talk about the stability of democracy but democracy is by definition an open, argumentative, quarrelsome society. It is quarrels that created the enfranchisement of women. Or that gave the majority of people the vote. It's struggles that democratised old aristocratic and industrial capitalist societies, that created the welfare state. All of these advances were strenuously, sometimes bitterly, contested in their time. So the process of democratisation is never an easy passage. Consensus is constructed by the clash between strong positions as to what constitutes the 'good life' – not by some pre-ordained unity.

But translate your question into another: should we then teach cosmopolitan values in schools? Without labelling them as such, I would say yes, a cosmo-politan approach to the discovery of the 'truth'. Of course, all schools are always passing on culture as well as knowledge and scientific understanding. They are transmitting culture. And the more we consciously think about whether we are transmitting the values of critical openness, of respect for but not subservience to difference, of a democratic culture of questioning the orthodoxies, the better. We're in the middle of a debate about whether our schools should become academies, sponsored and to a large extent run by wealthy individuals, private philanthropists and corporate businesess.. I saw the faces of people who have contributed to the next tranche of New Labour's academy strategy in my newspaper yesterday. Will anybody ask the question, why should we be governed by these people, why should a public education system have their priorities imposed on them by the private interests they represent, by people who have no experience or understanding of education? I wouldn't trust them to teach my grandchild to cross the road! But nobody asks that question. So am I in a democratic culture that is really questioning who does and who does not exercise power – which is after all the question with which democracy began? Why should they, because they are very wealthy, have the power to shape the ethos that governs me and my life and the life of my grandchildren to come? I think if we are going to be 'free' to teach Creationism or 'British values' in schools, we ought to be teaching a more cosmopolitan curriculum.

Because Britain has become, whether we like it or not, a kind of proto-cosmopolitan society. Whether or not we are going to get rid of the word 'multiculturalism', we are in effect, irreversibly living in a kind of mixed-up multicultural society. Not one in which the different groups police the differences and patrol the boundaries between them, but a hybrid society of a mixture of cultures and histories, and languages, and traditions, and cuisines, and ways of life. Multiculturalism as a policy goal may be abandoned but 'the multicultural question' – can we find a way of living more equally together without eating one another – will not disappear in a globalising world. Multicultural is what Britain now is, for good or ill, and to have a curriculum which doesn't teach, as one of its underpinning values, a positive view of that kind of cosmopolitan mix, is to sell out the past. Inevitably, we will fall back into ethnic particularism.

PW: So you are a cosmopolitan in your own country, in a way.

SH: That's nice to think, but I am sort of a cosmopolitan without thinking about it.

The following are responses of members of the audience to the viewing of the film of this conversation.

RICHARD WERBNER (Manchester U): Among other things, what intrigued me is the way Stuart wanted us to think of horizons beyond what is actual, to something potential. And this is what I myself view as deeply at the heart of the cosmopolitanism argument, the cosmopolitan question. But one thing, as I listened to him, disturbed me, because I found that I identified too much with him and his kind of experience of being someone who'd left one nation and then had a sense of what had gone on in the nation of origin. And the more I thought about it, I began to worry that the opposition he had between the Ali Baba's Cave sampler, who travels the globe and has a little taste of this and that, and then the cosmopolitan from below, might get in the way of understanding the connection between them, I mean between postcolonial elites and their fellow countrymen. I began wondering how one would see the work that goes on as the people who had to become cosmopolitan willy-nilly, they are still connected to the people who have the luxury of going to different sites in the world with all the comforts that come with it. And having known a cosmopolitan in Africa who kept this organic connection [to his rural ethnic community], I think the challenge for us is not to have too simple an opposition between deracinated, footloose cosmopolitans in the image that would have pleased Stalin, and then the ones that are coming from below and seem to be rooted. So I would say that this is a question to us: how can

we think of the connection between them and not only the disjunction between them?

PHIL STENNIGHAM (Keele U): I really enjoyed the discussion, but [there was] one thing about it that really surprised me, which is that all the talk about cosmopolitanism seems to be around the idea that it is a physical phenomenon, people moving around from one place to another, interacting, physically with other people. But it seems to me that there's another whole aspect to this which I guess I would have to call virtual cosmopolitanism, which is being developed through the Internet – the fact is that now, you know, I can sit in Keele and I can be in connection and communication with people all around the world, without actually having to move out of my office. And that seems to me another form that cosmopolitanism can develop, quite apart from the ability to travel or being forced to move. I'm speaking as somebody who grew up in Britain for the first 22 years of my life, and then I went to Canada for 30 years, and then I went to New Zealand, and now I'm back in Britain. And the interesting thing is that the Britain I'm now back in is quite different from the Britain I left 35 years ago. But one of the reasons that it's not quite like when I left, is because of the Internet, and I can now sit in my office and communicate with people all over the world.

PW: Stuart highlighted the difference between the Enlightenment principles of universal rights, and the sense that people have to be located, they do have a culture, they do have an identity that they can defend. I felt that the way Stuart was struggling throughout the film on how to bridge these two different dimensions, and how to think whether cosmopolitanism was an illegitimate word to use to create that bridge – I thought that was a very interesting aspect of the conversation with him. Because I thought that he did go on a kind of journey during the film, so that by the time he reached the end of the film, he had ended up as a cosmopolitan – which he denied, or worried about, at the beginning.

NIGEL RAPPORT (St Andrews U): I wish Stuart would say more about rootless cosmopolitanism and what he saw wrong with it. He referred to a Marxian critique of the term but left it at that. And it seemed to me that he was making a value judgement rather than an analytical judgement about where rootless cosmopolitanism might lead. Because it would seem to me, as a kind of neo-Kantian, to be precisely a route to world peace. And it seemed also to affect what he said earlier about how can one say, this is me, if one lives in-between. This seems to be something that everybody says – that this is me, and we all live in between, in various ways. And he described those kinds of ways of in-betweenness, as those that move and those that don't move, as both living in between in various ways. He claimed that identity isn't a free-floating smorgasbord, but nor is it inscribed

in genes. But it's about ideologies and histories and narratives. But those are precisely things that also move between, those aren't fixed in spaces. Narratives and histories and ideologies are things that one can't physically attach, nor can one really cognitively or emotionally attach those things to places. So all this adds up to a query, I suppose (and I wish he was here), because I'd like to press him. It seemed like a conviction that one shouldn't aspire to be rootless. It didn't seem to be an ethnography of his, or an analysis or a theory of his. So I'd like to know more about why we should share his conviction, his value.

PW: I thought that one of the things that Stuart did bring out, linked to your question, Nigel, was the way that he emphasised all the time that there was a problem of inequalities in the world – that there were power inequalities, there were economic inequalities. Maybe, I don't know if that kind of links into your question, because he couldn't get away from the fact that there couldn't be a cosmopolitanism until the problem of inequalities had been resolved.

IAN FAIRWEATHER (Manchester U): It seemed to me that one of the things being struggled with, both in the questions and the answers, was the relationship between cosmopolitan individuals and cosmopolitan cultures, and it came out particularly in the answer to the question, Can you be a cosmopolitan at home? And Stuart Hall described the Caribbean as a place with a cosmopolitan history, a place where culture is created in the mix; and of course another place famous for founding that kind of culture is the United States, another melting-pot culture. But obviously, he wasn't implying that someone coming from there necessarily is a cosmopolitan, despite having that history, or is any more likely to be a cosmopolitan than someone coming from a village with a culture that claims to be unitary for so long. So I think it would be interesting to explore more what is the relationship between coming from a culture that has a cosmopolitan history and being a cosmopolitan individual.

DIEDRE MCKAY (ANU): I was interested when Stuart Hall described himself as an outcome of the Enlightenment, and talked about his belief in history, progress, the rule of law, which I assume is state law, and being secular. And I wanted to think of that as a politics of recognition that we would apply to people who might claim to be cosmopolitan: to what extent recognition by others as cosmopolitan is dependent on a subject being a Western Enlightened, modern subject. If we're talking about people who might be migrating or travelling and engaging with the world in various ways, who don't have a conception of history that we would recognise as modern, aren't people who recognise the rule of state law, may in fact be marginal or in an agonistic relationship with the state which they find themselves in, and are not secular, never have been – where do we end up? I'm

sort of concerned that it's only possible to be cosmopolitan as a subject after the modern and after the Enlightenment, that we're talking about a genealogy which then excludes people who then are not caught up in that same genealogy. Do we then have to put them through this process? I was interested in what Hall would have to say about that, because he does ascribe a kind of moral virtue, I think, to being cosmopolitan.

PW: This is something of the tension in the term that he was struggling with as well, I think, because he did talk about cosmopolitanism from below.

KAREN LEONARD (U. of California, Irvine): I was struck by some of the questions that have come back to the film, about the individual versus the collective, or people at home rewriting or writing a national history; and people moving abroad, of course, are also rewriting, remaking the past, as they look to the present, the power configurations of the present, and I thought that this was a very interesting aspect of the interview.

Note

1. See also the film version of this interview: http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/Stuart_hall_fast.htm

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