

On a Kind of Cosmopolitanism

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We have some decent and many indecent societies and even more frequently societies in between. They will all have their decencies and indecencies. And sometimes different understandings or readings of these very terms. What is indecent in Kansas City may not be indecent in Orlando. Different societies, partially, will have their own decencies and indecencies. Moreover, in all societies there will be infants so young that they can neither act nor be decent or indecent. And there will be a few people so aged and so beset with Alzheimer's Disease that they cannot knowingly act decently or indecently. They, rather, are like big babies: people with adult bodies and baby minds. These people cannot have a way of life or even understand what it is to have one or to reject one. Infants and the very aged deeply Alzheimered people cannot act decently or indecently or even be said to so act. The so aged very normally will once have had a way of life but no longer have one or are even capable of having one or of understanding what it is to have one.

At the times that they are no longer capable there is no way of intelligibly saying they are acting decently or indecently or being decent or indecent or being moral or immoral. Still, they must be treated with care and concern, lovingly some would say, and it is in that way that they are treated decently. This is the way it should be.

They should also be treated appropriately lovingly where hopefully they will have some little note of that and even when, perhaps, they can have only some feeble notice of that, if at all. They are to be treated lovingly. One has perhaps seen that in seeing someone die. Plainly, a very saddening experience but an instructive one here.

What is it to be where things are not only *desired* but *desirable*? Where going in the desirable direction we live in exciting and attractive situations where such things are going on. Perhaps unfortunately not for all people there, but centrally at least for the cultured few without making it uninviting for anyone. A place where people can flourish without being caught up with religion or immersed with and/or so committed politically. They may be so caught up but they need not be. What is needed is a place where they will live comfortably and commodiously. Where there are good films, good opera, good concerts available. Where there are good schools and universities readily and affordably available and good medical treatment for all with their governments being the single payer. Where people will not get steamed up about people being different from them in their race or lifestyle. Where there will be no dislike, let alone hate, of the other. Something that now is scant on the ground.

In such a world we have a distinct kind of cosmopolitanism, though it is to be in a multicultural world that is not just tolerated but calmly taken to be desirable and widely desired for that desirable to have a firm widespread existence. This is *a* cosmopolitanism. It has some good things in it. But it is indifferent to a lot of things that would make for a flourishing life for as many as possible. It can blatantly tolerate a lot of misery and turn a blind eye on the struggle and the need to struggle for there to be an order of kindness for all and for a perceptive understanding by many of our world. That cosmopolitanism is not the humanistic egalitarian cosmopolitanism that I am attuned to and articulate and defend. Instead, it is conducive to an elitist *übermensch* cosmopolitanism that is exploitatively political and economic and can be a very nasty social order.

This effete snobbish elitist cosmopolitanism is unfortunately not a cosmopolitanism that is uncommon, particularly in our Western societies among the upper classes and even *some* non-upper classes who are educated. But it is not likely to be one of a Trump supporter. But it would be of a Kissinger one, though not only of such a one. It is the kind of cosmopolitanism that Marxists have typically contemptuously rejected.

It is a rather elitist one that is non-moralistic that favors a bourgeois democratic view. That elitism is an undemocratic view that does not seek an egalitarian world where everyone will and each is to count as one and none to count for more than one. They would regard that as an absurdly utopian view. If that is what democracy comes to, they believe, we could well do without it. They would like to ignore such matters and deal with what is commodious. Rather than trying to achieve a world of equality, they seek to blandly set such an egalitarianism aside. They are concerned instead with living interesting lives that are realistically possible and commodious.

For this to be so there needs to be cultural space for a well-mannered living where lives will be lived where there are cultural spaces for such living where the arts and sciences flourish and are securely anchored in a reasonable wealthy non-traumatic, non-conflicting society. There is little concern about equality in the society *these* cosmopolitans wish to attune themselves to, though they are not against some equality. But they do not make a big thing about it. It is just not a matter that they are much, if at all, concerned with.

What is a cosmopolitan world for them is an interesting and secure world of reasonable wealth with many life chances and respect for and interest in diversity in a tolerated multi-cultural cosmopolitanism. But not the humanistic egalitarian cosmopolitanism that I am articulating and defending. The cosmopolitanism I am characterizing here is indifferent to the human condition except to keep life sufficiently in order so that an elite could live commodiously and in a way that answers to and is in accordance with these elites' intellects and tastes. It is no wonder that Marxists were contemptuous of such a cosmopolitanism.

Yet none of these elitist cosmopolitanism need be racists or fanatics. They are rather indifferent concerning such matters. It does not exercise them as long as it does not lead to conditions that make life uncomfortable for these cosmopolitan elitists. They reasonably would wish Trump away. But they still are at a considerable distance from what should be our ideal: a humanistic egalitarian cosmopolitanism.