Introduction

Taking the Cosmos in Cosmopolitanism Seriously

A meeting in Paris in 1919 challenged in word and deed the Western claim that Africans could not self-govern. To this day, neo-Kantian cosmopolitan political theory cannot properly grasp what made this meeting so radical. This is because of the grounding of cosmopolitan theory in Kant's political writings, whose seemingly global orientation is – when closely examined – narrowly concerned with the dangers of colonial conflict for Europe and cannot on its own provide a normative vision of world justice. In this book, I propose a theoretical framework of *transnational cosmopolitanism* – built upon the neglected work of W. E. B. Du Bois – to make sense of this event and other forms of transnational solidarity that contest the exclusionary structure of domestic and international realms of politics. Transnational cosmopolitanism is not tautological, it directs our attention to the *political craft* through which global injustice is contested and alternative organizations of the world are imagined. The concern with global forms of injustice makes this framework cosmopolitan. But the conviction that global injustice is best reconstructed by attending to interconnected yet local forms of domination and the forms of transnational solidarity that emerge therein makes it transnational. These forms of solidarity inaugurate counter-publics that mark themselves off from the dominant public and belong neither to the domestic nor to the international realm, but straddle them.

But back to 1919, just as Western powers were meeting in Versailles, W. E. B. Du Bois hosted the second Pan-African Congress in Paris. In this meeting, Africans and African Americans congregated in order to pressure the delegates at the peace table to consider the interests of people of

color in the United States and the world (*FA*, 111). The United States and England denied visas to potential attendees not already in Paris, but the meeting took place nonetheless with attendees from over fifteen countries. Du Bois's plan for the German African colonies, which he had already sent to Woodrow Wilson, structured the agenda. This plan proposed that decisions on the fate of these colonies be made by a "public opinion" composed of chiefs and educated subjects from these colonies, along with the educated members of the African diaspora and the French and British colonies (*FA*, 119). These claims, and the actual gathering organized in Paris, undermined Western claims about subject peoples; their inability to self-govern was falsified by the very presence of these subjects, who – regardless of their different affiliations – came together to enact a new anti-colonial counter-public, i.e., a public that marks itself off from the dominant public, where it would have been received with hostility (Warner 2002, 81).

This new public converged around an understanding of the struggle against racial injustice in the United States being entwined with the fight against colonial rule in Africa. This public was neither domestic nor international, but relied on horizontal coalitions of subjects at the receiving end of imperial powers and spoke against Western powers' postwar consensus and the racially unjust United States polity. In so doing, this intervention highlighted the exclusionary nature of "international society" as well as the duplicity of an internally racialized United States performing as a liberal world power. At the same time, this event established ties of solidarity among differently located racialized subjects, which aimed to envision a world that need not predicate the freedom of some on the colonial or neocolonial oppression of others.

The gathering in Paris can be categorized neither as domestic nor as an international forum, thus falling into what I call "transnational politics." What is notable about this event, however, is how difficult it is to categorize it within the dominant coordinates of the contemporary neo-Kantian literature on cosmopolitanism (Benhabib 2004, 2006; Bohman 2007; Habermas 1997, 2001; Kleingeld 2012; Ypi 2012), itself an important strand of the contemporary debate on cosmopolitanism and global justice. Within political theory, cosmopolitanism is typically associated with an account of what justice is and requires a series of institutional prescriptions that contribute to realizing those requirements.[1]

[1] A second variant of cosmopolitanism is more directly indebted to Rawls's *Theory of Justice* and *The Law of Peoples*, and occasionally borrows from Kant's cosmopolitan

More broadly understood, however, cosmopolitanism is the area of inquiry that seeks to conceptualize questions of injustice and political responsibility at the level of the cosmos, based on the axiom of equal concern for all subjects regardless of membership or affiliation. If we are interested in theorizing injustice and political responsibility, we must grapple with the fact that, just as in colonial times, two features characterize our world: (1) injustice operates transnationally (i.e., affecting groups within and outside the West in ways that have affinities) and (2) vulnerable groups are excluded from representation in domestic spheres in the West and the non-West, and, as a consequence, in the international sphere. Focusing on the transnational character of injustice means acknowledging that multiple sets of dynamically overlapping and interacting social fields exceeding the national "create and shape seemingly bordered and bounded structures, actors, and processes" (Khagram and Levitt 2008, 26). This does not mean abandoning the domestic realm as an important sphere of politics, because the nation state is an inescapable social phenomenon that must be considered, even if not necessarily frame the inquiry (Seigel 2005, 63). It does mean that cosmopolitan approaches must theorize the distinctiveness of transnationalism to connect localized forms of domination and struggles with global economic and political structures (Mohanty 2002, 501).

The inability of neo-Kantian cosmopolitanism to grasp and theorize an event like the Pan-African Congress in 1919 speaks to deeper problems in this theoretical framework that prevent it from properly grasping contemporary questions of *transnational* injustice and the *political craft* through which subaltern actors contest these structures. These problems arise from the limitations of Kant's cosmopolitanism itself, but reappear in the accounts of neo-Kantian scholars in ways that curtail their ability to consider transnational injustice and transnational politics.

Kant's cosmopolitanism, developed in *Toward Perpetual Peace* (from now *Perpetual Peace*) and his *Doctrine of Right*, and the discussion of colonialism contained therein, are considered one of the bedrocks of the contemporary reconstruction of the Kantian cosmopolitan project. Yet, despite the apparently global motivation of his intervention, I show that both Kant's anti-colonialism and its role in his cosmopolitanism have actually narrower motivations. I argue that Kant's *Perpetual Peace* was

notions (Rawls 1999a, 1999b). I address this literature in the conclusion and elsewhere (Valdez 2019).

written out of concern for European stability and the progress of this continent toward peace. Each of the three "Definitive Articles" in this essay aims to come to terms with sources of instability and conflict that imperil the road toward European peace, including the third article, which contains the discussion of colonialism. While there is a moral condemnation of colonialism in the third article and one of settlement in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, these are not well-elaborated critiques and are compatible with hierarchical beliefs about race and civilization, which Kant explicitly espoused in earlier work. This is the *problem of hierarchy*. Rather than coming to grips with the nature of colonial injustice or exploring the political agency of the colonized (visibly at play in the Haitian Revolution as Kant was writing), the bulk of Kant's discussion in the third article focuses on *intra*-European colonial *conflict in* the colonies. In other words, rather than the relation of colonizer–colonized, Kant's focuses on intra-European conflict in faraway lands, which he judges too unbridled to contribute to the virtuous process of asocial sociability, which he believed would channel European conflict toward peace. This was his main concern, a concern that has little correspondence with the questions of global injustice that we face today. This is the problem of *correspondence*.

The evidently problematic commitment to racial and civilizational hierarchy in Kant has been shed by neo-Kantians, whose theories are genuinely egalitarian and concerned with the whole world, rather than just Europe. However, by maintaining other features of the Kantian framework, they inherit a framework that has little correspondence with our problems today. Thus, even if their goal is genuinely to advance a theory of *world* justice by embedding their theorization on Kant's framework, their vision of today's cosmopolitanism remains unwittingly centered in Europe (i.e., Eurocentric). This appears in three features of their theorizing:

1) Federative Eurocentrism: neo-Kantian scholars tend to remain (to different degrees and in different forms) within the Kantian framework that sanctions the domestic and international realms as the only spaces where politics takes place. In this they abide by the federative structure of Kant's cosmopolitanism.
2) Unworldly Eurocentrism: scholars do not consider intellectual resources and political practices from outside the West. This is despite the fact that this region has historically been at the receiving end of global wrongs (which cosmopolitanism aims to right) and

that it has, as a consequence, a well-developed tradition of thought and political practice with insights about global injustice.

3) Ahistorical Eurocentrism: neo-Kantian scholars tend to focus – sometimes critically – on a Western genealogy of international institutions (including the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the European Union [EU]) and overlook other instances of transnational cooperation taking place at the margins, like the Versailles example mentioned earlier.

In practice, these three forms of Eurocentrism result in neo-Kantians' tendency to engage in four interrelated practices of theorizing. First, because of their indebtedness to Kant's federative framework of cosmopolitanism, neo-Kantian scholars think of progress toward cosmopolitanism vertically, as a problem that requires democratization domestically and the gradual integration of these democracies into regional institutions in the style of the EU (Habermas 2000, 2006; Ypi 2012; sometimes Bohman 2007; Forst 2012). Second, because of their lack of attention to anti-colonial critiques of Western domination, some neo-Kantians think of Western democracies as the most developed ones and those that – once enlightened – will lead the project of cosmopolitanism. These two practices of theorizing overlook the problem that Western democracies actively sustain unjust power relations in the international sphere, of which they are the main beneficiaries. This puts in question the dictum that enlightened democracies will develop cosmopolitan orientations, and is akin to deferring to the privileged for a view of justice. Moreover, the fact that some states sustain unjust power relations also truncates the process of vertical integration of gradually democratizing polities, because imperfect democratic regimes in the Global South are significantly indebted to external constraints (Forst 2015). Third, a related practice of theorizing posits the model of the EU as a script for other regions to follow or as a model to extend to the rest of the world. This again reflects the Kantian federative model, and involves an assessment of the EU as an imperfect but improving script of federative peace that simply needs to be further extended for peace and justice to expand as well. Yet, the idea that the form of organization of a dominant region of the world can be extended is inconsistent; because the well-being and prosperity of Europe depends on a historically and presently unjust world, its model is simply not reproducible in the world sphere. Fourth, building upon a Kantian framework that considers the domestic realm paramount, some neo-Kantian scholars treat the cosmopolitan realm as

one of morality, with politics restricted to the domestic and international realms (Benhabib 2006; Habermas 2006). This strategy obscures the political activity undertaken beyond the domestic and international spheres by a variety of actors that operate transnationally to put forward alternative models of organization at the world level.

As a consequence of these three forms of Eurocentrism and the related practices of theorizing, neo-Kantian frameworks offer narrow accounts of cosmopolitan normativity and politics. First, by not engaging non-European intellectual and political resources, neo-Kantian scholars miss the centrality of racial regimes of imperial and postimperial domination operating within Western regimes and transnationally theorized by this tradition. This is a central *political* feature of the way in which authority and domination were organized, one that was still prevalent when the League of Nations and United Nations were founded. Second, by not deviating too much from the federative model, neo-Kantians overlook transnational forms of solidarity and cooperation that result in important political actions in line with the cosmopolitan project of justice. These forms of organization offer *normative* scripts of justice that require exiting exclusionary domestic and international realms of politics. Third, by overlooking transnational thinking and political action spearheaded by subaltern groups, they also miss normative and political dimensions of the struggle for justice that makes advances toward cosmopolitanism possible. Among these dimensions are the centrality of mutual identification and solidarity in the political craft of cosmopolitanism, and their role strengthening political agency and transnational coalitions that are the condition of possibility of cosmopolitanism.

To address these problems, I propose a theoretical framework of transnational cosmopolitanism that draws on the neglected post–World War I work of W. E. B. Du Bois.[2] This approach centers questions of identity, transnational solidarity, and anti-colonial counter-publics, and thus transfigures accepted divisions between domestic and international politics. A transfiguration amounts to a radical and qualitative break that does not claim to culminate or perfect existing structures but instead departs from them (Benhabib 1986, 41–2). In the case of the transnational cosmopolitanism I reconstruct, the transfiguration is threefold.

[2] My claim is not that W. E. B. Du Bois is the only scholar missing from this conversation, but that Du Bois's long and prolific career as a scholar and activist makes him a privileged source for a critique of neo-Kantian cosmopolitanism and a coherent and comprehensive approach to cosmopolitanism in its own right.

First, a transformation in consciousness allows domestically marginalized subjects to reenvision themselves as part of a transnational collective. Second, this transformation is enabled and advances the formation of a counter-public that relies on ties of solidarity and a common sense of imperial temporality as bloody and radical regress, rather than progress. Third, these twin realizations in turn feed into new disruptive forms of politics that intervene in spaces of domestic and international politics and demand justice and reparation. The goal of this engagement is to present Du Bois as a global political thinker who deserves pride of place in the literature on cosmopolitanism.[3]

Transnational cosmopolitanism transfigures cosmopolitanism and, in so doing, reconceives its normative impetus. The proposed approach does take equal concern as a motivation but it refuses to design all-encompassing institutions and universal principles of inclusion, and to adjust existing political action to fit existing domestic and international realms. Moreover, transnational cosmopolitanism does not theorize the present based on models of politics indebted to a European ideal of convergent republicanism and international federation. Instead, transnational cosmopolitanism focuses on three under-theorized dimensions of cosmopolitanism. First, transnational cosmopolitanism starts from the acknowledgment of the common transnational origins of injustice (i.e., the ontological point). This acknowledgment implies, second, that political arenas and systems of accountability that exceed the domestic and the international spheres must exist to track and contest these origins (i.e., the political point). Third, to track arenas where transnational injustice is politicized, cosmopolitan theorists must relocate the cosmopolitan subject away from the charitable Westerner and toward subaltern colonized and

[3] I have a profound debt to the dynamic literature in African and African American Studies on Pan-Africanism, "vernacular" and "colored" cosmopolitanism, and historical accounts of transnational coalition making (Briggs 2005; Hooker 2017; Horne 1986, 2009; M'bayo 2004; Makalani 2011; Mullen 2003; Nantambu 1998; Shilliam 2015; Slate 2012a; Stephens 2005; Von Eschen 1997). My aim here is to position Du Bois as a global thinker and an interlocutor in the political theory of cosmopolitanism. By doing so, I go beyond Pan-Africanism by focusing on Du Bois's interest in establishing affinities and extending solidarity beyond Africa and toward Asia and the Americas. Vis-à-vis the historical reconstruction of realms of solidarity among Africans and Afro-diaspora, and Asians as forms of "colored cosmopolitanism," I show the purchase of the writings of one participant in this movement and the instances of coalition making for theorizing cosmopolitanism. As a consequence, my focus is on a more textured analysis of the normative and political dimensions of Du Bois's writings and political practice, and how they should inform theorizing of cosmopolitanism in contemporary political theory.

neocolonized subjects who take seriously the questions of identity, political subjectivity, and solidarity, tying together marginalized subjects located inside and outside the West (i.e., the ethical point).

By relying on Du Bois's multi-genre writing, his autobiographical reflections, and his political action, the conceptualization of transnational cosmopolitanism I put forward highlights the *political craft* that underpins projects of cosmopolitanism. Attention to political craft allows us to uncover events that are unintelligible to existing frameworks of cosmopolitanism, like the one that took place in Versailles in 1919, and focus on their political and normative import vis-à-vis a project of world justice. In this sense, attending to political craft is not simply to "illustrate" abstract cosmopolitan theories, but to vastly alter their theoretical presumptions and normative priorities (Ackerly 2018, 9, 14, 26; Goodhart 2018, 12–17; Lu 2018a).[4] In this book, I highlight forms of hospitable communication between marginalized subjects that put the exclusions of sanctioned realms in sharp relief. This engagement questions basic theoretical notions of sovereignty, the people, and political subjectivity by transnationalizing them. I further show that these exchanges were built upon networks of solidarity that exceeded borders, and that they successfully constituted a dynamic counter-public with a shared temporality and public will distinct and opposed to those of mainstream European publics. The normative insights of the grounded character of cosmopolitanism and its attention to non-Western spaces of colonial or postcolonial oppression, however, do not simply follow from the marginal locations of the groups engaged.[5] The marginal character of the writings and political action of Du Bois is *not*, in and of itself, a reason for engaging with his thought. As Luciana Cadahia and her coauthors argue, the

[4] This project also has affinities with Michael Neblo's defense of a "cooperative mode" between normative political theory and empirical social sciences. While in this project I set out to "cooperate" with the historical context and political action of W. E. B. Du Bois, it is no less true that one of the things I expect from this engagement is guidance for the workability of the normative theorization of cosmopolitanism (Neblo 2015, 10).

[5] While Du Bois is, technically, a Westerner, his was a critical voice that explicitly contested central tenets of American democratic exceptionalism and Western civilizational discourse. Moreover, throughout his life, Du Bois aligned himself with and contributed to consolidating a host of non-Western currents of thought, including Ethiopianism, Pan-Africanism, and Afro-Asianism. He could, perhaps, be usefully understood as part of what is currently known as "the Global South in the West" (Grewal 2013, 6). This caveat allows me to otherwise maintain the distinction between the West and non-West, assuming "West" still usefully tracks the site of imperial and postcolonial capitalist power without denying the internal heterogeneity of the West and/or the fuzzier divisions between these spaces upon which transnationalism approaches rightly remark.

periphery does not necessarily, i.e., just because of its site of enunciation, hold a truth forgotten by the center (Cadahia et al. 2018, 9).[6] Instead, what counts is the ability of marginal thinkers and their proposals – often resisted at the time and ignored in contemporary scholarship – to make us reconsider ways of seeing the world, normative priorities, and undertheorized questions. In this book, I show that transnational cosmopolitanism offers powerful insights with which to theorize injustice, transnational politics, and solidarity in ways that will revitalize and democratize the project of cosmopolitanism. These insights include both tools for better conceptualizing contemporary global challenges, in the sense of acknowledging their political character, *and* a reorientation of the normative priorities of cosmopolitan projects.

In particular, the transnational cosmopolitanism I propose is a normative account, which is not committed to abstract derivations of ideal forms of institutions that will secure justice globally. Instead, transnational cosmopolitanism is *grounded* in concrete experiences of oppression and the political practices of the struggle against it, including the conceptions of justice and practices of freedom developed in the struggle. Moreover, the cosmopolitanism proposed is *relational*, to the extent that it emerges from forms of political action dependent on intersubjective identification and the establishment of ties of solidarity among subjects engaged in common struggles locally and transnationally. This cosmopolitanism is also *dialectical*, to the extent that it takes struggles for emancipation to be always incomplete, because they are either non–all-encompassing or because power structures reorganize and new oppositional claims emerge. Because it is grounded yet concerned with global (in)justice, the cosmopolitanism of this project is decidedly *transnational*.

[6] This is made clear by Clifford Bob's work on transnational movements whose goals are decidedly non-emancipatory (2001). Moreover, a reliance on the thought and political action of a thinker like Du Bois must also acknowledge the normatively problematic way in which power circulated within transnational coalitions themselves. Du Bois's supportive stance toward non-Western empires, his exclusionary attitude toward black women, and his patronizing stance toward Africans all fall within this category. These features of coalition making, even the more horizontal kind that took place among marginalized subjects of empire, speak of the inevitable deviation of hospitable relations toward attempts to establish mastery theorized by Jacques Derrida (2000). This feature of hospitality need not prevent us from considering Du Bois – or anti-colonial thinkers more broadly – as productive normative resources to rethink cosmopolitanism. Rather, it should further affirm the importance of scrutinizing the democratic character of transnational encounters and the publics and institutions that are built upon them in the theorization of cosmopolitanism.

By this I mean that it finds the meaning of *global* justice and emancipation in the *particular* way in which actors throughout the world experience injustice and converge in recognizing that the oppression they face is connected to racialized and imperial forms of global power. In other words, what justice requires is attention to what located subjects conceive of as properly emancipatory transformations, which may not coincide across spaces. This is not because their subjection is not a matter of "global justice," but because the common set of global forces affecting them and other located subjects are refracted through local conditions, historical constellations, and particular forms of colonial rule and/or state power. This form of inquiry augments, challenges, and redirects the contemporary discussion on cosmopolitanism. The fact that Du Bois is the core source of my inquiry and the perspective of black Americans and colonial peoples is central in his work does not mean this is a "vernacular" project. This is because these perspectives are required resources for rethinking global justice so as to better track oppression and the normative priorities of those whose needs it wishes to serve. By conceptualizing the problem of race-based, colonial, and semi-colonial domination, and attending to transnational identity, solidarity, and political subjectivity, transnational cosmopolitanism contributes to the project of universality understood as the process of contestation of existing universals (Balfour 2011, 132–3; Butler 1996; Ingram 2013, 156–7; McKean 2017). Attending to those subjects and instances of domination that are not intelligible in the standard notion of universality assumed in frameworks of political theorizing is necessary, because the emancipation of those subjects constitutes the very possibility of universality.

The notion of transnational cosmopolitanism proposed is normative as well as political. It is normative because it contains an account of (in) justice that is rooted in the political experiences, practices, and thinking of actors struggling against conditions indebted to global social, political, and economic forces. Yet, the normativity of my account does not depend on a vision of justice as an ultimate ideal, but, first, on the construction of a composite picture of injustice based on the experience and political action of oppressed actors and, second, on the recovery of the aspirations toward justice contained in the struggle. This vision of justice, moreover, changes as actors reconceive of themselves as political subjects and as conditions of injustice gradually subside or mutate. In other words, just as bourgeois freedom, which emerged in opposition to absolutism, contained patriarchal and racialized exclusions and was ill-equipped by design to assist women and colonial subjects in their struggles