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# **Cosmopolitics and Common Sense**

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**HORATIO**

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

**HAMLET**

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

(Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 5)

The paradox of a 'stranger' welcoming something 'strange' was not lost on her Tiv audience when Laura Bohannon recounted Shakespeare's Hamlet to them in 1950s West Africa: without a relevant genealogy how could they assess the meaning of the ghost King's relationship to Hamlet? (Bohannon 1966). The same paradox looms in the idea of a cosmopolitan or world anthropology: who plays host to whom intellectually in a discipline without favoured sites or privileged genealogical matrices? Who will arbitrate which 'spectres' are honoured and which are relegated (Derrida 2006)? If we accept that both the ethnographic field and anthropology as a discipline are now not simply multi-sited but in truth 'unsited', then this paradoxical predicament is already with us (Cook et al. 2009, Lins Ribeiro 2006). Modern anthropological knowledge has always been imagined in a certain way; it comes in emic form from a fieldsite to a centre of knowledge where it is welcomed for its potential to inform etic debates. But who will play host and whom guest in an ethnography and anthropology which does not distinguish fixed intellectual loci or points d'appuis?

In what follows, I argue that pursuing the logic of a cosmopolitan anthropology will inevitably open up a renewed discussion on the meaning of subjectivity vis-à-vis the social. I take as my focus a debate between Ulrich Beck and Bruno Latour over the notion of the cosmopolitan or cosmopolitical. Their contrary positions signal the increasingly strong divergence between a humanist and an organistic answer to the question 'what is a subject'? On the one side, Beck stands for an enduring humanism associated especially with Kant and refracted in latter-day anthropology by diverse figures including Firth, Mintz and Hannerz. For Beck, the human subject is 'a primary

substance' (Whitehead 1978:157): in his stance, understanding the current condition of human subjectivity is paramount for social science; other questions are questions only relative to this substantial one. On the other side, Latour ranks with proponents of organistic philosophies and anthropologies including Peirce, James, Whitehead, Bateson and, closer to the present, Strathern. For these thinkers, subjectivity derives its qualities from its distribution across emergent networks: it is not a property solely or necessarily even mainly of human individuals. The important discussion on cosmopolitanism is not, in the first instance, then, about whether this term will replace other terms or even whether cosmopolitanism is a 'good thing'; it rather has to do with the diverging conceptions of subjectivity it engages, and the intellectual and ethical effects of these engagements.

This paper begins with an excursus into the debate in question, looking first at Beck's cosmopolitanism then at Latour's contrasting cosmopolitics. We will see that Latour's critique revolves around the proposition that Beck's cosmopolitanism is too sociological and not anthropological enough (Latour 2004). My worry is that Latour's comparative anthropology may itself be too purified - insufficiently comparative, plural or subjectivized, but I will leave those concerns until later. However, Latour makes some points that we undoubtedly need to consider in arriving at a distinctly anthropological cosmopolitanism – one that accounts for the common sense of ethnographic knowledge. Against Beck's humanistic cosmopolitanism, Latour posits a cosmopolitics in which people, along with many non-human agents, create conflicting natures which they then fight over. I suggest that the positions of Beck and Latour may usefully be triangulated with a certain type of 19<sup>th</sup> Century skepticism or ethical egoism. Via a discussion of Kantian common sense I return to the issue in hand – what might be distinctive about an ethnographically informed anthropological cosmopolitanism? What assumptions concerning subjectivity might it presuppose or engage? An initial rapprochement between cosmopolitics in the Latourian sense and cosmopolitanism may involve acknowledging the activity of some of Latour's non-human agents both in the common sense of anthropologists and of their informants.

## **Zombie categories made visible**

Ulrich Beck has described extensively the crisis in 'methodological nationalism' that he sees at the centre of the fragmentation of latter-day social theory – and its cosmopolitanization (2002, 2004, 2006). The roots of this crisis lie in how the state has lost its metaphysical priority as the cause, frame and context for all the social phenomena that constitute it. There is an awareness that most of the stock concepts of Twentieth Century social science; the statistics that give mathematical meaning to state practices; society (understood as a synonym of the 'national fallacy' 2002:29); the family; the household; social class have become what Beck terms 'zombie categories' under current conditions (2002: 24). Taking their meaning each from the other, these concepts continue to do intellectual work even though the lived reality to which they refer no longer exists. The symptom of these developments, and in certain respects the cure, is the 'clash of cultures and rationalities within one's own life' (2002:35). Insofar as the awareness of attachments across these supposedly bounded categories becomes an ethical project, it lends itself to acknowledging a sense of 'global responsibility in a world risk society, in which there are "no others"' (2002:35-36).

*methodological cosmopolitanism* implies a new politics of comparison...  
The monologic national imagination of the social sciences assumed that Western modernity is a universal formation and that the modernities of the non-Western others can be understood only in relation to the idealized Western model (2002:22).

In this new field, 'there is not one language of cosmopolitanism, but many languages, tongues, grammars' (2002:35). However, on this point Beck is wary of giving value to culturally relative 'cosmopolitanisms' since with this move we revert to the conspectus of multiculturalism in which each individual becomes 'the product of the language, the traditions, the convictions, the customs and landscapes in which he came into the world' (2002:35). In the specific intervention that becomes the object of Latour's critique (2004), Beck

argues that rather than positing multiple and incommensurable forms relative to one another, cosmopolitanism must be based on a type of contextualized universalism.

The true counterposition to incommensurability is: there are no separate worlds (our misunderstandings take place within a single world). The global context is varied, mixed, and jumbled—in it, mutual interference and dialogue (however problematic, incongruous, and risky) are inevitable and ongoing. The fake joys of incommensurability are escape routes leading nowhere, certainly not away from our intercultural destiny (2004:436).

It is this 'single world' cosmopolitanism that becomes the focus of Latour's criticism. Beck, Latour argues, has taken his cosmopolitanism 'off the shelf, from the stoics and Kant' (2004:453). For Latour, Stoical and Kantian cosmopolitanism both imply an 'already unified cosmos' (Latour 2005:262,fn362). I will dispute this further on, but it is certainly true that this represents Beck's stance – we have each internalized 'jumbled' versions of a single world (Beck 2004:436). Further, in Latour's view, it is no use our continuing to say that if only we could agree about the one world we all inhabit then our problems could be resolved: we do not inhabit one world but instead a pluriverse of divergently mediated worlds ('pluriverse' being an adoption from William James, 1909). In the sense that people will not give up these multiple worlds without a fight, then they are incommensurable. In an ironic echo of Kant's proposal that enlightenment consists in throwing off a 'self-imposed immaturity' (Kant 1983:41), Latour tells us that instead of continuing to appeal to a shared (human) nature, Westerners need to jettison the Eurocentric 'exoticism they have imposed on themselves' (2004b:43); that is to say, they need to join the others in recognising many, variably mediated, natures.

As elsewhere in his writing, on this point Latour is fulsome in his approval of Viveiros de Castro's account of Amerindian multinaturalism (Latour 2009). Unlike Westerners who hold that there is one nature but many cultures,

Amerindians entertain many natures and a single anthropomorphic culture. For Amazonian indians the specific natural form of an entity hides its general anthropomorphic meta-structure. Latour presents the parable of a fight between Amerindians and conquistadores: Amerindians debate whether Spaniards have bodies while Spaniards discourse over whether Amerindians have souls – there is no shared nature regarding which their arguments can be resolved. The most important lesson here from Latour’s point of view is that the stabilization of any given form of nature involves the mobilization of hosts of non-human agents who intervene, interfere and play diverse negotiative roles; whether as divinities, test tube cells, DNA profiles, or ‘non-material couplings’ (1996). No purpose, then, in invoking Amerindians as participants in a shared cosmopolitan future: Amazonian Indians ‘are already globalized in the sense that they have no difficulty in integrating “us” into “their” cosmologies. It is simply that in their cosmic politics we do not have the place that “we” think we deserve’ (2004:457,fn13).

Latour’s cosmopolitics is, hence, not simply a struggle between human individuals and their diverse worldviews, it is a fight between human subjects plus all the non-human actors who participate (and can be thought of as having an interest) in the mediation and institutionalisation of specific fields of nature-and-culture. Thus Latour defines subjectivity in the following pragmatic (some might say generous) way: ‘every assemblage that pays the price of its existence in the hard currency of recruiting and extending is, or rather has, subjectivity’ (2005:218). This formulation has the effect – and this is of course central to Latour’s project - of reanimating, repersonalising and resubjectivising numerous inert or ‘dead’ commodities, categories, symbols, properties and objects, and making their cosmopolitical role visible and analytically crucial.

### **Subjectivity amidst a multitude of Gods and Demons?**

This matter of redefining subjectivity is surely the most fundamental point of divergence between Beck and Latour. In Beck’s stance, subjectivity remains without question a property of human individuals. For him,

cosmopolitanisation further pushes to the front the only kind of subjectivity that counts – the subjectivity of the thinking and acting human individual. As he states, ‘the question “who am I?” is now irrevocably separated from origins and essences’ (2004:449): cosmopolitanisation entails intensified individualisation. Without resort to a frictionless ethnic or national mandate, individual human subjects increasingly must answer directly to (and ethically for) the multitude of ‘gods and demons’ populating their versions of the world (Weber 1948:148). At the same time, despite their divergence, an emphasis on re-envisioning subjectivity is shared by Latour and Beck precisely because both eschew Twentieth Century social constructionism. Beck shows how the category ‘society’ has crumbled because the ‘transnational’ has become so irrefutably knotted into every aspect of subjective experience. The ‘national fallacy’ may, nonetheless, become intensified in these conditions. Even while it has lost its ‘institutional or geographical fixity’, the state continues to act – individuals are still forced to build their practices around its manifold intrusions (Trouillot 2001:126). But, Beck argues, nationality has at the same time become decreasingly comprehensible in value-rational terms: belonging to a particular nation-state has dwindling value as an explanation of anything else. Latour, in the same vein, indicates the futility of invoking a ‘society’ that lies behind, and at the same time explains, every political manoeuvre apart from itself:

To insist that behind all the various issues there exists the overarching presence of the same system, the same empire, the same totality, has always struck me as an extreme case of masochism, a perverted way to look for a sure defeat while enjoying the bittersweet feeling of superior political correctness. Nietzsche traced the immortal portrait of the ‘man of resentment’, by which he meant a Christian, but a critical sociologist would fit just as well (2005:252).

Latour and Beck share something very significant, then: they reject a cornerstone of classic sociological critique and in so doing they reach back to social philosophies that predate ‘society’ as an analytical category. For Beck this involves an explicit return to Kant. Meanwhile Latour, as we have seen,

calls on the pragmatism of Peirce and James in support of his revised sociology of actors and networks. But this reaching back takes them in distinct directions.

The reversed gaze beyond Twentieth Century social theory is a highly significant facet of the current intellectual dialogues around cosmopolitanism: there is a search for a conceptual language and this can involve either a redefinition of concepts already in play, new coinings, or a return to parallel dialogues from the past. Here I will briefly triangulate the position of Latour and Beck by introducing a relatively unknown mid-Nineteenth Century social philosopher, Max Stirner, into their controversy. Stirner, if not the most subtle of debaters, nonetheless brings some of the relevant issues into strong contrast. 'Saint Max' as Engels and Marx nicknamed him (1963), was one of the Young Hegelians who clustered in Berlin in the 1840s. It seems that he was amongst the quietest of that group (Mackay 2005). He published his only significant book, *The Ego and its Own*, in 1844. The foundational stance of the *Ego and its Own* is that the entire array of apparently humanizing institutions – the state, humanity, human rights, man, society, marriage, family and money comprise 'spooks' or 'fixed ideas' not absolutely different to the gods and ghosts of previous eras. The idea of 'man' or humanity is as much a 'spook' as is the 'nation' which it appears to transcend. These concepts stand in an authoritarian relationship to the individual ego which is unable to know itself while they continue to dominate its consciousness. Nationalist, revolutionary and humanist movements evidence in common a generalized respect for Man, or the Citizen, or the Party Member alongside a uniform contempt for the individual as an individual ego.

The inability of the self to distinguish itself from its own fixed ideas is ubiquitous, argues Stirner. 'How ridiculously sentimental', he comments, 'when one German grasps another's hand and presses it with sacred awe because "he too is a German"' (1907:302). Anyone who rejects incorporation into marriage or fatherland or humankind is labeled an 'egoist'; but it is the label that reveals the sanctity of the specific category, the particular 'spook'. As a young Hegelian, Stirner's narrative of how the ego ('I who really am I')

comes to know itself vis-à-vis these other lion-skinned 'thistle-eaters' is historical and dialectical:

What manifold robbery have I not put up with in the history of the world! There I let sun, moon, and stars, cats and crocodiles, receive the honour of ranking as I; there Jehovah, Allah, and Our Father came and were invested with the I; there families and tribes, peoples and at last Mankind, came and were honored as I's; there the Church, the State, came with the pretention to be I, and I gazed calmly on... so I saw I above me, and outside me, and could never really come to myself. (1907:294-295).

To which a latter-day commentator might add: 'here I allowed multinational corporations, private security firms and CCTV cameras to act extraterritorially as 'I'; there supermarkets, university ethics committees, banks and lobby groups, web portals and credit agencies ranked themselves unquestioned as 'I', while I, 'who really am I', continued to draw money from the cash point.

Stirner's ethical egoism demands that any principle or *idée fixe* that I invoke I should appropriate as a principle for myself alone. The 'money' I use is therefore not a metaphysical money somehow independent of myself, but is rather my money - money according to me; likewise any of the other 'spooks' that are important for how I act or think. The others likewise speak, not in the name of some further 'moral, mystical, or political person', but from their own unique ego (1907:294). In response to Fichte's humanistic 'transcendental idealism', Stirner posits a 'transitory egoism' that rejects the assimilation of myself into any other transcendent human 'I' (1907:237). Taking back 'the thoughts [that] had become corporeal on their own account... I destroy their corporeity... and I say "I alone am corporeal"' (1907:16). I will act, then, only in accord with whatever principles guide my action because those ideas alone truly exist for me and I will assume that the others will act with consideration to their fixed ideas and spooks.

Curiously, the more we read about Stirner's 'egoism', the more we may feel there is something self-less about it. If, as Stirner suggests, I accept that my limits are purely of my own subjective making then I relinquish the fundamental egoist's rationale that the remit of my ideas fixes should expand where and when I please because my ideas must be true objectively for all. In contrast, Stirnerian skepticism - the extension of an indifference regarding the presuppositions of others into how I consider my own principles - rather than exemplifying egoism, suggests instead a stance that Bakhtin calls 'playing a fool'. In Bakhtin's account, a 'self-consciousness' may emerge for the ego whereby, in its attempts to extricate itself from the rhythm of its relations with others, it 'has passed all bounds and wants to draw an unbreakable circle around itself' (1990:120). Hence, perhaps, the element of holy idiocy suggested in Marx's nickname for Stirner.

However, some important themes emerge here. On the one hand, the strident emphasis on ethical individualization connects closely with Beck, on the other, the recognition of how non-human agents or 'spooks' participate as actors in the lives of individuals is significantly Latourian, albeit that Latour is more generous towards his 'actants' (2005). Speaking teleologically, Stirner occupies a pre-Durkheimian world where individuality can still be thought of without reference to a society that preconditions it. He can nonetheless cognise some of the forces that will coalesce to establish that understanding. We should remind ourselves that Stirner lived in a German milieu that was ideologically but not socially or politically unified – the disparity between the exercise of power, subjective imagining and shared sentiment was all too obvious to him. Either way, Stirner would surely have agreed with Beck about the historical processes leading to individual self-recognition and no doubt he would have approved of Beck's description of 'zombie categories' so close as it is to his own notion of the 'spook'. Stirner would nonetheless have disapproved of the further idealistic step towards a shared cosmopolitan project. With Latour, he would have concurred that we live in many disparate worlds in the company of a multitude of non-human agents, though, again, he would strongly have disavowed the intellectual decentring that enables Latour to equate the subjectivity of these 'spooks' with my own self - 'I who

really am I'.

The point in contention is not simply that Nineteenth and Eighteenth Century intellectual conditions seem suddenly more familiar; that these parallel conceptualisations appear more than ever synchronously available and salient as part of our own apprehensions. The problem can be posed another way: what stands between these perspectives and our moment is Twentieth Century mechanistic nationalism and the sociology and anthropology that accompanied it. Perhaps there are ways nonetheless of thinking through, round and beyond that monolith.

To begin with we need to take heed of the conceptual revision that is entering the foreground. The Twentieth Century use of the word 'culture' familiarized us with the idea of a system of signs that could be grammatically ordered and exchanged at the collective and personal levels. One thing that Latour - and Stirner too in retrospect - tells us is that the matter is not so simple at all: the entities we have come to call cultural signifiers or symbols are not inert exchangeables, nor do they fall into place within mechanical systems: instead they act on us and for us; they are, in this sense, agents with subjectivity of their own. And, as Beck indicates, they may well - are likely to - have a life after their own death. Whatever social science now emerges will have to encompass those insights within its own common sense: we need to rethink the common sense of anthropology looking backward and forward.

### **The common sense of cosmopolitan knowledge and ethics**

The loss of interpretive power of social and cultural constructionism is by no means a new predicament; Hannerz has explored extensively the ecumenical situations and orientations that this loss opens up for view (1989, 1997, 2006). As long ago as the 1950s, Firth had indicated how social boundaries are 'in any case arbitrary... [human beings] are continually overcoming barriers to social intercourse' (1951:28). Nevertheless, Beck and Latour combined present us with new challenges for how we rethink both the modes of communication and the models of subjectivity that are now in question. Since I want to bring

Kant to my aid in exploring these issues without jettisoning either Beck or Latour, I must first dispute Latour's argument that Kant offers us the cosmopolitanism of an 'already unified cosmos' (Latour 2005:262,fn362). It seems one thing to criticize Kant for his unified architectonics of subjectivity, rather different to suggest that the cosmos that this subjectivity confronts is itself already completed for Kant. My suggestion here, which builds on earlier work, is that Kantian common sense offers a distinctive frame for figuring what is involved in a cosmopolitan imaginary and by extension for understanding the current common sense of anthropology (Wardle 1995, 2000).

Cosmopolitan ethics and knowledge are closely tied in Kant's writings with the capacity for reflective judgement<sup>1</sup> (Arendt 2003, Kant 1983, 1952:96-97). Reflective Judgement, as Veblen tells us, can be understood as the 'faculty of search... the faculty of adding to our knowledge something which is not and cannot be given in experience' (1884:264). Those who consider Kant to have taken for granted the outcome of this search (a unified cosmos) have in Veblen's words 'taken up the Critique wrong end foremost' (1884:263). Subjectively, cosmopolitanism exemplifies not a world that is already unified but a reflective search for unification which takes place with others in mind. The shifting horizon of our judgement at any given moment is whatever 'everything', whatever 'cosmos' we can summon to encompass what we know. Far from being unified before the event, our cosmopolitanism is fundamentally relative to each situation of subjective judgment.

Hannah Arendt ends her essay 'Some questions of moral philosophy' by drawing on what Kant has to say about common sense in his Critique of Judgement (Kant 1983, Arendt 2003). She argues that what he states there should act as a central point of reference for those who wish to understand ethics after Nazism. In Arendt's view, this final Critique of Kant's, surpasses the rational ethics of the Critique of Practical Reason. The fascist disaster was not caused, Arendt suggests, by a failure of rationality (Nazi functionaries

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<sup>1</sup> Kant's teleological reflection on world history in Perpetual Peace (1795) pursues his detailed inspection of teleological thinking in the Critique of Judgement (1790).

were rational enough; overly capable of applying a purely technical reasoning to human affairs) the failure was rather one of judgement, an incapacity to judge commonsensically that the rational procedures in question were universally monstrous and wrong. She points to Kant's treatment of 'common sense' in aesthetic terms. Kant answers the potential fragmentation and individualization of public knowledge by examining the subjective ability to organize communal knowledge through an aesthetics of common sense judgement.

Arendt argues that each of my common sense judgements, results from an imaginative process that involves me in exploring the field of associations that make up the community to which I understand myself to belong. Community is here radically relative to my own striving and imagining; it could well include known individuals but it might equally involve the heroes of novels or films, dead relatives, figures I know from the pages of wikipedia, people who I observe on the street but whom I never choose to keep actual company with. I am as a result 'considerate in the original sense of the word, [I] consider the existence of [these] others and... try to win their agreement, to "woo their consent," as Kant puts it' (Arendt 2003:142). I cannot communicate concretely with Elias Canetti or Fellini's filmic hero Guido, but I may well have them in mind in arriving at certain judgements (the sense in which I try to woo their consent is complex, of course). In this regard, when I explored the cosmopolitan imaginings of my Jamaican friends in earlier work, I realize in retrospect that I did not always take full account of how the spirits of the dead and other divinities can be interactively present in how situations are imagined and common sense judgements arrived at (Wardle 2000; I have explored these issues in more recent work 2007). Particularly, given his early flirtation with Swedenborgism (De Beaumont 1919), Kant would have understood the part played by the voices and visions that told Socrates to cross-examine the Athenian pretenders to wisdom (Plato 1997).

Common sense (unlike pragmatic moral reasoning in Kant's view) is, again, an aesthetic faculty not a matter of logic. The common sense of a particular individual includes their distinctive gestus, their tonality, the particular

rhythm of that person's modes of expression in arriving at judgement. It describes a style of characterising events and objects imaginatively and applying these patterns judiciously to particular situations. Of course how an individual's common sense expressiveness looks to an observer is incommensurable with how common sense is experienced in the first person. Either way, this judiciousness is not simply a matter of organizing perceptions correctly or not: on this it is worth quoting Arendt at length.

The point of the matter is that my judgement of a particular instance [depends]... upon my representing to myself something which I do not perceive. Let me illustrate this: suppose I look at a specific slum dwelling and I perceive in this particular building the general notion which it does not exhibit directly, the notion of poverty and misery. I arrive at this notion by representing to myself how I would feel if I had to live there, that is I try to think in the place of the slum dweller. The judgement I come up with will by no means necessarily be the same as that of the inhabitants... but it will become an outstanding example for my further judging of these matters. (2003:140)

Common sense is, hence, an active capacity: it entails the ability to search out and organize the examples and exemplars we need in order to form judgements about people and situations.

True to his Copernican turn, for Kant, common sense is hence a subjective faculty, not an objective body of knowledge or a closed set of rules of thumb. And, from the objectivist standpoint of social science, Kantian common sense appears as, once more, radically relative. There is no need to assume that we may be able to map one individual's 'common sense' onto another's even though, subjectively, common sense strives toward universal validity. Common sense judgement may arrive at a moment of objectifiable decisiveness (a box ticked or not, for example) but it has of itself no measurable properties only qualities: our understanding of common sense must take account of the 'very great difference of minds' as Kant puts it (2006:124). Nonetheless, as Arendt argues:

The validity of my judgements will 'reach as far as the community of which my common sense makes me a member – Kant who thought of himself as a citizen of the world, hoped it would reach to the community of mankind (Arendt 2003:140)

The exercise of common sense is, furthermore, reflexive. In his *Anthropology*, Kant encourages us first, to 'think for oneself'; second, to think oneself 'in the place of every other person' with whom one is communicating; third, to think 'consistently with oneself' (Kant 2006:124, Wardle 2000:130). 'Every other person' surely means here not every person with whom I could communicate in some concrete setting according to some acknowledged standard of measurement, but rather every other person whose personal standpoint I can imaginatively 'bear in mind' in such and such a regard. Hence, Kant construes a triadic process of reflexive refinement which consists in (1) knowing my own mind (2) considering fully (enough) the standpoints of the others (3) bringing this diversity into a kind of judicious consistency (back to 1). Here is Arendt's gloss: 'while I take into account others when judging, this does not mean that I conform in my judgment to theirs. I still speak with my own voice and I do not count noses in order to arrive at what I think is right.' (2003:140-141)

This refinement of common sense is, as Simmel would say, a *progressus ad infinitum*: newer, more highly differentiated, diversely informed judgements constantly come to mind even while others are forgotten or perhaps remain only half cognized (1978:118). There is no point at which I am able to say 'I now possess as much common sense as I need'. Arendt's argument is that ethics requires the constant intellectual traversing of the community to which I imagine myself to belong. The scope of common sense is a function of the narrowness or broadness of association that I am capable of organizing in this way and the judgements that result. She posits a situation in which someone cites Bluebeard as their moral exemplar – such a person we can try to avoid. The far more dangerous individual is, instead, the one for whom 'any company would be good enough', who is incapable of considering others in

the moral-aesthetic frame of judgement. In conclusion, reiterating the well-known phrase, Arendt comments how in 'the unwillingness or inability to relate to others through judgement... lies the banality of evil' (2003:146).

Note how Stirner's ethical egoism observes stages (1) and (2) of the Kantian progressus, but disables him from engaging in (3). Kant saw beyond the predicament that Stirner finds himself in. Stirner conflates thinking for oneself (as a correlate of individualization) with the idea that in my judgments I can only have myself in mind: on the contrary, Kant suggests, I constantly displace myself in favour of the others in order to judge in ways that have the potential to be generally true, not merely true for myself. What Stirner sees as a monstrous relinquishing of the self to fetishes and ghosts, Kant recognizes as a necessary moment in the process of arriving at a moment of judgement - so long as I am indeed thinking individually. It seems unlikely, though, that Kant would have guessed the degree of significance that all-or-nothing decision-making would later take for the existentialists whereby every choice is a test of the self's faith in itself.

How does this subjective picturing of common sense help us to consider the disputed vision of cosmopolitanism versus cosmopolitics? There is already, of course, a historical trajectory in which Kant's subjective sense of community meets and is transformed, on the one side into Weber's 'subjectively believed' ethnic belonging (1978b: 391) and, on the other, into Simmel's subjectively organized 'web of group-affiliations' (1955). The mid-Twentieth century interactionists with their emphasis on subjective choice between cultural-symbolic options are also inheritors of Kant, but they echo only rather distantly the qualities of Kant's original description. Their attempts to find a systematics as rationally convincing as Durkheim's took them further and further away from the aesthetic and imaginative dimensions of the Third Critique. But if the systematism of Durkheimian society is now redundant, then this also throws doubt on the interactionists' answer: interactionism as originally conceived will always be on the look out for social systems to critique in terms of rational subjective choice. Intersystems theory, which starts with a similar problematic, relies, likewise, on a 'system' that is then, so

to speak, crossed out (Palmie 2006:441).

### **A considerate cosmopolitics?**

For the task in hand, instead of extending our historical survey further (a useful mission), we need to put some Latourian tests to Kant's common sense. In particular, we need to ask how incorporative can Kantian common sense be of the kinds of non-human subjectivities Latour demands that we include? However, once we have pursued that question, it seems fair to turn the tables and ask in return; how capable are these non-human subjectivities of making common sense judgements? What capacities for moral aesthetic 'consideration' can we expect of these other subjects? Let us remind ourselves of Latour's generous definition of subjectivity. Agents and actants are characterized by their 'subjectivity'; the big issue is that there are many more of these subjects in heaven and earth than were dreamt of by Twentieth Century sociology. Subjectivity is acquired by becoming a gathering point in a network and by demonstrating the further ability to 'recruit others': many, many actants can apply and become qualified on this basis (2005:218). And, whatever subjectivity is, it is certainly not given *a priori*; on the contrary, as Latour puts it, '[y]ou need to subscribe to a lot of subjectifiers to become a subject, and you need to download a lot of individualizers to become an individual' (2005:216).

As Latour observes, non-human agents have always held centre stage in the ethnographic worlds of anthropologists; whether as baloma spirits, patrilineal ancestors, yams or cassowaries. And as Strathern shows, accounting for the relations making up these persons, and the relationships between them, has been integral to social anthropology as a project (1990). In ethnographic accounts, non-human persons quite openly participate in the day to day lives of the humans around them: Tallensi ancestors punish recalcitrant entrepreneurs (Fortes 1959); yams decide to roam across the Dobuan gardens during the night thus threatening the matrilineage (Fortune 1963:108); or, in a case I am more directly familiar with, Saints instruct city dwelling Jamaicans to go out and warn of impending destruction (Wardle 2007). In many respects,

as anthropologists, we can agree with Latour that 'humans have always counted less than the vast population of divinities and lesser transcendental entities that give us life' (2004:456). But the question in response might be 'counted' for whom? 'counted' by whom?

First let us consider again some of the ethical dimensions. What Latour is asking of Western cosmology is a repersonalisation of the invisible agents – machines, pandemic diseases, state practices which, while officially inert, act *de facto* as subjects. Would it help our understanding of liberal ethics if we came to recognise how Israel or Iran act not merely as a 'symbols' or even as determining systems, but as subjects instigating and authorising reactions? The anthropomorphism might at least be more honest. None of this is in fact ruled out by how Kant describes the aesthetics of common sense: we consider the examples and exemplars who partake in the community of our imagination and we make our judgements 'without counting noses'. The dilemma derives not from this direction – my human subjectivity – but from the other side: can I expect 'consideration' from these non-human agents; will they consider me as part of their community, a community of humans and non-humans? What kind of ethical behaviour may I expect – the unbending Tallensi ancestor? The humorous and unreliable Jamaican Saint? Certainly if we are able to recognize their field of associations as Arendt recognizes Bluebeard, we can at least make some relevant judgements.

However there are anthropological problems too, and they take us back to where we began. Any anthropologist who works closely with Amerindianists must surely view as problematic the amount of weight a strikingly reified Amazonian Indian 'cosmology' bears in Latour's account. Let us consider the five century long process that the term 'Amerindian' represents, that is to say the process by which people recognized as 'Indians' became American Indians. Viveiros de Castro would have us believe that this process has reached a point where Amerindians have 'no difficulty' in integrating 'us' into 'their' cosmology (Latour 2004:457,fn13). Not for 'them', then, the 'self-reflexivity of divergent entangled cosmopolitan Modernities' as Beck puts it (Beck 2004:36). In this vista, the Amerindians exist outside the constant

mediations, the typical interchange of personnel, the repeated 'overtaking' that characterizes the actor-network in Paris (Latour 2005). Perhaps more pertinently, the Brazilian nation as an actant, for example, is as utterly invisible in this Amazonian Indian cosmology as is the cosmology's role as an actant in South American national mythology. Does Latour's pluriverse necessitate a purified self-organising cosmology for which Amerindians are the outstanding metonym? These are, surely, ways of thinking that anthropologists have learnt to treat with extreme suspicion. Is it possible then that Latour's pluriverse is insufficiently plural? More consideration seems needed.

### **Conversing at the edge of time: an ethnographic example by way of conclusion**

It is March 2004. I am standing on the edge of the road with Lazarus watching the early morning traffic running into Kingston, Jamaica. Lazarus is an elderly Blue Mountain coffee farmer of Middle Eastern extraction: his parents fled Southern Lebanon to the West Indies in 1948. He owns about 25 acres of hillside crop and, every Friday, brings his workers down to drink white rum in the local bars here. Lazarus and I are talking about the war in Iraq that we have been watching via CNN news broadcasts over the last few days. Our conversation begins with apparently shared common sense assumptions and judgements. We both agree that the invasion was illegal according to international law, it will probably spark a civil war and is certain to breed more violence. When I speak, I draw on the catalogue of ideas and rhetorics that I have gleaned from the news media and hearsay, shaped through previous discussions with those around me. Lazarus concurs with what I say, but his field of examples and exemplars includes a range of distinct elements and his narrative moves toward a quite different, and in effect absolute, endpoint.

You see, Britain is the lost tribe of Israel: that is why it ever run things in the world. But now America take over. You know about the stone of Scone that was under the throne of England in time past? It hold the

power. That stone send to America with the Mayflower. Now America take over. You see the British must control the Black because once Hannibal have control over the British them. And Black rule hard, man: them make the people bend over and fuck him in the arse; fuck him, man. So that is why the British must ever control the Black. But now that power pass to America. Book of Revelations - America, man, are the lambllike beast come to rule the world in the last days.

For me to understand Lazarus' way of framing these issues requires a complicated exchange of standpoints. For the moment, I am interested primarily in the form or morphology of his discussion rather than its meaning. When I, so to speak, step into my own shoes as a white middle class European I am used to seeing the world perspectivaly. In a perspectival image the vista recedes towards an actual-imaginative vanishing point. Things nearer to me are larger, more sharply focused: objects further toward the horizon are decreasingly distinguishable, less fully meaningful and smaller. This is the ordering principle carried into our conversation both by the CNN broadcasts that are its focus and by my own ways of thinking and talking – the assumption of a certain kind of relation between centre and horizon. What, however, if my personhood were defined by being one of those 'distant' subjects/objects nearer the horizon? It is not that Lazarus disagrees with my presentation. His response, though, suggests a transformation of my perspectival ordering somewhat along these lines: to take up his standpoint (more like a dream compared to my initial version of reality) is to occupy a position bizarrely close to the vanishing point. Looking outwards from where Lazarus stands, I am confronted by actors who become monstrously larger the further away they are; their activities have no horizon, but their overwhelming centrality makes inevitable my disappearance.

In Lazarus' account, mental objects familiar enough to me from my childhood education - the Mayflower, the stone of Scone - have taken on radically distinct dimensions, activities and relationships to their place in the kinds of nationalist configurations I am familiar with. Hannibal, the threat to civilisation of my school days, figures for Lazarus as a violent and sexually

unruly African who, briefly jumping out of the correct ordering of space-time, is quickly returned to the horizon once more. America, a titanic entity, has come to hasten the end of my fellow indistinguishable others – ‘the black’. Social causality is certainly not here the measured rippling outwards of benefits toward the periphery posited by the perspectival politics of diffusion or modernisation: we might picture it instead as a kind of implosion of forces as smaller actors are sucked towards the larger body: an event that marks the end of all causal relationships and all time, the End of All Things.

We are faced, then, with the Arendtian task of trying to understand the common sense of others by getting to grips with our own. A fundamental subjective work I engage in with regard to my available knowledge is surely that of folding cultural discordances back into my common sense by way of the coherent judgements I make about the present (the narratorial centre of which is inevitably myself). This entails being able to map my subjective experiences cosmologically; to give these elements universal, cosmic validity. There is a constant traversing between my pragmatic subjective engagements with others and a referencing and legitimating of these engagements by reference to a cosmos (whatever examples and exemplars are available to me). That process provokes special difficulties and resulting stratagems in a place like Kingston. Jamaicans including Lazarus recognise themselves as thoroughly modern. Fundamentally, they accept the all-importance of the individual as both a claimer of rights and as a maker of contracts with others. Tradition and habit are, by contrast, contingent and subject to the transformative power of free will (Wardle 2000). But within what cosmological or metaphysical ordering can Lazarus legitimately make these contracts and claim these rights?

His response is both cosmopolitan and cosmopolitical - if we take the key elements of Beck's and Latour's analyses. In a Beckian sense, he does not ask to be freed from a world that holds the potential of being sharable. In his worldview the process of making meaning is thoroughly subjectivized, thoroughly individualized and this certainly seems the aspect that corresponds most to my way of seeing also. At the same time there is a

cosmopolitics here also which transfigures the fundamental spatial and temporal matrix of the 'nature' involved. There is, for instance, no deferring of moral judgement historically in his nature because it is about to come to an end. We both recognize, at least in broad brush, the same actants – Britain, the United States; constitutional symbols, but what we might call their cosmological distribution, size and efficacy is quite distinctly staged. When compared with Lazarus' sharply delineated view, my imagining of these entities becomes a little confused and vague – historical time and a certain kind of perspectival presentiment mediate it, but I am now less able to grasp entirely how. Here we can echo Latour's approving citation of Viveiros de Castro: Lazarus' common sense is already global: it is simply that in his cosmic politics I do not have the place I would have predicted for myself. But we have to employ this rhetoric with a proviso: the refinement of pristine indigenous cosmologies - elaborately articulated symmetric fictions - that provide the foil to a critique of 'Western' society is unsustainable.

### **Concluding remarks**

'Fetishism', remarks Gilsenan (paraphrasing J.S. Khan), 'infects us all, or rather it affects others, because we always seem to escape it' (2000: 603). Beck and Latour combined present the challenge of an anthropology that is simultaneously cosmopolitan and cosmopolitical. Latour's cosmopolitical challenge to Beck involves disavowing cultural code as a neutral medium exchangeable between individual cosmopolitan actors. Cultural code becomes instead an actant in the world of sociologists in the same way as spirits are actants in the world of spiritualists, or Charles Darwin is an actant in the world of socio-biologists. In Latour's view, scientific modernity involves constantly, in Gellner's words, 'invoking the processes of nature to underwrite social arrangements,... allocate responsibilities, and settle disputes' (Gellner 1964:76). The resultant multiplication of natures returns us ever closer to non-modern animism. The anthropologist's task becomes one of demonstrating the moments or nexuses where this underwriting takes place. The Beckian challenge to Latour may consist, by contrast, in recognizing that the 'others', in their generality, will no longer serve as stable points of

cosmological reference vis-à-vis 'our' unstable cosmology. 'They' also evidence internalized cosmopolitanism; the rhetorical claim that 'their' cosmological forms evolve in 'their' terms is wearing thin. A comparative anthropology that depends on building ever more rigid geometries around the ideas that certain 'peoples' represent is itself moribund.

If the systems of society and culture have gone then what is left would seem to be divergent histories and a conversation about the present and the future. Here we surely have to agree with Beck that anthropological dialogue can only be pursued on the commonsensical basis that elements of cosmologies can be shared between individual human subjects: human subjects remain the only agents capable of the kind of mutual consideration required. The danger here is the reinvention of what Gellner sarcastically terms the 'Pure Visitor' – an unmediated human ego whose role is to 'quarantine' and arbitrate social truths from a position outside the social (1964:108). At the same time, it is no use reinventing pristine ontologies to serve the same quarantining function. Without resort to either of these implausible guests we are left with an overcrowded universe lacking the geometric simplicities of 'our' versus 'their' cosmologies. If culture is gone, then we need not continue to be spooked by cultural fragmentation: anthropologists will surely still employ diverse heuristics of cosmology and social relationship, but their ethnographies need to be imaginatively open to previously unrecognized, or perhaps politically incorrect, types of agent as well as to new fields and forms of interaction and exchange. Code made the lives of anthropologists easy: 'code presupposes content to be somehow ready-made and presupposes the realization of a choice among various given codes' (Bakhtin 1986:130). Now, by contrast, we find ourselves 'in it together' but with competing definitions of 'we', 'it' and 'together'. How to understand subjectivity comes to the front at this juncture as the crucial object of reflection.

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