



II Congreso Latinoamericano de Teoría Social y Teoría Política

“Horizontes y dilemas del pensamiento contemporáneo en el sur global”
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MESA 5 Imágenes de la alteridad: la teoría social contemporánea y
las imágenes del otro en el mundo global.

Hermeneutical Explorations on the Cosmopolitan Sociology Project:
Aesthetic-Cultural Cosmopolitanism, Experience of Otherness and
Intercultural Understanding.

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Resumen

This article addresses the internal connection between globalization and cosmopolitanism recently established in social theory. When linking modernization to globalization and cosmopolitanism, Jürgen Habermas' and Ulrich Beck's programs are prominent in this context. Despite their innovations, I argue that the traditional model of modernization as societal rationalization grounds in the metatheoretical assumption of the deduction of the whole of (global) modernization from the rationalizing effect it introduces within the part (national society), thus narrowing the analytical scope to *internal* aspects of society. Generally speaking, modernization as rationalization disregards the historical entanglements between societies, which is precisely to what globalization and cosmopolitanization shed light. To understand these entanglements, I argue being necessary to start from the metatheoretical assumption of the deduction of the whole from the relationship between its parts (between societies). Based on a reconstructive procedure and studies on aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism and postcoloniality, the outlined hypothesis focuses on cultural aspects of globalization and conceives the experience of otherness as hermeneutic experience, which defines as a *medium* an indicatory concept of intercultural understanding. This hypothesis intends to contribute to the fundamentals of the cosmopolitan sociology project by introducing an intercultural perspective, which goes back to the Habermas-Gadamer debate.

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Introduction

In the last twenty years, critical social theorists have been addressing the transformations induced by mondialization/globalization¹ by means of a resignification of the philosophical idea of cosmopolitanism² with a sociological intent and of the redefinition of classical sociology concepts. There are strong differences between the approaches but what they all have in common is the intuition that the social life can no longer be understood without having the world society as a background. This is precisely what the work of major scholars such as Ulrich Beck (2006), Gerard Delanty (2009), Daniel Chernilo (2006), Robert Fine (2007), Vincenzo Cicchelli (2016b), aims to achieve by introducing a cosmopolitan perspective into sociology. One of the major orientations and challenges faced by the cosmopolitan sociology project concerns the cultural entanglements between societies phenomenon and its effects on action and socialization, both at the historical (diachrony) and the present (synchrony) levels. This article addresses what is fundamentally assumed in this phenomenon, that is, the existence of an intercultural type of mutual understanding constituting our “being-in-the-world”. When unveiling the preconditions and conditions of such a mutual understanding, I seek to contribute to the fundamentals of this project. The methodological approach is reconstruction.

When linking modernization to cosmopolitanism, Jürgen Habermas’ and Ulrich Beck’s programs are prominent in this context. The purpose of this linking is to open the modernization theory critical tradition to mondialization/globalization. Despite their innovations, I argue that modernization theory traditional model of modernization as societal rationalization doesn’t enable us to address mondialization/globalization. Fundamentally, this insufficiency relates to this model grounding on the metatheoretical assumption of the deduction of the whole of (global) modernization by the rationalizing

¹ On mondialization/globalization, see: Ortiz, 2003: Chap. I; Freitag, 2008: 255-290.

² For an introduction to the philosophical idea of cosmopolitanism, see: Coulmas, 1995; Nussbaum, 1997, Appiah, 2007, 2008. For an introduction to cosmopolitanism in the social science, see: Vertovec & Cohen, 2002; Beck, 2006; Fine & Boon, 2007; Delanty, 2009; Pieterse, 2009; Held, 2010; Cicchelli, 2016b. For the distinction between the philosophical idea and the sociological concept of cosmopolitanism, see: Bosco, 2016a: 15-40.



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effect it introduces within the part (national society), thus narrowing the analytical scope to *internal* aspects of society. As a consequence, modernization as rationalization disregards the historical entanglements between societies (the relationship between the parts) evoked by mondialization/globalization and cosmopolitanization (Bosco, 2016a).

In the first section, I reconstruct Habermas’ and Beck’s version of cosmopolitanism by means of a metatheoretical analysis (1). Then, I focus on applied sociological and anthropological studies on current cosmopolitanism which address the cultural identity, the forms of socialization, and the media narratives on global events. By taking into account the findings of these applied studies, I identify empirical, theoretical, methodological, and politico-normative insufficiencies in the authors’ cosmopolitanism (2). I present next the diagnosis of aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism and of cosmopolitan socialization stressing the cultural entanglements between societies and the experience of otherness (3). This is paramount because it means, as we shall see, that mondialization (culture) changes the standards of the cultural reproduction and of the socialization forms. Thus, mondialization evokes a sociological concept of experience able to apprehend the transformations induced by the cultural entanglements between societies. In order to do so, I suggest going back to Gadamer’s model of intercultural understanding, since it gives an adequate grounding for the addressing of the cultural entanglements between societies – and, therefore, for the cosmopolitan sociology project. The article then outlines a working hypothesis which conceives the experience of mondialization as hermeneutic experience having the intercultural understanding as *medium* (4). Finally, I stress that this hypothesis requires a revival of the 1970’s Habermas-Gadamer debate.

1 – Modernization as societal rationalization and Habermas’ and Beck’s cosmopolitanism: a metatheoretical analysis

The Habermasian version of cosmopolitanism has an explicit normative interest³ (Habermas, 2007: Chap. 7). The author’s diagnosis of the times (*Zeitdiagnose*) and the corresponding cosmopolitan normative horizon are grounded on the West/Rest

³ See: Fine, 2003; Chernilo, 2007.



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antinomy. This leads Habermas to differentiate the legitimation crisis in the postnational constellation as a democratic deficit in Europe (2010: 116-139; 2003b: 147-170; 2007: 144-152, 183-192; 2001a: Chap. 4) and as an insufficient normative institutionalization of the world order (2001a: 65-74; 2001b: Part III, Chap. 6). He then advocates a shift towards a cosmopolitan democracy for Europe (2007: 127-136, 137-140), and internationally, argues for a world order guided by the Western interpretation of human rights (2001a: 143-166; 2012: Chap. V). In what follows, I focus on this Western-based interpretation of human rights, showing how it consists in a politico-normative derivation of Habermas' theory of social evolution.

The Habermasian version of cosmopolitanism deals with the legitimation issues of democracy (system of rights) and of world order (international law) and sets a normative validity claim (Western interpretation of human rights) grounded in a theory of social evolution (lifeworld-system imbrication). Habermas assumes a functionally neutralizing principle in the evolutionary correspondence between the cognitive-technological sphere and the socio-moral sphere (Habermas, 1983b: 28-30 and 234-239; 2004: 31-63). The philosopher sees a more evolved West in the socio-moral sphere than the Rest, since its societies would have learned from the nationalistic mistakes of the past, would have rooted democratic principles, and evolved in the cognitive-technological sphere more than any another region. That is why he considers it non-problematic to base the horizon of a cosmopolitan world order on an “apologetic defense” of the Western interpretation of human rights (2001a: 153). From this perspective, the democratic West would represent the “best epistemic situation possible” (2004: 52).

In the structural sphere, this West/Rest antinomy can be interpreted as the derivation of the Habermasian concept of society. This concept is defined by the evolutionary imbrication between lifeworld and system (Habermas, 1978: Chap. 1; 1987, v. 2: 168-218). In a sociological standpoint, the structural unit of Habermas' theory of society consists in the evolutionary imbrication between the cultural community and its particular political and economic organization. The modern shape of this imbrication is the national society. In the context of a world society theory of evolution, this means that Habermas formulates a theory of the “cultural monad”: Social transformation would happen through an experience-based and reflexively and endogenously apprehended cultural tradition tending ultimately to modify the systemic structures.



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A fundamental insufficiency comes from this internal connection between society, social evolution and West/Rest antinomy. Leading up to the assumption of deduction of the whole from its part, the Habermasian concept of society focuses on internal aspects of the lifeworld-system imbrication, therefore not allowing address historical entanglements between societies, *i.e.* mondialization/globalization and cosmopolitanization. This insufficiency is particularly clear in the concepts of experience and situation: When having as a *medium* the formal-pragmatist conception of mutual understanding (Habermas, 1987, v. 1: 283-334; 2005), the experience is tendentially circumscribed to the linguistic community as a learning process, and the situation is wrapped in a sociologically particular structuration of the lifeworld and the system.

In Beck's perspective, cosmopolitanism is not only associated with a normative claim but also to a new methodological and theoretical perspective (2003a: Chap. 7; 2006: 253-263, 300-316). Beck's diagnosis of the times reveals that the continued modernization does not only produce wealth, it rather produces risks and destructions as unpredictable side effects (2001: 35 *sq.*). When dealing with such side effects, the modernizing society enters a reflexive dynamics in both individual and institutional levels. Reflexive modernization thus means a rationalization (stimulated by risk) of rationalization (stimulated by labor) (456-471). Considering that these risks and destructions are global and reach future generations (e.g. radiation), they force a reflexive cosmopolitanization of society and memory, which stimulates a transnational social and political integration (Beck, 2003a: Chap. 3; 2008: 34-37). Risk, as access to reality; reflexivity, as the dynamics of reality; and cosmopolitanization, as an objective and subjective immanent living condition and politico-normative horizon of the people living in that very same reality; all three constitute the key concepts of Beck's *Zeitdiagnose*.

Therefore, the production of risks is tied analytically to the development level of the productive forces. As the productive forces develop, they induce greater risk and destruction, and society becomes potentially more cosmopolitanized. That is why Beck associates cosmopolitanism with “highly developed societies of the West”, and consequently assumes a preponderant politico-normative role of this region in shaping a cosmopolitan world order (Beck, 2003b). At the socialization level, as Gurinder Bhabra puts it, this means the “poor exploited immigrants” living in the West are not “cosmopolitans”; they are “transnationals” (2002: 33).



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The historical experience of the West would authorize to ascribe to this region a special role in the global era since it supposedly achieved a transformation from a nationalistic social integration to a cosmopolitan one. The universal effect (rationalization) that the whole (modernization) introduces into its part is of central concern here: Beck universalizes the social situation of threat and the particular social experience of modernization in Western societies. His diagnosis of the rising social awareness of global risks and the corresponding politico-normative horizon is also based on the West/Rest antinomy: It assumes effective living conditions and the historical trajectory of democratic Western societies (Chernilo, 2006; Fine, 2007: 09 sq.; Costa, 2006: 77-83; Bhabra, 2011; Bosco & Ferreira, 2016).

Habermas' and Beck's version of cosmopolitanism incur in two empirical insufficiencies: In comparison to the Rest, first they assume either a higher potential of arising cosmopolitan values in Western societies or an already cosmopolitan West; second, they associate the existence of cosmopolitan social practices exclusively to this region of the world. Applied studies disprove both assumptions.

2 – Empirical findings and Habermas' and Beck's cosmopolitanism

The European Values Study carried out in 2000 shows that globalization as cosmopolitanization from inside “characterizes orientations of Europeans only to a limited extent” and, “[instead], they more often develop exclusive and local orientations in response to the new social reality of transnationalism” (Pichler, 2009: 719). Similarly, surveys applied in Sweden in 1995 and 2003 show that “the number of local and global protectionists increases at the expense of open locals and globals”; the Swedish appear to become “less cosmopolitan” (Olofson & Öhman, 2007: 889). Lastly, Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry's focal groups' research in England states that there is poor evidence of a cosmopolitan orientation of attitudes (2002: 472). These three applied studies allow us to conclude that the assumption of a cosmopolitan Europe seems precipitate, thus invalidating any special role attributed previously to this region in shaping a cosmopolitan world order.

The second assumption refers to Western “exceptionalism” concerning cosmopolitan social practices. Anthropological researches carried out in Nicaragua



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(Glynn & Cupples, 2010), India (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003), and in West Africa (Piot, 1999), for instance, reveal cosmopolitan practices potentially existing in any social group where the historical experience of contact with different cultures is given. As *praxis*, cosmopolitanism exists in various ways and places and must consider both synchronic and diachronic dimensions of our world experience. Since there is a precedence of the local over significations and material objects that travel worldwide, there is the possibility of being cosmopolitan in different ways, through sociologically situated internalizations and rejections of unfamiliar cultural content.

As a social practice, it is empirically precipitated ascribing cosmopolitanism geoculturally. In the multiplicity of (entangled) modernities and cultural traditions (Conrad & Randeria, 2002; Pieterse, 2010), cosmopolitan social practices, for instance, may not be associated with democracy or secular reason (Gidwani & Sivaramakrishnan, 2003: 343). Therefore, it would be more accurate to speak of *cosmopolitanisms* (Pollock et al., 2000; Bhabra, 2010), since mondialization evokes an internal connection between cosmopolitanism and localism (Lamont & Aksartova, 2002; Hannerz, 2006; Mignolo, 2000, 2010, 2011b).

The previous argument seems to theoretically, methodologically and normatively invalidate the West/Rest antinomy, *eo ipso*, the cosmopolitanism version conceived from it. At the theoretical level, this antinomy leads to the empirically questionable conception of a Western modernization historically preceding and spreading out teleologically to the Rest, as if the latter would be a passive side of the former's modernization. At the methodological level, it tends to fuse geopolitical frontier, which is historically contextual, and sociological frontier. Considering both levels, we can outline a *continuum* between the “whole-part” metatheoretical assumption (modernization as societal rationalization) and the West/Rest antinomy: The particular expression of modernization in the dominant part of the world (West) is taken as a comparative standard. Consequently, the historical entanglements between societies (Lévi-Strauss, 1987; Schwarcz, 1994; Appadurai, 1996; Randeria, 2002), which co-produced the modern world, are disregarded. At the politico-normative level, it also disregards historical processes through which worldwide horizon of modernization was activated: mainly processes of colonialism and imperialism (Wallerstein, 1976; Bhabra, 2011).

Therefore, I argue that the diagnosis of cosmopolitan social practices must start from the constitution and reproduction of symmetries and asymmetries in the



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happening of the everyday experience of mondialization, the latter conceived by the synchronic and the diachronic experiential dimensions. Concerning asymmetries, for instance, Alexa Robertson’s work on television international news narratives is elucidative. Robertson (2010: 85-100) shows, on the one hand, how Northern European television international news representations of world events – e.g. 9/11 and the 2010 tsunami in Indonesia – promote a cosmopolitanization of social life “without leaving home”; on the other, how the discursive construction of such events in news narratives is embedded in a particular worldview and reproduces world power asymmetries (19-24). This means that the journalist’s hermeneutical situation drives the interpretation of mondialization in the mediatic sphere. The internal connection between cosmopolitanism and localism is confirmed here. From this perspective, the diachronic dimension of the experience of mondialization evokes the reproduction of world historical asymmetries. In the case of media narratives, this reproduction happens in the discursive selection of what is relevant to be reported (Dencik, 2013).

Therefore, although the simultaneity of news’ circulation at the international level stimulates senses of a common present between territorially and culturally distant social actors (synchrony), our previous embodiment in a hermeneutical situation and in a particular world horizon (diachrony) suggests that asymmetries are reproduced and may be constituted in everyday interactions – as, for instance, in the experience of the real, virtual or imagined contact with the Other (Cicchelli, 2016b: 189), or even, one could deduce, as a hermeneutically inherited prejudice (Gadamer, 1999: 416-448).

In what follows, I focus especially on symmetries. What justifies this framing is the fact that, when considered from the hermeneutical perspective of our world experience, symmetries shed light on the fundamental issue of the cultural diversity and the cultural entanglement between societies. To approach it, the recent research on aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism is of central interest, since they address the everyday life experience of this very entanglement.



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3 – Aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism, cultural entanglements, and the experience of Otherness

The international circulation of cultural products (music, literature, movies, food, clothing, and so on) introduces the cultural difference into the everyday life as a mundane relationship with otherness whose nature is “aesthetic in a first instance” (Cicchelli, Octubre & Riegel, 2016: 57). Modifying the individual’s aesthetic senses (Cicchelli & Octubre, 2015: 102), the international circulation of cultural products has an effect on the identity-building and cultural belonging, *i.e.* on the cultural reproduction and the forms of socialization. Vincenzo Cicchelli (2016b: 183-189) distinguishes four components of an existing cosmopolitan socialization, among which the cosmo-aesthetic component is of particular interest here.

Based on the results of empirical studies on cultural consumption practices among young people in France (Octubre, 2014; Cicchelli & Octubre, 2015; Cicchelli & Octubre, 2017), aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism states that the globalization of cultural products engender processes of aestheticization – by means of emotions, and taste and practice diversification linked to cultural consumption in the definition of the self – and of culturalization of everyday life and identities – by means of a return of the exoticism stimulated by the vulgarization of cultural acquisitions and of the increased physical, mental or virtual mobility (Cicchelli, Octubre & Riegel, 2016: 59). Being a banal or ordinary cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006: 83-89; Lamont & Assarkova, 2002; Urry & Szerszynski, 2002), this aesthetic perspective addresses the everyday experience of cultural entanglements as a “cosmopolitan spirit” (Cicchelli, 2016b: Chap. 6), rather than a “cosmopolitan disposition” (Lamont & Assarkova, 2002; Olofsson & Öhman, 2007; Woodward & Skrbis, 2007; Woodward, Skrbis & Bean, 2008).

Three dimensions of our relationship to cultural difference define the concept of aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism: (a) “a strong attraction and curiosity with respect to cultural practices and exotic products from elsewhere, having or not having localised references – authentic or reinvented ones”; (b) the “hybridization with national cultural forms or with localized individual appropriations”; and (c) “the development of a self-assertion that is linked to the desire to understand the Otherness, to better understand oneself” (Cicchelli, Octubre & Riegel, 2016: 60). Aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism, as



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a cosmo-aesthetic component of socialization, comes to the sharing of feelings, sensations, tastes, abilities, lifestyles, knowledge, throughout the experience of the familiar and the non-familiar. This cosmo-aesthetic component of socialization reveals changes in the intersubjectively shared cultural repertoire, once restricted, *grosso modo*, to the ethno-aesthetic canon of the nation.

The distinction between inadvertent and advertent cosmopolitanism is central in this context (Regev, 2011; Cicchelli, 2016b: 191-196). The former refers to the international circulation of the cultural industry products and its eventual local hybridization and reinvention. It is inadvertent since hybridization and reinvention are not necessarily intended; one can consume “cosmopolitanly” without engaging reflexively with otherness. On the other hand, advertent cosmopolitanism concerns a reflexive approach aiming to transcend the boundaries of one’s own cultural tradition, becoming “a set of cultural performances associated with specific groupings or communities” (Redev, 2011: 111). To this extent, the consumption of “foreign” cultural products reflexively stimulates the imagination in a cosmopolitan sense and can nurture an ethical, moral or political engagement with the Other.

The inadvertent or advertent nature of cosmopolitanism suggests that the relationship between cultural consumption and cosmopolitan openness involves an ambivalent learning process related to the contact with otherness (Cicchelli, 2016b: 180-183). Ambivalent since it is not acquired through organized knowledge, but through the representational build-up of ordinary experiences, thus being “a learning, tangled and reversible process” (Cicchelli, 2013a: 218). That is, aesthetic experience and learning are not linearly linked: On the one hand, aesthetic experience of consumption does not necessarily give rise to an inclusive moral consciousness and ethical principles of the Other, but, on the other, such a consciousness and principles presuppose the aesthetic experience (Cicchelli, 2016a: 9). From this ambivalent learning process arises the figure of the cosmopolitan amateur, whose relation with culture is based on a dynamics of sharing, distinction, particular and ephemeral mixings “linked to a horizontal socialization (through networks, and peer groups)” (Cicchelli, Octubre & Riegel, 2016: 62).

The empirical research on aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism is still incipient. Consequently, we know little about the cosmopolitan aesthetic amateurship normative implications and its effects on social stratification. However, the already conducted research suggest that, as a consequence of the everyday life and identities



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aestheticization and culturalization, cosmopolitanism is not restricted to the elite stratum anymore: “[...] When the snob elites [...] are replaced by aesthetical cosmopolitans, the hierarchies of legitimacy (cultural/social/economic) tend to be detached, notably among young generations and in a regime of mediatic and digital consumption” (Cicchelli & Octubre, 2015: 108). This means that the homology between social and cultural stratification (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1979) seems to have been complexified: Aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism sheds light to new forms of “distinguishing and reconnecting information and knowledge, education and culture, experience and representation” (Cicchelli, Octubre & Riegel, 2016: 60). As a resulting effect of the tendency towards the cultural spaces hybridization, it would not be possible to ascribe a social position only based on the taste and practice repertoire anymore (Cicchelli & Octubre, *ibid.*).

Aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism situates the cultural entanglement between societies on the little things of everyday life. It interweaves two analytical levels, the macro-sociological – that is, “the cosmopolitanization of everyday life consuming culture” – and the micro-sociological – young people’s “cosmopolitan outlook”. This procedure “[combines] cultural products (their economy, from production to distribution), consuming behaviors (reception, appropriation) and representation (hybridization of imagination, from local to transnational, from individual to collective)” (Cicchelli & Octubre, 2014: 16). Involving a linguistic, visual and narrative appropriation (Cicchelli & Octubre, 2015: 103), aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism refers to a “hermeneutics of alterity” in which ego’s experience of the otherness is constitutive of learning processes (Cicchelli, 2016b: 153-166).

According to what we have seen in previous topics, aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism thus concerns the synchronic and symmetric aspects of the experience of mondialization, since it diagnoses a diversification of the cultural contents constituting our everyday world experience (synchrony), and shows that we can access and incorporate interpretatively these contents (symmetry). Informed by the above-mentioned research results, the following working hypothesis focuses on the elementary aspects of the experience of mondialization aiming to contribute to the unveiling of the hermeneutical precondition of the experience of mondialization. When introducing an intercultural perspective, it engages with the cultural diversity and the cultural entanglement between societies’ phenomena, both presumed in the experience of mondialization and the cosmopolitan socialization.



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4 – Experience of mondialization as hermeneutical experience: working out Gadamer’s hermeneutics with a sociological intent

When conceiving the experience of mondialization as hermeneutic experience, this working hypothesis addresses the following questions: (i) Why is cultural diversity immanent to the human condition? (ii) How is the cultural entanglement between societies possible?

(i) Mondialization seems to have enlarged the synchronic dimension of our world experience by diversifying the everyday contact with other cultural traditions and things in the world – what we have particularly seen in aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism. This enlargement suggests we become potentially more and more aware of the fact that increasing cultural entanglements between societies (synchrony) have an effective influence on historical consciousness. As to the hermeneutical sphere, the mondialization evokes a diversification of the available sources of meanings and of the culturally-based interpretations of the world and things in it with which we have contact throughout our life. In a general sense, we can say that this shapes the experience of a potentially common notion of time and space, thus stimulating what we can refer to as a cosmopolitan imaginary within social groups.

This diversification lays emphasis on an immanent finitude resultant from three hermeneutical preconditions of our understanding. First, the hermeneutical situation, in which we are *always already* embodied, imposes a limit to our world horizon because the latter is both inherited *via* tradition (diachrony) and acquired throughout partial fusions of our horizon with Other’s horizon in the happening of our world experience (synchrony) (Gadamer, 1999: 440-455, 540-543, 550-555). Second, this finitude is due to the mediation of our understanding by the progressive structure of discourse; we access our knowledge progressively. Third, it comes to our phenomenologically situated world experience (636-662); because our body is spatially and temporally situated, we cannot go by all the experiences available in the world. These hermeneutic preconditions of our understanding impose a finitude to the experience of mondialization in the sense of how we live it and can understand it.



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In light of this, we can address our first question: Cultural diversity would be immanent to the human condition because our understanding is finite. Since our understanding is finite, mondialization is experienced differently according to the hermeneutical situation (diachrony) in which we are embodied and the partial fusions of our horizon with those many Others' horizons that constitute our present – as a tourist, as the foreigner who becomes our neighbor, or *via* the international circulation of cultural products, the media narratives. Therefore, the hermeneutical finitude of our understanding suggests that there are as many sociological forms of cosmopolitanism as there are different cultural forms of living, in the sense of *how* we relate to otherness and to *what* Others.

(ii) Those partial fusions of horizon may be tacit, by means of pre-constituting our being-in-the-world – as in the inadvertent cosmopolitanism – or conscious, by means of the possibility to seek it – as in the advertent cosmopolitanism. In both forms an intercultural understanding is presupposed, which concerns our second question: The cultural entanglement between societies would be possible since our hermeneutical openness to the world has no previous constraint of any kind, thus evoking an intercultural understanding as a precondition and as a condition of our world experience.

The intercultural understanding preconditions can be revealed by the three substantial aspects that define our hermeneutical openness to the world. As a preliminary formulation, we could state that the cultural entanglement between societies is possible because:

- When defining an antecedence of the thought over the language (Gadamer, 1999: 621-636), the principle of analogy reveals that we are able to establish similarities between practices, words, signs, and to what things they refer in the world. This means, by definition, that we can express our thought through any practice, word, and sign available to us, no matter their usage frequency on a specific cultural community or the cultural background.
- The semantic floating character of the word (non-strict correspondence between word and thing) requires the expressive use of the language by the speaker (590-608), which enables, first, the directing of the word to what the speaker wants to express, secondly, the directing of the word's meaning to the



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interaction context in which the speaker is using it. By definition, the word then is available to anyone’s usage, without the constraint of any kind, even if it comes from another language.

- The intersubjective binding nature of language use enables to access the meaning evoked in the speaker’s utterance (662-688), and this access does not presuppose – again, by definition – a previously shared lifeworld nor a culture.

From this perspective, we are not culturally isolated. Throughout the happening of our world experience, there exist not only differentiation regarding others’ cultural traditions, but also sharing: “[...] the closed horizon that would surround a culture is an abstraction” (Gadamer, 1999: 454). Our perception boundary and the linguistically-impregnated world constitute neither a hermeneutic border (540-543, 550-559) nor a sociological one. Because linguistic impregnation and perception happen through “shadings” of the object, our understanding is hermeneutically open, even allowing us to access “shadings” presented in another language (650). Presumed in the experience of mondialization, the cultural entanglement between societies thus evokes an intercultural understanding as a precondition of our world experience, since we are hermeneutically open to everything that constitutes our present.

In the perspective of the speaking subject, these preconditions of the intercultural understanding mean that the experience synchronic and diachronic dimensions become effective as continuous *dialogue* (512-533) with the cultural “Others” constituting our hermeneutic universe – throughout, we could fundamentally say, an imagination-based dynamics of the rapprochement and remoteness (Cicchelly, 2016b: 140-141). Presumed in the experience of mondialization, the cultural entanglement between societies also evokes an intercultural understanding as a condition of our world experience, since living in a “mondialized” world implies to interact continuously with the sources of meaning and the culturally-based interpretations of the world and things in it that reach us. In this context, the familiarity or the unfamiliarity of the cultural content that reach us drives the dynamics of the experience.

When evoking preconditions and conditions of our world experience, the intercultural understanding can be taken as the *medium* of the experience of mondialization. To this extent, the intercultural understanding seems to enable the



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characterization of the cultural entanglement between societies as a learning process – tacit or conscious, ambivalent, as conceived in the cosmopolitan socialization. If we agree that the mondialization refers to a diversification of the available sources of meanings and culturally-based interpretations of the world and things in it, then this learning process can be hermeneutically understood as a thought-signs’ diversification and as a semantic diversification of the linguistic structures intersubjectively shared in the lifeworld.

As such, the historical consciousness would not be merely the autophagic outcome of a reflexively apprehended and experience-based cultural tradition. Inasmuch as our world horizon is not the static expression of the hermeneutical situation in which we are *always already* embodied (Gadamer, 1999: 544-550), the contact with (cultural) otherness (synchrony) can activate a reflexive apprehension of the inherited cultural tradition (diachrony) and lead, as a learning process, to a widening of our world horizon.

The empirical implication of this hypothesis is as follows: Living in a “mondialized” world implies being cosmopolitan in some way – as already suggested by Beck (2006: 51-69) – since the cultural difference became immanent to the happening of our everyday experience, *i.e.* to the socialization. To the extent of aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism, this hypothesis suggests that cultural products can be taken as the *medium* and consumption taken as the phenomenon which forces a cosmopolitanization of the forms of socialization (synchrony) driven by an intercultural understanding. This intercultural perspective accesses the internal connection between aesthetic experience and learning process since it enables to scrutinize the linguistic, visual and narrative appropriations identified by aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism – that is, the very process which symbolically and materially diversifies the cultural reproduction and “cosmopolitanizes” the forms of socialization. Also, revealing preconditions and conditions of our world experience, this hermeneutically-based intercultural perspective indicates that the advertent cosmopolitanism presupposes the inadvertent: If thought and language had not opened us previously to everything constituting our present (tacit fusion of horizons; inadvertent cosmopolitanism), the seeking to aesthetically distinct experience of consumption would not be possible (conscious fusion of horizons; advertent cosmopolitanism).

This working hypothesis has to be interpreted in the frame of a reconstructive approach which goes from preconditions to conditions of our world experience, and as



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such, it is intended to contribute to the hermeneutic fundamentals of the cosmopolitan sociology project by introducing an intercultural perspective – which consists, according to our starting point, in theoretically deriving the metatheoretical assumption of the relationship between the parts (between societies) in light of empirical analysis. At the sociological sphere, this intercultural perspective has to be able to contribute to the definition of otherness and the role of alterity in the cosmopolitan socialization.

Final considerations

In the first two sections, we went successively from the metatheoretical analysis of Habermas’ and Beck’s version of cosmopolitanism to the identification of empirical, theoretical and politico-normative insufficiencies in the author’s versions. In section three, I presented the diagnosis of aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism as an everyday form of the cultural entanglements between societies, *i.e* of the experience of mondialization and cosmopolitanization. Throughout Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, I then outlined a working hypothesis intending to unveil preconditions and conditions of an intercultural understanding which can be taken as the *medium* of the experience of mondialization. When adopting reconstruction, the concept of intercultural understanding, as suggested, can function a fundamental of the cosmopolitan sociology project, fundamentally because it provides an answer to the questions of why is cultural diversity immanent to the human condition; and how is the cultural entanglement between societies possible. By doing so, this working hypothesis allows grounding what the above-mentioned sociological and anthropological literature states – which is: There are as many forms of cosmopolitanism as there as different forms of living and we are culturally opened to everything constituting our present.

However, just to say that Gadamer’s hermeneutics fits better to the intent of substantiating the sociological addressing of the experience of mondialization than Habermas’ or Beck’s version of cosmopolitanism, is not sufficient as a deductive argument. At least, it requires taking into a new account the Habermas-Gadamer debate. We need to answer the implied question of why Habermas’ formal pragmatist foundation of the social life would insufficiently apprehend the experience of mondialization, especially when we consider that Gadamer’s hermeneutics influenced



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Habermas’ program in many ways (Habermas, 1987b: 184-215; 1987c; 1987d: 354-359) and that Habermas outlined an alternative to what he characterizes as subjectivism⁴ in Gadamer’s philosophy (1987d; 2004: Part I).

At the philosophical dimension, we can then stress two main tasks still to be done. First, the main question at stake concerns knowing if Habermas’ formal pragmatist foundation of the social life leads to a narrowing of our world experience when taking only the speech act’s effects as analytically relevant (1987a, v.1: 296-347). According to what we have seen about aesthetic-cultural cosmopolitanism, one may ask: Can we address the inadvertent cultural hybridization and reinvention and its effects on the identity-building and the cultural belonging – *i.e.* on the cultural reproduction and the forms of socialization – as a linguistically mediated mutual understanding? The second task comes to the unveiling of the internal connection between communicative and strategic action, the evolutionary lifeworld-system concept of society, and the West/Rest antinomy in which Habermas grounds cosmopolitanism.

Despite the inconclusive stage of the hypothesis explored here, we can nonetheless indicate one major sociological task to be done in connection with the philosophical dimension. This hypothesis would require, at least, the substantiation of the internal connection between the experience of mondialization and the cosmopolitan socialization throughout a hermeneutically-based intercultural perspective.

Considered together, I estimate that the philosophical and the sociological dimensions of this hypothesis can contribute to the substantiation of the cosmopolitan sociology project since it enables to address the cultural entanglements between societies (the relationship between the parts) as learning-based inputs of the social transformation. In other words, my major intuition is that the cosmopolitan sociology project requires the development of the intercultural perspective into a critical hermeneutics.

⁴ Habermas also criticizes, first, Gadamer’s underestimation of the power of reflection enacted in the understanding; second, Gadamer’s concept of tradition as uncritical, which may lead to dogmatism; and thirdly, his’ excessive emphasis on the ontological self-sufficiency of hermeneutics (Habermas, 1983a).



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