

# Cosmopolis

## A Review of Cosmopolitics

2015/3-4

### Editorial

Dominique de Courcelles & Paul Ghils

This issue addresses the general concept of “spirituality” as it appears in various cultural contexts and timeframes, through contrasting ideological views.

Without necessarily going back to artistic and religious remains of primitive men, which unquestionably show pursuits beyond the biophysical dimension and illustrate practices seeking to unveil the hidden significance of life and death, the following papers deal with a number of interpretations covering a wide field extending from belief to theory, from emotions to concepts, from the wisdom of personal experience to the most sophisticated doctrines. Spirit and spirituality are indeed many-faceted notions. They may refer to the intricate world of the interacting spirits which inhabit living beings in animistic traditions, without excluding a “grand force” linking human beings within a dynamic whole on which their very existence rely<sup>1</sup>. They also bear upon more atomistic and either/or approaches of Western philosophy, which have become embodied in Cartesian dualism against a monotheist background, to the point of freezing the essence of individuals and culminating in the extreme individualism that characterizes our contemporaries. However, this equally refers to the opposite conception of materialism, across times and cultures, from ancient India and Greece (Cārvāka, originally known as Lokāyata, or some Buddhist doctrines for the former, Democritus or Lucretius for the latter) to more contemporary materialistic schools, whether modern or postmodern.

The following papers look at the contrasting forms of the philosophy and spirit of the human factor set into a whole, with no artificial disjoint between the psychical and the physical levels, as Wittgenstein put it: “And how can a body have a soul?”. This approach is not unrelated to the notion of anthropocene examined in a recent issue of *Cosmopolis*, which provides another comprehensive framework open to a spiritual life emerging from the very environment that generated it.

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The first section of this issue was edited by **Dominique de Courcelles**, director at the National French Research Centre (CNRS), whom we wish to thank for collecting relevant studies relating to

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<sup>1</sup> Paulin J. Houtondji, *African philosophy : Myth and Reality*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983 et *Combat pour le sens. Un itinéraire africain*, Cotonou, Flamboyant, 1997; Alexis Kagamé, *Philosophie bantu comparée*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1970.

the religious and political questions, with a view to focusing on the war of ideas inevitably waged behind images, concepts and perceptions, taking an asymmetrical approach. To the extent that they are mindful of global/local interactions and include representations, opinions and beliefs, such disciplines as philosophy, philology, history and social sciences can provide useful studies accounting for new practices in geopolitics and a fair diplomacy.

In her introduction, **Dominique de Courcelles** first poses the question of how the religious and political spheres interrelate, with their corresponding religious demands and humanistic values. She then suggests that the right question today may be breaking with the philosophy of human rights concerned with the defense of human beings against the hazards of arbitrary politics or the instrumental use of religion, in favour of a fair philosophy of humankind, a new humanism. This would consist in recognizing a common loyalty of all towards one interhuman, not only interstate community, to protect it from both the autonomy demanded by individuals and the instrumental use of minorities.

Considering the fact of diversity, so important today in terms of both politics and religion, **Abdelhai Azarkan** looks at the conditions under which tolerance could obtain the double status of right and duty. He revisits to two philosophers, John Locke and Voltaire, who thought about it from the historical reality of religious wars. The former made tolerance into a right, basing his analysis on the political-legal level, while the latter saw tolerance as a duty, from an analysis based on ethical-political criteria.

**Mathieu Guidère** examines what he calls semantic denominationalism, a term which implies religious attributes and identities, whichever national loyalties or personal belonging they may have at the same time. Since the early 2000s, this phenomenon has expanded tremendously, compounded by the “war on terror” and the over media-oriented terrorist actions. Denominational expressions act as formal names for ordinary and high-profile players in domestic and foreign policies of democratic states. These systems reveal a receding secularization, while the powerful comeback of religious identities signals the failure of nation-states and the weakening of the humanist spirit.

**Barbara De Poli** retraces the history of a contemporary jihadism claiming its Islamic essence and asserting the truth of genuine coranic principles via the war on infidels, with a view to restoring the Caliphate. After defining the term *jihad*, she shows that even if this contemporary jihadism is spreading in the Muslim world, it radically departs from Islamic law and the received use of the term *jihad*, in so far as it is rooted in the early radical thinking of Islamic ideologues in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting with with Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. This current has been fueled by by international conflicts since the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan, in which the so-called Western countries bear a major responsibility.

**Abderrazak Sayadi** starts from the Tunisian experience to ask the question of humanist values and democracy within the relationships between the religious and political spheres. As a historian of religion, he is brought to demystify certain islamic principles and to paying attention to the reform of law, seeing the separation of religion and politics as a precondition to a successful democratic gamble and the establishment of a renewed humanism.

**Dominique de Courcelles** reminds us that getting a better knowledge of narrations and words makes it possible to better understand how logical and rhetorical thinking works for those who wage an asymmetrical war, re-enchanting and mystifying the world to better take control. As soon as 1932, an exchange of letters between Einstein and Freud made it clear that, in order to free man from fatality and war, education understood as culture was fundamental. Such illustrations as the execution of Oussama ben Laden and the Caliph's speech in Mossoul show

that a preliminary analysis of images and words is essential to a fair diplomacy conducted by people from civil society, whose culture and wisdom allow justice and force to speak together and better resist war.

**Marcel Boisard** thinks that on the day the guns fall silent, exhausted by war, we will not return to the state borders that have prevailed for a century as an outcome of the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916. It is time to prepare the "day after", which will be a huge challenge. To this end, a summit of Middle-East nations is urgently needed to globally decide the fate of those peoples. On the condition that we know who the enemy is and accept to name it, to understand the history of the countries, groups and alliances, and to question any false or self-interested sense of certainty.

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In the second section, **Paul Schafer** provides the author's experiences to explain how culture, from the artistic to the biological, has the power to open the doors to spirituality, from the inner self to the global environment. He asks himself whether a relative permanence of spirituality can arise from the specific moments that characterize it.

**Laurent Ledoux** synthesizes the conclusion of a symposium held on 22 January 2015 on the links between philosophy and management, on the basis of the spiritual dimension conceived as "natural" and the answers it may suggest to the issues that face the organizations in a "contemporaniversal" world.

**Jacques Rifflet** makes that question in a secular perspective, based on the wellsprings of personal commitment before it can be caught by any religious creed or scientific theory. In this sense spirituality, in alliance with reason, both inspires human consciousness and illuminates its destiny.

**Sami Aldeeb** asks himself whether Islam can be reconciled with human rights. Caught between the belief in an absolute and final Word descended from the sky, and evidence showing that any religion is the creation of a given culture and a society situated in time and space, the Makkan and ... contexts et médinois call for differentiated, if not opposite answers and exegeses.

**Bernard Carmona** provides the outline of a dialogical framework, which is known to be a feature of debates between the various philosophical schools of classical India, exemplified here by the transdisciplinary perspective of debates within a Buddhist context.

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The articles not focused on the previous topic include a study by **Landry Signé** on China's strategy, competing with the United States to control African resources. The author deals with the specific case of China's rapprochement with Southern Sudan since Sudan was broken up.

In the last paper, **Goran Fejić and Rada Iveković**, return to the essential role that women should play, and comments upon the role of some international legal instruments related in particular to the elimination of all forms of discrimination. The perspective is transnational and transethnic and is based on secular criteria, as regards nation-building and more generally society-building. Considering the persistence of widespread violence, whether in times of armed conflict or in times of peace, the question remains whether it is possible to fully implement rights and justice instruments.