

Accidental cosmopolitanism:
Citizenship at the end of history*

The observations below are an attempt to understand what becomes of us once the focus of our life shifts to the private sphere. Arguably, we are then utterly dependent on the guidance and protection offered by administrative bodies and reviewing courts. But could such dependence ever be consistent with human autonomy? It will be argued that it is possible to see even administered lives anchored in a peculiar form of collective self-determination. From the same perspective, however, it becomes also clear that a life of this type is necessarily burdened with cynicism and self-alienation.

World citizenship by happenstance

Trivially understood, cosmopolitanism stands for the endorsement of citizenship of the world. Indeed, many self-ascribed cosmopolitans perceive themselves in one way or another as part of a global community for which everyone supposedly shares common responsibility.

Such a *political* cosmopolitanism is undeniably noble in its ambition. At the same time, however, it gives us only half the picture. It eclipses another and perhaps even more fundamental cosmopolitanism that is negative and quite accidental, that is, a product of circumstances rather than choice. This *accidental* cosmopolitanism de-links life from the place at which one lives among others. Rather, life finds its lonely home in the pursuit of individual success.

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The observations below are an attempt to develop accidental cosmopolitanism into an ideal type. Pursuing such an ambition invariably involves, as is known from Max Weber, a modicum of exaggeration. The point of the exercise is, nonetheless, to invite readers to draw on this type in order to make sense of attitudes and conduct that they observe in themselves as well as in others.

Roughly speaking, accidental cosmopolitanism is an offspring of contemporary capitalism. It is the subjective reflection of the victory of the market over the nation. Not by accident, it emerges in response to competitive pressures.

On an individual level, its rise involves experiencing life as increasingly not lived in communion with others, but rather as lived against one another. This type of life is predominated by efforts to brace oneself for various competitive races. What is more, life needs to be mastered in a context where markets generate opportunities without regard to local biographical ties. People need to trail opportunities wherever these may come to pass. If this is the principle on which leading a life is built, the question of where one lives and with whom becomes secondary. Indeed, those questions appear to be reminiscent of the time when humans grouped in hordes for the reason that keeping company is a useful mnemonic device for remembering feeding grounds.¹

On a collective level, the primacy of the market is perceived as an inability of politics to alter effectively the “natural laws” of commerce and finance. At best, politics can help individuals to adapt to an ever changing business environment. Moreover, the political leaders of market-embedded states refer to market pressures in order to explain why they have no choice. By abdicating responsibility they expect everyone else to succumb to what they perceive to be inevitable. What is lost here is the confi-

¹ See Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Gesammelte Werke (ed. A. Frisé, Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1978) vol. 1 at 9.

dence that markets can be held responsible by creating governments that are made responsible for markets.

The individual and collective loss of control is complemented by the growing influence of transnational regulatory or coordinating authorities. Whatever may be done by political bodies today is either prepared or supplanted by “sites”² beyond the nation state whose operation is of utmost importance to protecting and channeling the lives of ordinary people. The standards for banking are set by a relatively small number of insiders. The lending policies of global financial institutions are determined by a group of persons who share a certain economic philosophy. National polities cannot but be part of their game in order “not to be left out”. They either become policy takers or participate keenly in a multilevel system in which national administrators cooperate with international bureaucracies and members of the private sector.

Finally, the experiences of disempowerment reconfirm the lingering sense that contemporary life is situated in a post-historical condition. This means that with the demise of reasonable alternatives to “liberal democracy”, history has morphed from a linear progression towards equal recognition into a senseless struggle for and against the same set of ideas and institutions (democracy, human rights, the rule of law and free markets). As has been succinctly observed by Fukuyama,³ the impression that humanity has reached the end of history emerges within history. It marks the moment at which history has come to a rest. This moment may pass if those who are dissatisfied with living a life of hard work and preference satis-

² James N. Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier: Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

faction resolve to “restart history”⁴ again. At the same time, there is also fear that more harm than good might come from embarking on such an experiment. Such apprehensiveness accounts for the *post-historical legitimacy* that we attribute to the United States of America and the European Union. Both are defective by their own standards; but any attempt at exploring alternatives would appear to be even more dismal given that it might open the Pandora’s box replete with religious fanaticism and ethnic strife. Indeed, there is a shared concern that dismantling either epitome of the Western world would only give rise to a horrible—and horribly absurd—spectacle. We are therefore inclined to believe that pushing the boulder of liberal democracy down the hill of history would merely create the burden for others of having to roll it up again in the future. Disempowerment *and* the impression of the futility⁵ to recoup the power of common action seem to be the essence of the post-historical experience.

These four factors account, tentatively, for a situation in which people behave as cosmopolitans by accident. What I would like to explore here, is what this means for the normative core of citizenship, which is collective self-determination.

Traditionally, as citizens, people have conceived of themselves as part of a common world. This is the key to seeing self-determination mediated by living among others. *Political* self-determination is based on the premise that one is collectively autonomous if (and only if) one yields to those others to whom one belongs.

The underlying conception of life as lived among people with whom one shares a concern for a common world becomes increasingly implausible when, as pointed out

⁴ Ibid. at 334.

⁵ The impression of futility reflects, of course, a reactionary mindset. See Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversion, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1991) at 60.

above, life is experienced as lived against one another and when opportunities are indifferent to places. The situation of life, in other words, is no longer perceived to be ultimately embedded into the body politic. The question is then whether there is a form of “collective” self-determination that is adequate to accidental cosmopolitans. Obviously, it would have to be a form of collective self-determination that is not at all mediated by a public sphere.

It will be argued that it is possible to arrive at a respective concept. The collective self-determination of accidentally cosmopolitan individuals is not mediated by communication and voting but by acquiescence and going with the crowd. This appears to involve self-alienation because individuals become detached from their own reason and judgment. Surprisingly, self-determination can be alienated without thereby turning into heteronomy.

I will also argue that this self-alienation gives rise to symptoms in which are articulated both the desire to overcome alienation and the individual inability to do so. The normative import of the relevant phenomena should not be underrated, for they also represent a *critique* of the post-historical situation. More than a mere immanent critique, which uses the principles pursuant to which the object of critique claims to conduct itself, this critique is even intrinsic to the situation. The critique *exists*, however enveloped in symptomatic practices that involve a retreat from politics to morality. I hasten to add, therefore, that my observations are therefore not supposed to formulate my own critical views. Philosophy leaves everything as it is. It merely makes an effort to arrive at a better understanding of what people implicitly believe when they participate in historical practices.

Finally, I will conclude with the observation that accidental cosmopolitanism alters the outlook of society profoundly. The most elementary question addressed by par-

ticipants in the body politic has been to determine what it means to treat every member with equal respect and concern. Fleshing this meaning out has involved articulating a conception of social justice. The focus on justice disappears, however, when places lose their political significance. The guarantee of equal respect and concern pursuant to a commonly adopted conception of what this means becomes supplanted with the expectation to be treated equally wherever one goes, that is, to expect from each jurisdiction to treat people without regard to their nationality. Consequently, the most elementary political question is no longer that of social justice but rather that of inclusion.

I begin with the characterization of the presupposition of political self-determination and then turn to reconstructing the conditions of its accidentally cosmopolitan counterpart.

The body politic

We do not enter the world from the outside. We are always already invested in it. Living a life means being among others and being absorbed by the things that we do.⁶ Dialectically put, we are ourselves by being outside of ourselves. Our lives are possible through relationships with others. What we do takes on determinate significance only against a shared web of roles and examples, which lends substance to our choices even if we choose to defy established conventions.⁷

We can be who we want to be, however, not only by fitting in or in acts of defiance, but also by determining the relationships in which we are both related to and at a

⁶ See Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt aM: Klostermann, 1975) at 242, 417.

⁷ See, more recently, Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) at 242.

distance from others.⁸ Of course, unless we attempted to behave tyrannically, we need to recognize that others have to play a role in determining our lives. When reflecting on the terms of our existence we need to confront the fact that living in the world means being with others who are our equals. Indeed, in the public sphere we need to see ourselves through the eyes of others *as* others and hence as people who perceive things differently, reason differently and take different things for granted.

Not only do we not enter the world from a hypothetical point outside of it, we are also not in the position to invent our world and to pick and choose the people around us. Life is not fiction. The world is a place. We are dealing with particular people, who in their own view are just as special as we take ourselves to be.⁹ We have to recognize that our life is determined by people who are already here and with whom we, invariably, continue with what has come down upon us from previous generations. We can be the authors of our own lives by sharing our authorship with others. We must not perceive ourselves at the centre of our existence in order to be that centre. More precisely, we can lead our own lives only by identifying with a *situation* in which we perceive ourselves as one among others.¹⁰ This is not a moral de-

⁸ It is a classical shortcoming of liberal political philosophy to present self-determination as though it happened cabined within the confines of one's home. This, if anything, is the shortcoming of the otherwise masterful theory of Christine Korsgaard. For a recent brief introduction, see Christine M. Korsgaard, 'Self-Constitution and Irony' In Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011) 75-84 at 78-79.

⁹ Arendt was correct in seeing the paradoxical equality of distinction as the most elementary condition of political life. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958) at 8, 57, 175, 215.

¹⁰ For a similar observation, see Rahel Jaeggi, *Entfremdung: Zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems* (Frankfurt aM.: Campus, 2005) at 41.

mand. It is a condition of self-constitution.¹¹ The identification with a place is a condition of freedom, for one can be who one is only by situating oneself somewhere.

Generally, identification means making oneself actively passive. By identifying with a role model (*e.g.*, Ethan Hunt or John McLean) one allows oneself to be determined by the actions, attitudes, virtues or even gestures of another character. One makes them one's own very much like in the manner in which one finds the reasons of one's idol good. Analogously, in the case of a place one allows determination by the situation of which one believes to be a component. If one emphasizes the persons who are part of this situation one speaks of "the people" to whom one belongs. If one wishes to refer to the situation itself, one speaks of a "nation".¹²

As long as we are in the world, the place at which we have become who we are is determinative of who we are for others. When we reveal where we are from we reveal who we are. "I am from France" means that "I am French". We even take our place with us when moving to another place. It then becomes displaced, but no less real.

Life has a beginning and, even more importantly, also an end. By virtue of being finite, life is serious.¹³ Due to a serious interest in leading our lives *over time* we need to have a sense of where it is supposed to go on. If we are interested in leading our own lives in the future then we

¹¹ Self-constitution is the activity of pulling one-self together. See Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). It is submitted, therefore, that one can succeed at that only by seeing oneself as who one is, that is, as part of a situation.

¹² This, at any rate, appears to be the understanding of French revolutionary theory. See Abbe Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?" In *Political Writings* (ed. and trans. E. Sonenscher, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003) 92-162 at 136-137.

¹³ See Barbara Merker, *Selbsttäuschung und Selbsterkenntnis: Zu Heideggers Transformation der Phänomenologie Husserls* (Frankfurt aM: Suhrkamp, 1988) at 214-215.

have to participate in the collective self-determination of our place. Since the place that we share with others enables the individual life of each, the fate of the place is of common concern.

The identification with a situation in which we perceive ourselves as being with others over time does not give rise to complete self-constitution unless, paradoxically, one negates one of its essential features. The situation is boundless. It is boundless not in the sense of flowing out naturally into infinity but for the reason that it can be given a different outlook by shifting the focus. The situation of life is in and of itself multifarious. Any determination is necessarily inadequate to its indeterminate determinateness.¹⁴ Nevertheless, for the reason of creating a presence for oneself in this world, lines need to be drawn if only for the reason that votes can be counted, for mastering one's own life ultimately needs to be mediated by acting together. This, at any rate, is the "worldly" way of generating and regenerating power.¹⁵ Common concern for the bounded place is a transcendental condition for giving one's life a presence in this world.

The altered significance of the place

Places are the media for the engagement with concrete others. Nonetheless, it is not impossible to delink human existence from this very elementary condition. Not only does this happen when people retreat for religious reasons from worldly pursuits and seek their individual salvation,¹⁶ it can also be observed when people no longer see how engaging with others and acting in common might alter or affect their existence. The place is then transformed into a resource for private pursuits. It is, for

¹⁴ See, generally, Gerhard Gamm, *Flucht aus der Kategorie* (Frankfurt aM, 1991)

¹⁵ See Arendt, note 9 at 52-53.

¹⁶ See Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (trans. E. Fischhoff et al, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) vol. 1 at 627.

example, a prerequisite for carrying a good travel document.¹⁷ Where people live then matters to them only inasmuch as it affects amenities and comfort. They prefer New York over Iowa City because of the greater variety of food. But they are not part of it. They choose to live there for their own convenience, and it is better to live in New York rather than Iowa City because your friends are more likely to visit you there.¹⁸

As the gravity shifts towards private life, the primary setting of social experience is markets. They are not bound to a place. Rather, they facilitate fleeing and repeated exchanges with others as “character masks”,¹⁹ that is, persons performing economic functions, such as those of a seller or a borrower. These functions are just as universal as markets are principally without borders. In contrast to constitutions, markets are not tied to polities. The delinking of human life from the place gives rise to an accidental form of cosmopolitanism. It is “accidental” in that it is different from the cosmopolitanism of those who locate their lives in a global situation.²⁰ Their cos-

¹⁷ The very phrase that one belongs to a place indicates that one is not master of one’s location. The place determines where one better ought to be. Socially understood, identity is not a possession, it is an attribute that one cannot dispose of.

¹⁸ The retreat from the common world appears to have a variety of causes. One of these may well be that participating is overshadowed with overwhelming futility. This impression can have different sources. One may be that there is nothing left to change. The state of the world is as good as it gets. Moreover, changing the world already seems to have become a matter for banks and other corporations to procure. They negotiate the terms of their operation in a dialogue with national politicians and international administrators. See Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011) at 168. Civil society participants are sometimes consulted. Why should in a world like this anyone have any incentive to engage in politics? Any trade-off between politics and private life is necessarily inclined to favour the latter.

¹⁹ See Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*, *Marx-Engels-Werke* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1968) vol. 23 at 100.

²⁰ See, most notably, David Held, *Cosmopolitanism: Ideals and Realities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010) at 14.

mopolitanism locates itself in a global *cosmopolis*. Accidental cosmopolitanism, by contrast, does not locate life at a place. Life is essentially private, and it is so anywhere.

The question is how one can account for citizenship under conditions of accidental cosmopolitanism.

The cosmopolitan outlook

If people do not primarily, but only accidentally, live among others, the lives of others do not matter in a biographically significant sense, but rather in the aggregate size of consumer demand, labour cost, birth rates or incidences of illness. The challenge posed to collective self-determination is not the trouble involved in getting along *with* this or that group. What matters, instead, is how aggregate factors of social interaction might adversely affect individual experiences and opportunities. The holistic background of political life recedes into the background. The presence of others does not translate into demands addressed to an already “encumbered self”,²¹ but rather to aggregate effects that constitute externalities. They require some regulatory response. Rational yielding to regulations, therefore, is the key to understanding what becomes of citizenship—and how collective self-determination works—under conditions of accidental cosmopolitanism.²²

As a category, “externality” transforms public problems, which affect a common form of life,²³ into calculable and discrete instances of harm whose probability is susceptible to calculation and aggregation. Its career be-

²¹ See Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (2d ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) at 178-179.

²² I cannot explain here why per my observations above I merely address only the “pure”, and not the “mixed” form of cosmopolitan self-determination.

²³ See John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems* (Chicago, Swallow Press, 1954) at 64.

speaks a perspective on the social sphere that attributes the major role to action governed by private law rather than to political action pursuant to a constitution.

Whatever happens among people happens, so long as it is legal, as an exercise of individual rights. By definition, the enjoyment of rights is *prima facie* free to disregard aggregate effects or other unintended consequences. It is the confluence of externalities that constitutes the social space addressed by regulations and interventions. The individual relates to society as a sum total of side-effects.²⁴

Not by accident, in such a realm of experience, “risk” and “crisis” play a central role.²⁵ Risk signifies what is man-made, and hence contingent, and yet also unavoidable since it is built into the fabric of a private form of human association. The same is true for most crises. The post-historical world is perceived to be at risk because the decentralised constitution of society confronts its subjects with seemingly unmanageable complexity. A risk society, thus understood, is a social world where regulation is restricted to addressing the unplanned consequences of conduct while the rules underlying its constitution are more or less immune to change.²⁶ It is, in other words, a post-historical world.

When one abstracts from the existent political bodies and perceives various fora and sites of regulatory authority—the Basel Committee, the Codex Alimentarius Committee, the World Health Organisation, the Inter-

²⁴ See Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (trans. Ciaran Cronin, London: Polity Press, 2006) at 36. In a sense, this is also true of how Dewey conceives of the condition under which a public comes into being; but the difference to the existence of isolated externalities the problems that are addressed by a public can be translated into the concerns of a common form of life. See Dewey, note 23 at 137.

²⁵ See Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk* (trans. Ciaran Cronin, Cambridge: Polity, 2009) at 6-8.

²⁶ When the potentially adverse consequences of human activities are deemed to be either inevitable or desirable then it is only possible to deal with them as risks.

national Monetary Fund—it can be seen that bodies of this type are relatively immune to political challenge and operate on the basis of their own functional specification and institutional culture. Consequently, the relative *a priori vis-à-vis* which collective self-determination can establish itself is not the state, as a corporate body whose power of agency can be appropriated by the people, but various processes that respond to anonymous fields of interaction among strangers.²⁷ The task is to channel human conduct through regulation whose substance originates from a variety of transnational multilevel networks, such as food safety standards. Their claim to legitimacy is based on the generation and implementation of expertise. The mood of citizenship changes from the *normative* (“This is what we want”) to the *cognitive* (“I understand that this is a good idea”).

In a so-called “knowledge society” people are aware that whatever could be known by them is already known with greater credibility by someone who has been certified to know better.²⁸ The exercise of rational agency—self-determination in the sense of making oneself into the cause of an end²⁹—becomes thus utterly dependent on rational deference to technical, legal, economic, administrative, medical and psychotherapeutic expertise.³⁰ Therefore, one needs to defer. But how is one to decide when to defer and to whom? When one does not submit

²⁷ For an attempt at a phenomenology, see, notably, Ann-Marie Slaughter, *The New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001).

²⁸ For an introduction, see Nico Stehr, ‘Moderne Wissensgesellschaften’ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 36 (2001) 7-14 (<http://www.bpb.de/files/K318AX.pdf>).

²⁹ See Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity and Integrity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) at 96.

³⁰ The rise of Raz’ service conception of authority has a real social background. For an elementary exposition, see Joseph Raz, ‘The Obligation to Obey: Revision and Tradition’ In his *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Politics and Law* (2d ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 341-354.

one's thoughts to the scrutiny of arguments and discussion, one can examine one's reasoning only by being heeded of what is done by others whom one regards to be at least as reasonable as oneself. Deference is based on the self-reassuring working of *communis opinio*. Weber's cage of obedience³¹ is woven of the trust in the rationality of others.

However, this deference towards others is exercised by everyone simultaneously because people need to rely for their own deference on the deferential behaviour they observe in others. It is rational only as long as there is individual who actually knows to which institutional body to defer and under which conditions. Paradoxically, nobody can tell who that trustworthy individual is, for this itself would require superior insight. What is more, no one can *be* this individual because each has to rely on the reason and judgment of others. Hence, practicing deference presupposes yielding to the judgment of someone who does not exist, but in whose judgment nonetheless everyone reasonably needs to trust. This, as will be explained below, is the core of civic interpassivity.

By emphasizing rationality I do not suggest that cosmopolitan selfhood is egocentric or even immoral. On the contrary, accidentally cosmopolitan selves, in order to apprehend themselves correctly, need to see themselves occupying a potentially boundless social space, which is always universal and thus always and already inhabited by everyone. If anything may be applied to everyone, then *universal* principles. Consequently, post-historical selves possess morality rather than political judgment. They use moral principles without paying regard to the distinction between compatriots and strangers. In fact, there is no reason for this morality to stop at the threshold of humanity. Since people are notoriously in close contact with what they eat, the ethics of ingestion understanda-

³¹ See Max Weber, *Staatssoziologie* (ed. J. Winckelmann, 2 ed. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1966) at 47-48.

bly becomes of greater relevance to accidental cosmopolitans than the lot of indigent compatriots whom they never see.

Collective self-determination

But how should citizenship be possible under conditions where political units—either the *polis* or the state—are either already obsolete or irrelevant to the lives of people?

If anything is most fundamental to our understanding of citizenship it is the idea that citizens engage, if they wish, actively in governing their common affairs. In a large a republic—that is, a modern constitutional democracy—this no longer means that citizens take turns in holding political office; rather, they occupy jointly the position of the polity's principal and vote on the groups that will exercise the power of legislation. It is in such mediated form that citizens are believed to be collectively self-determining. Assuming that this idea defines the essence of citizenship, accidental cosmopolitanism can be a version of citizenship only if it is possible to link it differently to collective self-determination.

Traditionally, both political philosophy and constitutional doctrine have highlighted the active side of collective self-determination. They explored matters such as giving voice to minorities³² or the number of legal obstacles that a political movement would have to climb in order to attain the power to write political transformations into the stone of higher law.³³ However, for the purpose of developing a cosmopolitan understanding of self-determination it is of far greater interest to explore the passive side. Being collectively self-determined hinges on the reasons that one might have to have determinations made by others count as one's own.

³² See John Hart Ely, *Democracy and Distrust: A Theory of Judicial Review* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

³³ See Bruce Ackerman, 'The New Separation of Powers' (2000) 113 *Harvard Law Review* 633-729.

The above formulation appears to exclude the existence of political self-determination in the case that one prevails in a political contest. Standing in a political relationship with others, however, involves sharing a place with beings who are strangers to one another in the sense that they find different things convincing or plausible. When one is in a political relationship, one lives among people who either believe that working for taxes is enslaving or a legitimate membership fee collected by the community. The most elementary demand of political life is to get along with people who seem to be persuaded by reasons that one finds unconvincing. The demand can be met only if there is a reciprocal understanding that in spite of differences in apprehension and opinion one shares a situation of life together. For reasons of reciprocity, politics requires us to see ourselves as one stranger among others. The strangeness of the views and judgments of our fellow citizens are often held latent owing to their unquestioned presence at a place.³⁴ It is strangeness that *looks* familiar because it has been around for a while. Living politically, we may, as one of these strangers among others, agree to compromises or mutual understandings that we would not support as an individual person. Thus, understood, one is collectively self-determined in a political understanding when one yields to what one wants *as* a stranger who lives among others.

Within a body politic people are confronted with the task of reconciling their own will with the will of others. The key to finding reasons for making room for the will of others is, first, viewing one's own life as a component of a larger context and, second, identifying with the existence of one's life in this context more than with any political preference one happens to see defeated in a vote. Such an identification with the place can give rise to very troubling situations. The German conductor

³⁴ Evidently, the political relationship comes to an end in cases of expulsion or genocide.

Wilhelm Furtwängler is a case in point. He lent his talent to the Nazi regime, which he hated, simply because he could not get himself to leave Germany. Conflicts of this type reveal a general predicament underlying our political existence. Living politically, we need to see ourselves as persons amongst others who think and reason differently. We merely share a *place* with others.³⁵ The medium that permits people to sustain reciprocity under this condition is legality. The outward compliance with legal norms³⁶ is the mode of expressing respect for the choices made by those whose reasons of choice one does not find convincing or simply irrelevant. Legality permits one to be loyal to a community that is one's own, even though one is, within it, a stranger.

Under the post-historical conditions of accidental cosmopolitanism, by contrast, the question is not whether one should yield to the volition of others with whom one shares a place. Through the lens of legality these volitions *appear* like commands: You have to, no reasons need to be given. In the accidentally cosmopolitan case, the point of self-determination is to deal with knowledge claims, that is, the reasonableness of expertise that addresses itself to the complexity of life in the aggregate. It feeds into modes of channelling individual conduct under complex conditions of risk, either through rules or incentives. Accidental cosmopolitans need to make sense of the knowledge claims underpinning problem-solving. When life is not experienced under circumstances of political self-determination, one cannot but rely on admin-

³⁵ Even though their view of the world may strike one as strange, the place is nonetheless familiar. The others are difficult to read, but they belong to oneself because they are part of the place where one lives. Under such a condition of estrangement from others one can only be self-determining by conceiving of oneself as a stranger for others. Seeing oneself through the eyes of others one realizes that, as a member of a community, one is a stranger to oneself.

³⁶ See Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (trans. M. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) at 47, 51.

istrative services whose task is to facilitate or even to optimize processes of exchange and consumption. Such services are trustworthy as long as they incorporate rationality and do not unduly interfere with fundamental rights. Their origin does not matter. It is immaterial, in particular, whether their genealogy involves public regulators or self-regulating markets.³⁷ When it comes to determining the limits set by fundamental rights, the same principle is applied recursively. Trust in the technological and economic expertise of regulators becomes complemented with trust in reasonableness of judicial bodies.

Accepting administrative claims to rationality presupposes sharing indulgence with others. When it comes to rational deference towards claims of rationality, one needs to take one's cue from the conduct of others. Therefore, this is a world in which conventions have penultimate authority. I do as all others so. Instead of yielding to the will of others, which mediates collective self-determination in the body politic, what counts is the reliance on the good judgement of others who rely on the same. But since nobody actually has such good judgement the belief that deference to expertise is rational has in fact to be collectively imagined.

Civic interpassivity

Generally, one encounters interpassivity³⁸ whenever individuals concurrently forbear from doing or enjoying something on the basis of the *tacit* assumption that there is something that serves as a substitute for forgone opportunities. Most remarkably, however, individuals do not believe in the full substitutability. Rather they imag-

³⁷ For a remarkably insightful analysis, see Galf-Peter Callies & Peer Zumbansen, *Rough Consensus und Running Code* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2011).

³⁸ I am borrowing the term from Robert Pfaller, *Die Illusionen der anderen: Über das Lustprinzip in der Kultur* (Frankfurt aM: Suhrkamp, 2002) at 27-41.

ine someone, who is actually no one, to believe it. This, at any rate, is the structure of what the Austrian philosopher Robert Pfaller calls “beliefs without believers” or “beliefs without owners”.³⁹

It think it is fair to say that, to a certain extent, we all live by delegating belief to some imagined gullible believer. When I am buying the tenth monograph that claims to explain the twenty-five years of philosophy leading from Kant to Hegel, I am doing this with the more than subliminal awareness that I will likely never have enough time and patience to read this book. But I take comfort from my shortfall with deference to a belief without actual believer who imagines me resorting to a secluded hideout where I will have the leisure and energy to catch up with my studies.

Perhaps this phenomenon can be even better understood with reference to what neurotic symptoms or perversions are supposed to accomplish.⁴⁰ A neurotic symptom promises to resolve the conflict between two conflicting demands, which usually originate from different parts of the soul (the id and the superego). The symptom provides a resolution not for the conscious person concerned because the ego is often annoyed by the stupidity of the symptom (e.g., some form of compulsory behaviour); rather, it provides such resolution for the unconscious believer in the resolution. While the symptom is an annoyance, consciously considered, it provides an outlet for satisfaction from the perspective of the unconscious. This is consistent with the idea that the unconscious, in Freud’s understanding, does not operate along the lines of the rationality that governs the conscious self.

Hence, buying the tenth work dealing with twenty-five years of philosophy I find a way of resolving the conflict between, on the one hand, satisfying my interest in that

³⁹ See *ibid.*

⁴⁰ See *ibid.* at 137, 181.

period and, on the other, feeling belittled by the amount of sophisticated scholarship that exists on this topic. Instead of reading these books, I collect them. I can take comfort from the fact that I own them. At the same time, I can act out how much I resent these learned authors by ignoring their work. Of course, my conscious and rational self ends up being terribly unhappy about the amount of money that I waste on books; but my unconscious is quite content because it believes, first, that buying is a substitute for reading and, second, that it hurts the authors if they are not read by an interested reader.

It should be noted, in passing, that as a result of both beliefs I live by suspended illusions. I am aware of a lack of time and discipline to study the secondary literature on German idealism. Hence, through the juxtaposition of the conscious and the unconscious belief the illusion of substitutability becomes suspended. Harboring suspended illusions indicates the relevance of irony and play. Consequently, by virtue of buying books on twenty-five years of philosophy I can *play* at being intellectually conversant in this period.

I think that Pfaller is correct in observing that much of the fabric of our culture is woven of beliefs without a conscious believer. Heavy art books are produced and bought in order to be shelved. Until recently, TV programs used to be often recorded and only very rarely watched. In each case, the active enjoyment of a thing is replaced with a substitute and an imaginary believer who believes that the substitution works in order to make forgoing opportunities either bearable or beyond reproach. People share this tacit suspended belief in substitutability, for otherwise common practices would not make sense. The market for art books exists. Collecting books is a respectable social practice, which nobody would dismiss as stupid. Recording and copying in lieu of listening and watching are widely shared techniques of coping with scarce leisure. But these practices make sense only if

someone believes in the effective substitution. But, of course, nobody really holds the respective belief. We believe in it ironically. Consequently, we can *play* watching movies by means of recording.

Such an imaginary believer in substitutability is not tantamount to what pragmatist social behaviourists call the “generalized other”, which stands for the organized attitudes that a group takes towards individuals.⁴¹ The generalized other represents the systemic perspective of the set of norms governing the conduct of the group. Each individual is in principle capable of adopting this perspective by speaking for “us” in saying “we”. In other words, even though the generalized other provides guidance and thereby constrains individuals, it does so from the perspective of an ordinary individual. With regard to its abilities, it is in no manner superior to them. By contrast, the imaginary person who reads all the books by collecting them, watches all the movies by copying them has capacities that are superior to the individuals whose passivity it facilitates. This does not, however, put this person into the chair of the superego. Quite the contrary, by virtue of an imaginary I, individuals obtain the tacit licence to *underachieve*, even if the underachievement concerns—as it often does—pleasurable experiences.

Arguably, an analogous structure of belief can be observed in the case of interpassive citizens. The belief in substitutability concerns, in this case, individual self-reliance and judgment. The baseline is set by the citizens’ expectation to be able to judge for themselves to whom it is prudent to pay cognitive deference. Since competent judgment of this type is either next to impossible in the face of complexity and competing authority or futile, anyway, if not supported by others, they need to defer to the conduct of everyone else. But as everyone

⁴¹ See George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of the Social Behaviourist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) at 154.

else is doing the same, all are looking to the left and to the right. It is not rational, hence, to substitute one's own judgment with following others, unless one believes, without further warrant, that all acts of deference eventually point to that one citizen who is getting it right.⁴² In other words, the substitution of one's own judgment with conformity and submission is based on the illusion that doing as others do is a way of doing the right thing. Nobody can believe in such an illusion. Nonetheless, the substitutions enable people to *play* at being smart by going with the crowd.

Of course, there is a surplus value that accrues from going with the crowd. Under conditions of cognitive or moral uncertainty, crowd-following promises to relieve from responsibility, for all that one does is doing as all others do. This is a way of substituting an impossible choice with a bet on the intuition of others. If, under this condition, anyone were responsible for going with the crowd everyone would be. This would eliminate going with the crowd as a type of action, for whoever is going with the crowd would be perceived as doing what the crowd does for reasons other than going with the crowd. But the crowd does not act on reasons. It is not a collective agent. Going with the crowd is a way of acting in the absence of substantive reasons. One is taking a bet on the crowd. One cannot be blamed for it making a bet. Not surprisingly, much of the practice of playing smart is a consequence of ducking and conformism. If one does not want to appear strange in the eyes of all others one does not put into question what these others seem to accept as a given. The fact that nobody wishes to be in the position of the weirdo explains, indeed, why matters can so easily *appear* to be taken for granted.

Interpassive citizens do not believe that the crowd is right. Indeed, not infrequently, they complain about the

⁴² There is, of course, Condorcet's jury theorem.

fact that “we” are all so terrible. They thereby reserve their right to revoke all deference and to exercise their own judgment. The chain of substitution could be rescinded any time. Yet, the opportunity thereto never comes to pass. Like owners of art books who may not even take the plastic wrapping off their bulky works, interpassive citizens save action for another day. They may complain about this or that and even profess their profound alienation from governing institutions, but they would never become active, for doing so would undermine the belief without believer which makes a perfectly private life possible.

Good reasons

Quite disturbingly, however, there are also good reasons for participating in civic interpassivity and tacitly accepting the subconscious authority of substituting one’s judgment.

As a device for coping with complexity, interpassivity can be easily rationalized in a society that is predominated by market rationality. Interpassivity has the structure of believing in the prudence of others as long as this belief promises to pay off. Financial markets embody this structure.⁴³ In this context, the value of a security is determined without a close analysis of the underlying risk but rather on the basis of another’s willingness to pay. Likewise, the belief in the fictive belief that yielding to the conduct of others is rational can easily be sustained as long as societies pay a dividend for gullibility. One can go on as long as one has reason to be confident that everything will be fine. As had once been observed by Vaihinger, fiction is what makes practice possible.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Crouch, note 18 at 98, 118.

⁴⁴ See Hans Vaihinger, *Die Philosophie des Als-Ob: System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit aufgrund eines idealistischen Positivismus* (9th ed., Leipzig: Meiner, 1927).

Moreover, civic interpassivity becomes even more distressingly plausible in the face of the enormous practical difficulty involved in attempting to be a non-gullible Razian individual. An individual of this type would accept the practical authority of another person or institution only if it could establish that the person or institution knew better what is best for this individual or were in a superior position to bring about a desirable result.⁴⁵ The application of this “service conception” of authority presupposes not only that people would find it easy to distinguish between what they confidently know themselves and what is better for them to have known by others, but also that the meaning and scope of the conception could be easily ascertained. The roughly forty densely argued pages that Raz recently spent on elaborating the conception must make this appear doubtful.⁴⁶ Indeed, in addition to calibrating the service conception, distinguishing between what one knows and what one had better known for oneself by others is such an arduous task that its successful dispensation seems to presuppose invariably beliefs without believers. There is no reason to be confident that one can be a Razian individual without deferring to someone else’s opinion. It remains unclear, at any rate, whether it takes an ordinary or an imaginary individual to draw the line between instances of self-reliance and reliance on others. There is even reason to suspect that the very conception of the Razian individual is a rationaliza-

⁴⁵ For a brief statement that is even more abbreviated in the text above, see Joseph Raz, *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) at 347. An alternative way of looking at the same matter is to say that individuals behave like “rationally passive shareholders” of a corporation who are intuitively aware that they would make things worse if they decided to take control. On the concept, see Joseph W. Yockey, ‘On the Role and Regulation of Private Negotiations in Governance’ (2009) 61 *South Carolina Law Review* 171-219 at 177-178. I owe this observation to Maya Steinitz.

⁴⁶ See Joseph Raz, *Between Authority and Interpretation: On the Theory of Law and Practical Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

tion of the belief in an imaginary other and, in this respect, a mere intellectual proxy for it.

Self-alienation

The sketch above suggests that accidental cosmopolitanism is a form of self-alienation. It even appears to be alienation from the self in the strictest possible sense, for what people lose is a connection with what we consider to be their nature, namely reason and judgement. Their relation to society is mediated not by their own judgment of the applicability of reasons but rather by a non-existent believer who judges the substitutability of judgment for them. In Hegelian parlance, people of this type are “outside of themselves”. From the perspective of a French nobleman, one would be inclined to say that through playing being smart people have successfully be-taken themselves to a state of permanent infancy.⁴⁷

According to Marx’s classic observation, one enters a state of self-alienation if one is governed by circumstances that one experiences as a foreign force. All doing is in fact enduring, all active engagement is a way of giving oneself up to fate.⁴⁸ The state of self-alienation is different from heteronomy, for one is not subjected to the will and command of another person.⁴⁹ Rather, one merely adapts to the run of events. This involves alienation from one’s acting self and a reification of the social world if one falsely believes to have no choice. The situation of life is then no longer seen as a situation in which one acts. One identifies with a situation of inactivity and ends up drifting through life.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Tocqueville, note at ***.

⁴⁸ See Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (ed. M. Quante, Frankfurt aM: Suhrkamp, 2009) at 88-89.

⁴⁹ See Jaeggi, note 10 at 79-80, 238.

⁵⁰ See, for that matter, Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) at 371. Raz, however, would describe such a situation as heteronomous because he does not recognize the concept of alienation.

The inaction concerns, evidently, political autonomy. One may want to conclude that private autonomy remains nonetheless intact. Political autonomy concerns the common authorship of laws. It involves the exercise of communicative freedom, which is subject to the intrinsically normative constraints of communicative action and discourse. Availing oneself of communicative freedom entails, therefore, normative commitments, such as the readiness to give reasons for one's claims and to be responsive to the reasons given by others.⁵¹

Such a common practice of communicative freedom does not exist in the accidentally cosmopolitan situation. Arguably, its absence also alienates people from their private autonomy. If the point of private autonomy is to optimize freedom of action and choice for all,⁵² it is the core question of public autonomy to articulate what it means to guarantee this freedom *equally*. The epicentre of political debate and action is the struggle over equality. Therefore, people can only establish a meaningful connection with their private autonomy if it is mediated by their participation in the political choices governing its constitution. If they are alienated from their public selves they cannot proudly identify with their private achievements because these are, where it matters, the result of circumstances that one could not have reasonably endorsed had one had political freedom.⁵³ Rather, their alienation from the political world will likely be accompanied by a cynical attitude towards life.⁵⁴

The intriguing question is whether this diagnosis does not itself require a belief without believer. Perhaps acci-

⁵¹ See Jürgen Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung: Beiträge zur Diskurstheorie des Rechts und des demokratischen Rechtsstaats* (Frankfurt aM: Suhrkamp, 1992) at 152.

⁵² See *ibid.* at 161.

⁵³ See Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000) at 265, 279.

⁵⁴ See Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt aM.: Suhrkamp, 1983).

dental cosmopolitans are entirely correct in assuming that they have no choice in the post-historical fold. Perhaps they are not alienated but merely realistic. Hence, perceiving alienation and cynicism presupposes viewing the present from a perspective that precedes the end of history. It is difficult to believe its relevance in the post-historical world. Hence the creation of the gullible believer in the wisdom of regulatory processes and, for that matter, the wealth-generating effects of markets would not be a symptom of alienation but a reasonable coping device that allows one to shut off a world that has become too complex and ungovernable for humans.

However, there are symptoms of human conduct indicating that people indeed experience a loss of their selves. Apparently, the experience of self-alienation is made indirectly through efforts at reconciling public autonomy with the predominance of one's private life. Yet, the respective attempts are all tarnished by the disempowerment underlying private autonomy devouring itself.

Symptoms: Good consumption and good products

Contemporary societies are places where we experience ourselves from within, but our being with others from without. While the latter means that representations of society are encountered in the form of aggregate numbers, people retain a sense of public engagement through internalization. If societies are considered unchangeable the only way of bringing about change is by changing oneself. Asceticism and morally conspicuous consumption become the symptoms of a communication that is essentially solitary and not at all geared towards engaging with others. Since consumption is the sphere where freedom of choice is exercised not merely in order to adapt to opportunities it should not come as a surprise that accidental cosmopolitans develop a strong taste to moralize

consumption.⁵⁵ They thereby authentically express discontent with their alienated state by simultaneously resigning to it.

Moralized consumption—the stern-faced abstention from, for example, porn, meat or drugs—is a symbolic engagement with the social world that does not move anything. Even though for the people harbouring the relevant moral beliefs the issues are not of minor moral salience, it is no longer believed that the reasons are so convincing that others will join in and help to adopt a public ban. In fact, this may not be the point. Engaging with society has become a matter of “life politics”, that is, of developing and polishing one’s personal identity.⁵⁶ The point of these exercises is not that of creating a better world, but an appealing version of oneself that one can show off to others. It reaps additional emotional reward from a narcissistic satisfaction with one’s own self-discipline.⁵⁷ I am afraid that Ulrich Beck, even though quite perceptive in his diagnosis of individualization, was wrong when he suggested that the experience of living in a risk-society gives rise to politicization.⁵⁸ Rather, it results in the moralisation of consumption and administrative action. The zeal with which it usually comes about indirectly reveals something about the underlying disempowerment.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Moralization means, on the one hand, to base the choice on individual insight into one’s duty instead of making the matter binding politically; it means also, on the other, to perceive a good society to be the effect of the good people living within it. Individual morality is supposed to be a necessary condition for the moral goodness of society.

⁵⁶ See Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991) at 214-224.

⁵⁷ See Pfaller, note 38 at 237.

⁵⁸ See Ulrich Beck, *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order* (trans. Mark Ritter, London: Polity, 1997) 162-170.

⁵⁹ See Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life on An Age of Diminished Expectations* (New York: Norton, 1979).

Beyond this symbolic level of engagement, accidental cosmopolitanism resorts to the market in order to change the world. The moralization of consumption is thereby complemented with the moralization of markets. The idea is to send out signals to consumers that by buying certain products they are contributing to a praiseworthy cause.⁶⁰ The selection of such causes is effected through market transactions that revolve around certifying certain products as morally preferable for people who want to change the world by way of consumer choice rather than taking to arms or using the ballot box.⁶¹ The certification is carried out by private businesses and involves high start-up costs for producers and distributors that want benefit from the label. Of course, little is known by consumers about the conditions governing the certification process. There is no monitoring equal to judicial review of administrative action. Of course, private rating agencies can be used to certify the certified label. An endless proliferation of markets for information is conceivable here.⁶² They would be the substitutes for a vigilant public, which would ordinarily ask a number of questions. For example, it is difficult to see how the monitoring of compliance could ever be effective without some elaborate procedure or political responsibility. What is more, certain systems, such as “fair trade”, actually may work to the detriment of the producers of raw materials. Their

⁶⁰ Not by accident, it would be more accurate to say that “fair trade” is a consumer-dependent rather than a consumer-driven movement for change. See Sarah Lyon, ‘Evaluating fair trade consumption: politics, defetishization and producer participation’ (2006) 30 *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 452-464 at 456: “Consumers can purchase fair trade coffee to combat their feelings of political fatalism and chronic that many argue result from the sheer scale of contemporary social and economic change and the inability of national governments to control or resist it”.

⁶¹ Lyon, *ibid.*, at 457 speaks about “charity at a distance”.

⁶² See Galf-Peter Calliess & Peer Zumbansen, *Rough Consensus and Running Code: A Theory of Transnational Private Law* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2010) 155-157.

entanglement with preferential systems prevents them from becoming producers of the end product itself (which is arguably the case in the case of coffee beans). The disappearing of politics may thus perpetuate and aggravate social inequality.

From redistribution to inclusion

Accidental cosmopolitanism transforms the imaginary of equality profoundly. It shifts the focus from living among equals to the equal inclusion into society.

In its most ambitious understanding, realizing equality within the context of a political society requires choosing that basic structure of society which is likely to give rise to a distribution of goods and opportunities which is more attractive to everyone than a purely egalitarian distribution.⁶³ It is understood, in this context, that these demands can only be met on the basis of counteracting and correcting the primary distribution brought about by a network of horizontal transactions. In order to live up to these demands polities need to have boundaries. Not everyone can be eligible to receive transfers, and not everyone can be expected to pay.

By contrast, under conditions of accidental cosmopolitanism this redistributive task of political communities drops out of the picture—or is at least overdetermined by a focus on inclusion. The latter is all about access to goods and opportunities regardless of the resulting pattern of distribution. Outsiders have to be let in. Once someone is on the inside, the inequalities to be found there are relevant only inasmuch as they can again be cast again as problem of inclusion. For example, after foreigners have been admitted to the labour market any ensuing inequality is relevant only if it pre-empts people from participating in society on the ground of some fac-

⁶³ See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

tor that creates for the person concerned an insurmountable obstacle of inclusion (*e.g.*, race, gender, sexual orientation, age etc.). It is irrelevant, from this perspective, whether a fully inclusive society is marked by large inequalities of wealth.

Hence, accidental cosmopolitanism is perfectly comfortable with a world without borders in which people actually experience each other as belonging to different strata of society. Intellectually, this shift from redistribution to inclusion is reflected in the public and philosophical discourse that has risen to intellectual prominence with the ascendancy of neoliberalism, namely, the debate over migration.⁶⁴ In this context, it is increasingly taken for granted that people have a *prima facie* right of freedom of movement, at any rate, subject to the one condition that markets offer them opportunities. This right has risen to the level of a prime directive of the post-historical world. It is complemented by the expectation to be free from all discrimination on the grounds of nationality wherever one goes.

Conclusion: Alienated legitimacy

When citizenship loses its mooring in the experience of a common place it takes on the self-alienated form of accidental cosmopolitanism. Citizens are alienated from their capacity to reason and judge and no longer experience the world as amenable to alteration through their choices. Without being coerced, their lives are actually governed by an anonymous network of “good reasons” to which they conveniently yield.

The loss of experience of living together has many reasons. One is a loss of perspective at the end of history. The other is the overwhelming impression that life is actually lived against one another. The third is that with

⁶⁴ See, for example, B. Barry & R. Goodin (eds.), *Free Movement: Ethical Issues in the Transnational Migration of People and of Money* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

increasing expansion of markets, opportunities are indifferent to places.

Social justice as the central focus of politics is replaced with the belief that all progress comes from making societies more inclusive.

I would like to note, in conclusion, that when I first presented my views to American friends I earned a mix of consternation and relief. They attributed my reconstruction of accidental cosmopolitanism to my experience as a disenfranchised immigrant. While they expressed genuine sympathy for my sense of aloneness, they appeared to be also quite content that the diagnosis of a disconnect from the polity did not seem to concern them.

I found this reaction somewhat surprising. I, for one, believe that the accidental cosmopolitanism that I embody in my life reflects my assimilation into American society more strongly than my being an uprooted immigrant. It is part of common American culture to experience the demands of work as overpowering, omnipresent and all-consuming.⁶⁵ Private life—associated with family and religion—is highly cherished in America, while politics is increasingly perceived as a cynical game played by oligarchs and powered by super political action committees. Nowhere are people generally more detached from their places than the in the American suburbia. Neighbourhoods appear to be extensions of the private sphere of their inhabitants. Encounters with others give rise to widespread panic. Americans also live highly competitive lives. Their understanding of success is generally not at all tied to being good at your place but at moving to where your career might take you. Their concerns for compatriots are very limited and mostly treated as a matter of private whim. The mistrust in public institutions is so immense that the American system of government has

⁶⁵ See Dalton Conley, *Elsewhere, U.S.A: How We Got from the Company Man, Family Dinners, and the Affluent Society to the Home Office, BlackBerry Moms, and Economic Anxiety* (New York: Vintage, 2010).

become almost dysfunctional.⁶⁶ What preempts Americans, however, from perceiving their accidental cosmopolitanism is their belief in the glory of their nation. Military prowess, the role of the United States in world history and its prominent position in global capitalism are preferred objects of identification. But they are also detractors. They should not be mistaken for the belief that Americans perceive themselves as living at a place for which they share a concern.

The civic attitudes to which the diagnosis applies, arguably with even greater force, are to be found in the European Union. Accidental cosmopolitanism reflects the mindset of the well-educated and mobile class that has generally benefited from the common market and availed itself of the opportunities that it offers. But it is also consistent with the experience of those Europeans who feel alienated from their national polities, but are also unable to perceive the European Union as the place that they share with others.

At the outset, I mentioned that the legitimacy of the United States and the European Union is derivative of widespread timidity as regards riskier alternatives. We are now able to understand that this timidity is a manifestation of self-alienation. People see their life in a situation in which it is better for them not to exercise their power of political choice.

It appears, therefore, that the legitimacy of the two major polities of the Western world depends on individuals remaining in a persistent state of self-alienation. One may wonder whether this is something we have reason to gloat at.

⁶⁶ See Thomas Friedman, 'Down with Everything' *New York Times*, April 21, 2012.