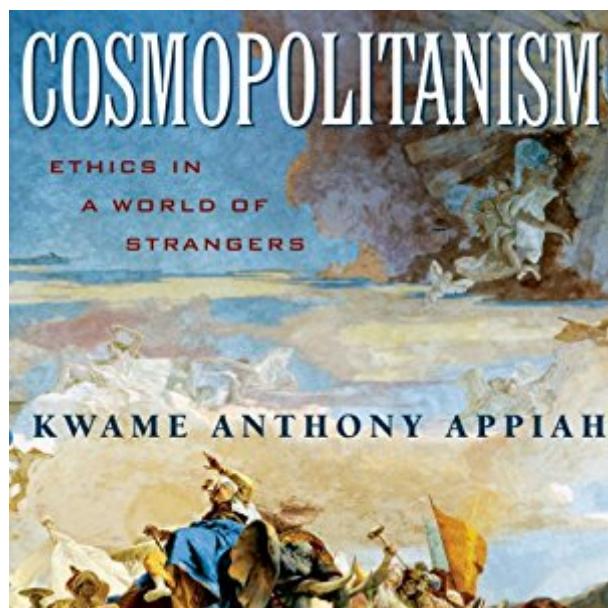


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Cosmopolitanism: Ethics In A World Of Strangers (Issues Of Our Time)



Synopsis

Anthony Appiah's landmark work, featured on the cover of The New York Times Magazine, challenges the separatist doctrines espoused in books like Samuel Huntington's The Clash of Civilizations. Reviving the ancient philosophy of "cosmopolitanism", a school of thought that dates to the Cynics of the fourth century BC, Appiah traces its influence on the ethical legacies of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Raised in Ghana, educated in England, and now a distinguished professor in the United States, Appiah promises to create a new era in which warring factions will finally put aside their supposed ideological differences and will recognize that the fundamental values held by all human beings will usher in a new era of global understanding.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading through Appiah's Cosmopolitanism, I was pretty fascinated by the fact that references to its underlying concept date back to the fourth century BC, which interestingly, was a time where this term's very meaning could not have been understood in the manner as we possibly can grasp it today. Interestingly, I had watched a TED talk by Appiah not too long back in which he had drawn a comparison between the Asante community and the Western world to note that in case of the former, there were a set of assumptions dictated by religion, which any explanation of either the physical or the spiritual had to satisfy before possibly gaining widespread acceptance. In this regard, Appiah's example of the virus being the

basis of some of the diseases and the parallel explanation for that through witchcraft as understood in his Asante community, was pretty insightful. In chapter 7, Appiah speaks approvingly of the exchange (or contamination) that comes about as a result of globalization. While the benefits he attributes to this process are significant, he fails to properly identify the associated harms. An example of such a harm can be drawn from Equiano's description of how slave traders who brought European goods to exchange for slaves, essentially incited the natives to indulge in slave trade and consequently, disrupted the previously established economic equilibrium of the native community. While I enjoyed reading Cosmopolitanism, I couldn't help but sense its utopian nature, which we can attempt to approximate but are not very likely to attain.

Kwame Appiah is a unique writer because his life has been unique. (How many of us weave effortlessly between worlds of African royalty and American academia?) If you can handle reading many ideas at once without needing a clear, direct path to any particular conclusion, you will be able to appreciate Appiah. Though he wants you to see something particular, he's unable to express it without giving you numerous anecdotes in a haphazard, avuncular way. I love hearing interesting stories from well-traveled people, so I enjoyed the book, especially its two main points: "What is reasonable for you to think...depends on what ideas you already have." Talk, discuss, and be curious--it will help us "get used to one another," and in this prosaic method, bring peace and tolerance. These are seemingly simple concepts, but Appiah--with his diverse background--is able to express them in ways a less-traveled person cannot. Pick up the book, and enjoy the journey.

Solid ideas and food for thought wrapped in a dense package making it a slow, hard read. The author incorporates his personal experience effectively, but unfortunately it is without much humor or playfulness. Idea after idea, theory after theory, he makes his way to a satisfying conclusion.

I got this book a while ago and still go back to reread the book. It's about cultures and its influences on a human nature. Since the author carries more than one culture within himself, he provides great examples of what it is like to see the world through many unlike perspectives that have been formed under different cultures. Thought provoking. Definitely recommend.

Philosophy is hard. Approach starts with a conversational tone and many interesting stories about his family and his native Ghana. Perhaps it's easier for him to see how we should take on our responsibilities for the other people in the world because he's had to adapt to so many changes in

cultures.. He discusses intellectual and artistic properties and where they rightly belong, but doesn't in any way talk about social media and how it is drawing the world closer together. I think he's interesting, but still very hard to understand.

In an affable but disciplined way, Appiah takes on many of our cultural assumptions and champions cultural meldings and mixings as the most promising path to understanding among the many warring factions on the planet. Rescuing the term "cosmopolitan" from its narrower meaning and broadening it out to describe an expanded multiculturalism, he opens possibilities and dispels myths about how we should be relating to one another in the modern world.

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