

Cosmopolitan Education

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David Hansen notes that recent cultural fracturing and violence have generated many cosmopolitan projects; humanities and social science scholars have offered them as intellectual resources for ameliorative projects. Hansen indicates the scope of this work, but otherwise says little about it. Noting that cosmopolitanism has been critiqued as naïve, optimistic, rootless and elitist, he assures us that scholars have responded to these critiques, but since both new cosmopolitan ideas and critiques of them appear daily, further assessment is sorely needed.

Hansen's substantive account begins with two surprising moves. First, noting "affinities" between educational cosmopolitanism and moral, political, and cultural cosmopolitanisms, he states that it is not merely an "appendage." He might mean that we cannot deduce an educational cosmopolitanism from external premises. But instead Hansen turns away from these other cosmopolitanisms, linking educational cosmopolitan to "the art of living" without fitting it into a larger cosmopolitan political or cultural project.

Second, after situating current cosmopolitanism as a response to recent crises, Hansen worries that it has become "parasitic upon perceived rupture, strife, and fragmentation." He tries to avoid this by shaping educational cosmopolitanism as more than a means (of response to the crises), thus sidestepping the very problem situation that the new cosmopolitanism addresses but leaving us uncertain about how to assess his formulations, if not as a resource for amelioration.

Hansen's exposition of educational cosmopolitanism starts with Epictetus; he and other classical Stoics were early cosmopolitans. For them the art of living meant living in accordance with nature, especially human nature's universal capacity for reason. Possessing this capacity, all people belonged not only to local communities but also to a worldwide community of reason. Starting with Epictetus offers opportunities for linking the art of living with cosmopolitanism and comparing classical and contemporary cosmopolitans (Epictetus, for example, reflected on adversity and disappointment, not cultural difference). But Hansen quickly drops Epictetus without taking these up, and turns to the core elements of educational cosmopolitanism (EC). Let me summarize these elements, each of which raises questions for exploration:

1. EC presumes, along with liberalism, a creative potential of all people to craft meaningful, purposeful lives, and thus grants the young everywhere genuine freedom in articulating their response to experience.
2. EC also foregrounds the community, seeking mechanisms for protecting it from corrosive pressures (in the wake of global consumer markets).
3. EC presumes that individuals and communities can "inhabit the world educationally," that is, come to grips with external contacts.

4. EC is generative in pointing to opportunities for joyous, creative uses of the global cultural inheritance.

What is specific and unique in cosmopolitanism's approach to the freedom of individual learners (1)? Hansen says it draws from liberalism, but we need to know how it does so, and how it then differentiates itself from liberalism. Some forms of educational liberalism grant too much freedom to learners, neglecting their dependence and membership in communities with constraining norms.

In (2), Hansen qualifies his liberal individualism by saying that cosmopolitanism foregrounds both the individual and the community. Does this mean that we are to assign them equal weight? How, then, would we decide specific conflicts between them? Encouraging young people to form individual plans of life deviating from those of community elders hardly conduces to community integrity.

Turning to (3), Hansen *presumes* that both individuals and communities *can* learn to inhabit the world educationally, that is, *can* learn both that difference and permeability are givens that they have no choice but to "come to grips" with, and that by reconstructing core habits and customs by learning new ideas and practices, they *can* sustain their "cultural integrity, tradition, and distinctiveness."

What kind of *can* is operating here? Does Hansen really wish to presume these positions? Isn't this an empirical hypothesis? Can't some individuals and groups be so locked in by their habits and cultural norms that they simply cannot engage in "examining, assessing, and responding creatively to" external pressures to change?

We might question whether cultural difference and permeability are as inevitable as Hansen insists. Vulnerability to change depends on both pressures exerted and capacities for resistance. Just as a healthy person resists viruses that knock others out, so an individual or group with a healthy self-regard might resist novel seductions. Secular youth might be unable to fend off novel seductions that those raised within self-conscious and caring communities of moral value can resist.

Element (3) also blurs some important distinctions. A group choosing to "reconstruct...core customs" by "learning new ideas and practices" may sustain its distinctiveness, and even its cultural integrity. But can it sustain tradition? Reform Judaism may be distinct and integral, but it is a far cry from traditional Judaism. Doesn't retaining tradition imply *not* reconstructing core customs?

This brings us to (4). Hansen states that individuals and groups are able not merely to "deal with" cultural variability and "sustain" their existence, but even to revel in joyous, childlike creative acts that "render life meaningful in remarkable ways." Indeed, the changing world relentlessly "addresses people with questions about their forms of life and thereby urges them toward cultural creation." Educational cosmopolitanism assures us that individuals and groups not only can survive amidst change, but should anticipate it with pleasure.

Hansen appears to take the inherent value of examining and assessing situations and creating novel responses for granted, making him vulnerable to the charge of ethnocentrism, of uncritically accepting the values of liberal modernity. One might

ask whether it is always a good thing for young people to be incessantly confronted with critical questions about their forms of life and ways of doing things. Perhaps it would be best if their daily concerns could be taken up against a relatively stable background of custom and habit, with questions regarding that background raised only when unavoidable. Hansen does not see this as a choice on offer. The corrosive force of cultural variability is a given. Traditional groups (such as the Amish, or traditional Jews) might not agree, and we shouldn't just beg the question against them. Indeed, Hansen opens himself to Tom Popkewitz's critique that cosmopolitan interventions shape new subjectivities for the disciplines of the market and state in the global era.¹ Only an antiglobalist political praxis can rebut such a critique.

Hansen presents an illustrative case to concretize the elements of educational cosmopolitanism. Surprisingly, he states as a "central premise" that it doesn't require a radical reconstruction of primary, secondary, or tertiary education. We might wonder why Hansen makes this a premise, rather than arguing for it as a conclusion. Won't some be inclined to argue that some features of his position, for example, freedom to develop beyond the norms of the group, in creative and unpredictable ways, require a thorough institutional reconstruction?

Many recent scholars have argued that entrenched educational institutions were formed to create the subjectivities appropriate to the modern national state. For Andy Green, mass education is one with the "cultural revolution of modernity," aimed to suppress ethnic and religious differences.² For Bill Readings, the unifying idea of the modern university has been the advancement of the nation, so that as global networks replace nation-states as centers of material and cultural production, the university lies "in ruins."³ Both formulations imply that educational cosmopolitanism will require fundamental change.⁴

Turning to the music composition example, does Hansen mean this as a representative case? It is hardly typical of school education, as this sort of learning usually takes place in conservatory classes and private lessons. The lengthy discursive and heuristic episodes Hansen describes appear incompatible with the standard egg-crate school schedule.

And something is odd about the case. Students are moved by a flamenco recording and want to add its strains to their compositions. But Hansen's cosmopolitan teacher overwhelms them with questions that arguably impede rather than foster composition: What is the history of the music and its instruments? How are the instruments made? Isn't this a bit much? Doesn't it do what Hansen wants to avoid, turn a music lesson into a cosmopolitanism lesson? We can agree that some such questions will sometimes be useful, but then we must explore when and how to raise them, in relation to what ends in view, and whether they can adequately be taken up within conventional schooling.

Despite these concerns, I share Hansen's aim of making the global cultural inheritance available and useful for all learners. I thank him for offering a formulation of educational cosmopolitanism, and join him in inviting other philosophers of education to join in so that this idea may be fruitfully developed.

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1. Tom Popkewitz, "Alchemies and Governing: Or, Questions About the Questions We Ask," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 39, no. 1 (2007): 64–83.
 2. Andy Green, *Education and State Formation: The Rise of Educational Systems in England, France, and the USA* (London: Macmillan, 1990).
 3. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).
 4. My own view of educational cosmopolitan implies the need for fundamental change. See Leonard Waks, "Cosmopolitanism and Civic Education," in *Global Citizenship Education*, eds. Michael Peters, Alan Britton, and Harry Blee (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense, 2007).