Cosmopolitanism as a philosophy for life in our time

Cosmopolitismo como filosofía para la vida en nuestro tiempo

Le cosmopolitisme comme philosophie pour la vie en notre temps

David Hansen

Teachers College, Columbia University, United States

ABSTRACT

Educators the world over struggle with contemporary conditions that militate against their vocation. Endless top-down accountability measures, rapid economic turns and inequality in supportive resources, a torrent of consumerist media stimuli that distract educational focus, and other forces require educators to work that much harder to sustain serious educational values. In this article, I put forward a cultural and ethical vision of cosmopolitanism as an orientation that can help educators in their work. This vision pivots around teachers and students learning to fuse reflective openness to new people, ideas, values, and practices with reflective loyalty to local commitments and ways of life. This orientation mirrors how the school can become a cosmopolitan canopy. The school can become a place in which all participants develop ethical strength and perspective in order to respond thoughtfully and actively, rather than react passively, to today's pressures.

Key Words: cosmopolitanism; education; schools; tradition; philosophy.

RESUMEN

Educadores de todo el mundo luchan con las condiciones contemporáneas que inciden en contra de su vocación. Las medición sin fin de la responsabilidad de arriba a abajo, los rápidos cambios económicos y la inequidad de los recursos de apoyo, el torrente de estímulos en los medios de consumo que distraen la atención educativa y otras fuerzas demandan de los educadores un trabajo que hace mucho más difícil mantener importantes valores educativos. En este artículo presento una visión ética y cultural del cosmopolitismo como una orientación

que puede ayudar a los educadores en su trabajo. Esta visión pivota sobre el aprendizaje de los profesores y estudiantes para fusionar la apertura hacia nuevas personas, ideas, valores y prácticas con una fidelidad reflexiva para los compromisos locales y formas de vida. Esta orientación refleja cómo las escuelas pueden convertirse en toldos cosmopolitas. La escuela pueden convertirse en un lugar en el que todo los participantes desarrollan una fuerza y perspectiva ética con el fin de responder atentamente y de forma activa, más que desde una reacción pasiva, a las presiones del presente.

Descriptores: cosmopolitismo; educación; escuelas; tradición; filosofía.

RÉSUMÉ

Les éducateurs de par le monde entier se débattent avec les conditions contemporaines qui militent contre leur vocation. Des mesures hiérarchisées à n'en plus finir de comptes rendus, des virages économiques soudains, et une inégalité de ressources de soutien, un torrent de stimuli de la part des média de consommation qui distraient du focus éducatif, ainsi que d'autres forces, exigent que les éducateurs travaillent beaucoup plus fort pour soutenir les valeurs formatrices sérieuses. Dans cet article, je présente une vision culturelle et éthique du cosmopolitisme comme une orientation qui puisse aider les éducateurs dans leur travail. Cette vision tourne autour d'éducateurs et d'étudiants qui apprennent à fusionner une ouverture réfléchie à de nouvelles populations et de nouvelles idées, valeurs et pratiques, avec une loyauté réfléchie envers leurs propres engagements et styles de vie au plan local. Cette orientation reflète comment l'école peut devenir un chapeau cosmopolite. L'école peut devenir un endroit où tous les participants développent une force et une perspective éthique pour répondre de façon réfléchie et active, au lieu de réagir passivement aux pressions actuelles.

Mots clés: le cosmopolitisme; l'éducation; les écoles; la tradition; la philosophie.

THERE COULD HARDLY BE A MORE AUSPICIOUS, if not urgent, time for gathering fresh perspectives on the deep purposes of education. Given the nationalistic pressure on educational systems today to transform themselves into mere appendages of the economy, school leaders and teachers must constantly reaffirm their values regarding the people they aspire to be and the aims they hope to serve. They must articulate and re-articulate their identity in light of the rapidly changing cultural, social, economic, and political global landscape. In the United States, this pressure mirrors the fact that the very idea of public education is undergoing a severe test at present, with respect to its oft-cited purpose of helping the young learn to participate in a democratic society. Every educator I have met in recent years, from veteran kindergarten teachers through freshly minted assistant professors at university, seems deeply concerned about the "acceleration" of change in our era toward a narrow means-ends calculus (Halevy, 1948; Piel, 1972; Scheuerman, 2004). To be sure, there has always been change in human life, since the very dawn of culture. However, today things seem to be moving extra fast, alongside worrisome issues such as continued ethnic and sectarian strife, population growth, environmental damage and climate change, and the like. There seems to be a widespread feeling that educators are standing on an unsteady platform with a great many uncertainties and confusions surrounding us (Magsino, 2007).

Tradition and traditionalism as responses to globalization

We can witness on both a global and quite local scale two responses to these circumstances. Like cultural change itself, which as mentioned goes back to the very origins of culture millennia ago, the two responses to such change that I have in mind also have a long lineage, namely because people are rarely passive in reaction to pressure on their values and ways of life. One strand can be called traditionalism, the other tradition. Traditionalism is a term of art for the attempt to preserve custom, belief, and value in a pristine, pure, unsullied, or hallowed state. Here, calls to change are felt as essentially undermining or acidic. Thus, traditionalists in the arts, in religion, in various social practices, and elsewhere historically have sought to repel pressure, to resist cultural change, and to build a bubble or cocoon.

The poet, novelist, and educator Rabindranath Tagore, who hailed from Bengal in India and was the first person outside the West to be awarded the Nobel prize in literature (in 1913), had this to say about the power of traditionalism that he and many of his fellow artists struggled against, in what has been called the Bengali Renaissance of the late nineteenth century: “Our literature had allowed its creative life to vanish. It lacked movement. Its so-called leaders suspected every living idea that was dynamic” (Tagore, 1966, p. 81). “People who cling to an ancient past,” he went on to complain, “have their pride in the antiquity of their accumulations, and in the sublimity of their high-walled surroundings. Ideas cause movement, but they consider all forward movements to be a menace against their warehouse security” (p. 81; and see Hansen & Diego, in press; O’Connell, 2007; and S. Tagore, 2003, 2008). What Tagore identifies can be found in many quarters of the world today. For example, it seems to me we can detect in many right-wing and left-wing views of education the register of traditionalism that exasperated Tagore and his comrades.

In contrast, tradition – or what I’ve described in my work on education as a sense of tradition (Hansen, 2001) – points to the view that deep values can be sustained even as they evolve and take on new features or modes of expression in response to the permanent presence of cultural and other forms of difference. People can sustain a deep sense of reverence even if the objects of reverence transform through time. Jaroslav Pelikan (1984) dramatizes the difference between tradition and traditionalism by stating: “Tradition is the living faith of the dead [while] traditionalism is the dead faith of the living” (p. 65). In a less polemical manner, Martha Nussbaum (1997) contends that “any living tradition is already a plurality and contains within itself aspects of resistance, criticism, and contestation” (p. 63).

Like the acceleration of change that seems widely felt today, these two long-standing responses to change also seem to be undergoing transformation in ways that are not always easy to track, since we’re all living in the very midst of them. Here is where the term of art “cosmopolitanism” that appears in the title of this article comes into play. In some respects, alas, it’s not a happily chosen term. For one thing, the familiar fashion magazine by that name, *Cosmopolitan* – along with the new Las Vegas hotel-casino also with that name – conjures the stereotypical image of the cosmopolitan as an elite globetrotter treating the world’s cultures and traditions as a

source of commodities to consume and trophies to collect. For another thing, the term can also imply a rejection of local culture, custom, and tradition. Its original, ancient Greek root – *kosmopolites* – is typically translated as “citizen of the world.” This concept can imply there is a universal moral and value platform that trumps in importance what is provided by one’s natal roots and community.

However, though the term cosmopolitanism has its difficulties, it seems to me that one of the tasks of the scholar has always been to reclaim concepts, to reconstruct them, to retrieve and rehabilitate them, to chip off encrusted associations and release them to go to work for us. I can still recall, for example, the reactions I sometimes received, several decades ago, when I referred to the “moral” dimensions of teaching and educating, having participated at the time in a three-year-long field-based study with a group of teachers on what we called “the moral life of schools” (Jackson et al., 1993). The very word “moral” raised a lot of peoples’ hackles. This reaction reflected a time when people like the American religious huckster Jerry Falwell were exploiting the term moral with oxymorons like “the moral majority” – which I call an oxymoron because any humane, inhabitable notion of morality that is conscious of human diversity necessarily implies reason, criticism, and judgment rather than anything that would be ideologically determined by a majority. I think we scholars do sometimes have to reclaim concepts from being hijacked for particular ideological ends. We have to breathe life back into dogmatic – which is to say, dead – language.

I take the concept cosmopolitanism to mean, first and foremost, not a citizen of the world per se, but rather an *inhabitant* of the world. I would argue that this shift in meaning is not stipulative. Rather, it is warranted based on how the concept cosmopolitanism has found expression and, more importantly, been enacted over the past 2,500 years, ever since the iconoclastic Greek-speaking Diogenes – who prowled Athens’ famed agora in the decades after Socrates – first used the term cosmopolitan as a way to disparage what he saw as the narrow-mindedness of local custom (Branham & Goulet-Cazé, 1996; Shea, 2010). I do not think that someone can be a citizen of the world – that is to say, a citizen of anywhere – without being an inhabitant of somewhere. Otherwise the person is not a citizen, but a nomad lacking an authoritative moral and political connection with other people.

Thinkers from Immanuel Kant to Jacques Derrida associate cosmopolitanism with a deep sense of hospitality to the stranger, in which I would include not just new people but also “strange” new ideas, values, and practices. Importantly, if I am to be hospitable to the ‘other,’ or to new ideas and values, I need a place in which to receive them. I need a sense of home, of place, of the local. From a cosmopolitan perspective, this home can take many forms, and a person may have more than one home in the rich sense of that nurturing, safety-connoting term. Home may be primarily in family and local community. But home might also be a vocation or practice. For example, an artist may feel profoundly at home in her craft and in her community of fellow artists. A teacher may feel a profound sense of place and home in the practice of teaching. For many dedicated teachers, their classrooms provide a powerful home-in-the-world. A religious person may feel deeply at home in her tradition as it is expressed and enacted the world over. These homes are not necessarily

peaceable kingdoms. Artists, teachers, and religious people alike often disagree energetically with one another, and yet they can do so ecumenically and tolerantly with one another. To be cosmopolitan-minded is to have a sense of home or place in some substantiating form or another. It is to have a sense of solidarity, a sense of identity, a sense of meaningful connection, with others in the world. In brief, to be cosmopolitan-minded is to inhabit the world.

Another way to say this is that cosmopolitanism is a normative term of art for ways of being and moving in the world. These ways fuse what can be called reflective openness to new people, ideas, practices, and values, with reflective loyalty to local commitments and forms of life (Hansen, 2011). The qualifier *reflective* is key here, in that cosmopolitan-minded openness involves a critical edge. It does not mean hanging a sign on the door of one's mind or spirit which reads "Come on in, whatever idea or value or principle you are!" But cosmopolitanism, as I understand it, is not a synonym for open-mindedness because it also incorporates a dynamic mode of reflective loyalty to local values and origins. Here the qualifier *reflective* is necessary because a cosmopolitan-minded relation with tradition and home is not an idolatrous, dogmatic, traditionalistic one. Instead, it features a supple relation characterized by sufficient love, respect, and gratitude for one's formative origins such that one knows – albeit not necessarily in so many words – that the quality or spirit of cultural reverence can be sustained, indeed often deepened, even as the particular shape, contours, or character of revered objects change over time.

Thus, cosmopolitanism, as I see it, denotes a dynamic fusion of reflective openness to the new with reflective loyalty to the known. This fusion points, in turn, to what can be called cosmopolitan-mindedness, -heartedness, and -spiritedness. Moreover, the fusion of openness and loyalty indicates why cosmopolitanism does not constitute a new "identity" that would compete with or supplant so-called local or particular identities. Rather, this orientation has to do with how one perceives, holds, and expresses one's identity. It involves developing a dynamic relation – a living relation – with the values that guide one's life and that of one's community. In this relation, people come to hold and express their identities and values in peaceful, communicative, and yet determined ways. They experience why reason and criticism are not *ipso facto* acidic of custom and ceremony, but rather can deepen one's organic relation with them. People discover the primordial truth that they are not just created beings but can be creative beings. Thus cosmopolitan-mindedness walks hand-in-hand with a sense of tradition regarding one's commitments. If its contrast, traditionalism, means "No questions asked, please, all the answers are in," a sense of tradition means "Thank heavens for those answers, otherwise we would have no sense of direction." However, thank heavens we *can* pose questions, so that our inherited ways of life – whether in art, religion, education, or whatever – can be dynamic enough to respond meaningfully to the unavoidable realities of incessant and rapid socio-economic, political, and cultural change.

I believe we can translate the term cosmopolitan as "inhabitant of the world" before we turn to the idea of "citizen of the world." Metaphorically speaking, if I attempt to put both of my moral and cultural feet in the world writ large, I will

discover that I am standing nowhere, and may end up in a nomadic free fall. But I can – to stay with the metaphor – stand with one foot in solidarity with others if I also have a footing on the ground in my local soil, for soil is always local, organic, with its distinctive textures. These are theoretical claims that can be juxtaposed with contrasting claims that might derive, for example, from humanism, liberalism, multiculturalism, or other -isms.

However, I've also been suggesting that these comments on cosmopolitanism are philosophical, and not just theoretical. Here, I have in mind philosophy in its wisdom tradition, or what is sometimes called philosophy as the art of living. If theory – or philosophy as theory – asks “What is justice?,” philosophy as the art of living asks “Am I dwelling with others justly? How might I come to do so? How might I learn to listen, to engage, to interact meaningfully, and to contribute?” I take cosmopolitanism to be closely allied with the idea of philosophy as the art of living, since as mentioned it highlights the lived quality or character of my dwelling with different people, ideas, values, and practices.

How might what I've said appear in actual practice? What does cosmopolitanism-as-inhabiting-the-world look like in the affairs of human life? Does cosmopolitanism paint merely a city in words, or can it actually come to life in a city of people? In the remainder of this article, I will provide three responses to these questions, two of them well-grounded in the research literature, and the third provisional. I have addressed the first two in a recent book entitled *The Teacher and the World* (2011), and am working out the third response in a field-based project taking place in some public schools in New York City.

Cosmopolitanism on the ground

1) For the first response, we can consider the historical record. In my recent book, I describe cosmopolitan-minded interaction that historians have documented in the Mediterranean basin, beginning in the Greek and Hellenistic era through the days of the Ottoman Turks. Scholars have also illuminated the existence of cosmopolitanism-on-the-ground – or what the Princeton philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005, 2006) dubs “rooted cosmopolitanism” – in Europe, beginning with the Renaissance and extending through the present. One such study is Amos Elon's beautiful if also heartbreaking book, *The Pity of it all: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch 1743-1933* (2002). The book illuminates the creative ways in which German Jews contributed vitally to every aspect of German culture while retaining, in a dynamic manner, distinctive features of long-standing Jewish traditions. There have also been historical studies that address cosmopolitan-mindedness on the ground in both South and East Asia, including work by the Singapore-based scholar Saranindranath Tagore (2003, 2008), a great-nephew of the famed Rabindranath Tagore whom I mentioned previously.

Based on a survey of recent historical research, I contend in the book that cosmopolitanism, understood as an organic fusion of reflective openness to the new with

reflective loyalty to the known, has found varied expression around this globe of ours for some time now. I also indicate, based on these historical sources, that this orientation seems always to exist side-by-side with cultural myopia, indifference, and intolerance – and, it should be pointed out, sometimes in the very same person or very same community. These facts are why cosmopolitanism as conceived here is not a “solution” to various human predicaments, so many of which have been around a long time and show no signs of disappearing anytime soon. Rather, it constitutes an orientation that, in my view, can position people to respond to challenge and difficulty, as well as to cultural possibility and opportunity, in richer and deeper rather than impoverished and shallow ways. We could call this cosmopolitanism with a pragmatist accent.

2) A second response to what cosmopolitanism can look like in actual practice comes from an ever-growing empirical literature across the academy. Anthropologists and sociologists have illuminated cosmopolitan-mindedness on the ground in places as varied as urban London and rural Jamaica. They have studied the play of the concept in the lives of immigrants, working class people, youth, and others (Schiller et al., 2011; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002; Werbner, 2008). There is also a slowly growing literature in educational research that is shedding light on enacted cosmopolitanism in the school and classroom, as well as through web- and other media-based forms of communication (Hansen, in press; Hull et al., 2010; Kromidas, 2011; Mitchell & Parker, 2008; Osler & Starkey, 2003; Saito, 2010). This literature has illuminated as well as problematized what “actually existing” cosmopolitanism (Malcolmson, 1998) looks like, as compared with its theoretical expressions.

I say “problematized” because, for the researcher, it is often difficult to tease out cosmopolitan-mindedness from other dispositions and attitudes human beings express in the daily vicissitudes of life, as well as in dramatic moments of decision and judgment. The literature confirms an insight the early modern writer Michel de Montaigne captures in his famous essays – which are models of a cosmopolitan outlook, in my view – when he argues that the diversity within a given human being can be as great as the diversity between any two persons, and that the diversity within a given culture or community can be as great as that between any two communities (1991, p. 380, 887, 1207, 1220). I suspect we could all attest to the truth of this insight were we to examine our lives as minutely as Montaigne did his. All of this is why, as mentioned earlier, cosmopolitanism is best understood not as a new “identity,” as such – one that would compete, say, with one’s cultural, religious, or political identity – but rather as an orientation toward the affairs of life in which a person comes to grips with and holds his or her identity (or identities) in a kind of generative or productive tension with those of other people. I have in mind here the narrative tension in a fine novel, film, poem, or theatrical performance that draws us in rather than repels us. Tension can be formative rather than solely negative or debilitating.

3) Finally, let me turn to a third response to the question of what cosmopolitan-mindedness can look like in the concrete. This response will shed light on why I elected to entitle this article “Cosmopolitanism as a Philosophy for Life in our Time.” I envision cosmopolitanism as a term of art that denotes a fundamentally educational

outlook toward life, in which people learn to learn from all the encounters that come their way, the unpleasant as well as the welcomed. I consider cosmopolitanism as characterized here to be a philosophy *for* life rather than just a theoretical framework *about* life.

This third response, which as I also mentioned will be provisional, stems from a field-based and philosophical research project now entering its third year. The project is guided by questions about what it means to be and to become a person in this fast-changing world of ours. I am using cosmopolitanism as a lens or interpretive framework. I undertook a pilot study two years ago in a primary school in New York City. Along with two doctoral research assistants, I sought to think through relations between cosmopolitanism and education, and also to think through relations between cosmopolitanism and undertaking field-work in schools since, as yet, there has been little school-based research deploying the concept and what it represents.

On the basis of this pilot study, I set up an endeavor for last year and the current one that involves 16 public school teachers who work in eight different schools in New York City. The teachers have quite diverse backgrounds. They range in age from their mid-20s to mid-50s. As a group, they cover every grade from Kindergarten through 12, and their subjects include art, science, social studies, English, music, and history. They are a self-selected group, having all volunteered on the basis of an initial interview I held with each of them about participating in the endeavor. All came highly recommended to me from trusted colleagues and teachers I know in local schools.

I began extensive classroom-based observations in September, 2012, and have now observed over 100 classes taught by the teachers. My two doctoral research assistants have witnessed a like number. In addition, we held ten formal meetings this past year with the teachers as a group, and will continue this practice in the current school year. We open the meetings with a catered dinner, and then devote two steady hours to discussion of topics related to being a human being in our fast-changing times. The meetings have been wide-ranging, though not explicitly about cosmopolitanism and education. I did provide each of the teachers a copy of the book I referred to previously, and in our second formal meeting as a group I gave a presentation about it. However, my posture has been to listen and allow ourselves to follow the emergence of the teachers' own ways of thinking about being and becoming a person in globalizing times. They have articulated a rich array of philosophical ideas (if not cast as such) and a quite remarkable tableau of personal experiences. Indeed, this current year we have shifted the format of our meetings, going from my chairing the sessions, as I did the previous year, to a process in which one or more of the teachers introduces a theme and chairs the discussion. The themes have included, among other topics, the place of learning and play in becoming a person, a discussion of contemporary constraints and pressures on becoming a person, and a discussion of racism and other forms of intolerance that impinge on what we can call human flourishing.

The fieldwork portion of the project has been fascinating. I have come to think of the schools and classrooms as constituting, at least in many cases, what might be dubbed a "cosmopolitan canopy." As far as I have been able to determine, this term

was first used in a recent book written by the sociologist Elijah Anderson (2011). Anderson deploys the term in a descriptive way, to refer to urban spaces, such as marketplaces, civic and community centers, and the like, where people from different cultural backgrounds can mingle and interact peacefully on a regular basis. In a manner that resembles Erving Goffman's micro-studies of everyday life, Anderson shows that these cultural crossroads can be educational. As people move with and observe persons from other races and ethnicities doing the same things they are – eating, shopping, relaxing, and taking their time – they can slowly but surely, Anderson argues, modify pre-held cultural stereotypes and begin to dissolve unexamined cultural assumptions. Anderson contrasts these cosmopolitan canopies with other urban settings, sometimes literally right next door, that feature either no sense or feeling of cosmopolitan community, or that feature racial, ethnic, or other forms of separatism and apartness.

From a descriptive point of view, much of what I've witnessed in the eight schools conforms with the idea of a cosmopolitan canopy. Consider just one of the schools, Public School 330 (a pseudonym); it is one of New York's seemingly countless public primary schools. Two grade five teachers who are part of the project work there. The school is quite diverse from a cultural point of view. It mirrors the cultural diversity of the city itself, so enriched, dynamic, and sometimes tension-laden as it is with its constantly evolving immigrant and longer-standing communities. The children in the school were mostly born in the United States, and indeed mostly born right there in the local neighborhood. They have roots in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh; in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam; in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Guatemala, and Ecuador; in Poland and Ukraine; and the list goes on. There are Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims. Some children display a brilliant command of English and are academically very strong. Others have a ways to go linguistically and academically. Many classrooms include both a regular teacher and another teacher, who is there either all or part of the time, who has expertise in special education and related services for children with disabilities. PS 330 is a well-run school with a comparatively peaceful and positive ethos. Based on my observations and those of my research assistants, teachers and students alike tend to get along pretty well, and there is a steady academic focus in what we have witnessed.

I would suggest that, according to the descriptive criteria Elijah Anderson presents in his research, PS 330 constitutes a vibrant cosmopolitan canopy. It is a safe place where every minute, hour, and day of the long school year, every child and every adult is more or less constantly in the living presence of cultural diversity. I understand "culture" in the widest possible sense we can give that term. It denotes not just national, racial, ethnic, gender, religious, and other typical categories we deploy in conjunction with the concept of diversity, but also the sheer range of personalities, individual habits and dispositions, and the like, when we get down to the level of moment-by-moment interactions in the classroom and school.

The opening of school first thing in the morning feels like the opening of the world itself. Children with roots from around the globe pour into the building, together generating excited words in many registers. It is difficult to describe the

profound emotional feeling I have each time I stand squeezed tight in a corner of the entry to the building, as this astounding flow of young humans streams in to spend the day there together. I do not mean to suggest that the sense of this opening is like a flock of believers coming into a church, mosque, or temple to share fellowship together. What the feeling evokes, for me, are John Dewey's deepest ambitions and hopes for the school in a society aspiring to become democratic in more than name alone. I think especially of his provocative, and challenging, discussion in *Democracy and Education* (1985, pp. 22-27, *passim*). There, he refers to the school as, at its best, creating a new cultural platform or horizon for all the children and adults who enter it. They coalesce not into a pre-fixed or pre-frozen cultural and social matrix. Rather, they "assimilate" (p. 26) into what-is-not-yet, into what they are themselves forming – both directly and, more decisively, indirectly – each and every day, based on the varied cultural and individual resources they bring to their encounters.

There are, in my view, overtly normative, transformative aspects to the school and classroom as a cosmopolitan canopy – perhaps not surprisingly since, unlike in Anderson's study, we are talking about school rather than a more "neutral" marketplace or public crossroads whose function, at least in an explicit sense, is not the forming of persons. Both of the grade five teachers, Roberta and Karen (pseudonyms), are keenly aware of the cultural diversity in their classrooms and school. Both teachers strike me as quite sensitive and attuned to varieties in learning style, expectation, background, capability or readiness, and the like. Importantly, what could be called their cultural responsiveness is at one and the same time psychological and moral responsiveness. That is, they do not perceive their students primarily through a sociological lens but rather through what might be called a humanistic lens, or what I would like to call a cosmopolitan lens (see Kromidas, 2011). Both teachers have explained to me that they are taken by how some students seem to use the classroom space as a place for experimentation in who and what they are as persons (not in so many words, to be sure). These children seem to hold their various cultural roots in one hand, so to speak – again, with culture broadly understood here – and any number of new possibilities in the other hand, with these possibilities triggered for them both by the curriculum and by the constant stimulation of their peers' ways of responding to the curriculum and to what might be called the quite *miraculous* experience of being together day after day. I use that dramatic expression to underscore how easy it is to take for granted the otherwise amazing fact that we have these places called "school" where children and their elders can gather together day after day.

The school as a canopy for ethical and moral education

The long-term project I have touched upon here is revitalizing my own understanding of what school can mean in our time, both despite and because of the contemporary tide of pressures being brought to bear upon it as an institution. On numerous occasions, as I have sat quietly in a classroom corner taking in the scene, I have asked myself: Is there a better place for these children or youth to be? Is there

something better they could or should be doing? I have been hard-pressed to come up with a superior response other than school – at any rate, a school like PS 330.

What I want to suggest is happening there, at least to an extent, is a formative process in which some of the children – and I suspect some adults, too, when I think of Roberta and Karen – are expressing the fact that they can be creative beings in the world rather than merely created beings, to recall an earlier distinction I made. They can come further into the world, rather than presuming that the physical and existential places from which they come – when they stream through the crowded entry way into the school – are all there is to life. With regards to the possibilities suggested by the actualities of the cosmopolitan canopy, it seems to me that with some further energy and mindfulness that canopy can become an even richer place for ethical and moral growth.

Here I think of the moral as having to do with ways of regarding and treating other people as well as the things of the world, with the latter, in school, perhaps best exemplified or embodied in the curriculum. (I have written at length about why the curriculum of the school, in a cosmopolitan perspective, can be viewed and engaged as an inheritance from the world to us all; see Hansen, 2008, 2011.) Within the cosmopolitan canopy of school, there is much to learn about other people both past and present, including about their differing values, beliefs, and practices, and, as importantly, hopes and yearnings.

By ethical growth, as compared with the moral, I have in mind what I have seen in nascent, hard-to-describe form in some of the children's doings, and in the two teachers' doings as well. If the moral points to how one regards and treats other people and the things of the world, ethics points to how one regards and treats oneself – but with a critical edge, in that ethics spotlights, or calls upon the person, to cultivate his or her aesthetic, moral, and reflective capacities. In this respect, ethics becomes a comprehensive concept bringing together, as just mentioned, the aesthetic, the moral, and the reflective. The school as a cosmopolitan canopy can become a place for the continuous moral and ethical education of children and adults alike, in which they participate themselves in how to cultivate what another well-known philosopher of the art of living, Confucius, long ago called “humaneness” in our relation with self, other, and world. Together, teachers and students can respond intelligently to the pressures current globalizing trends place upon them. They can inhabit their shared world even as they create it and metabolize it into their outlooks on life.

Cosmopolitanism constitutes an orientation for life. It describes a way of moving in our complex world of different persons and often confusing societal forces. The orientation does not eliminate tensions or predicaments. There remains a great need for generative institution-building, as well as political and economic reform that can lead to more just arrangements than what we witness world-wide today. Many scholars working with the cosmopolitan idea are elucidating what these macro mechanisms might look like (see, for example, Barry & Pogge, 2005; McDonough & Feinberg, 2003; Tan, 2004). However, while that effort continues on an international scale, life in schools and classrooms will go on day after day. This life can be substantially enriched, and its integrity preserved through the vicissitudes of change,

by incorporating – literally, by embodying – a cosmopolitan orientation.

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