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Critical Assessment of Popkewitz's *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform*: An Essay Review

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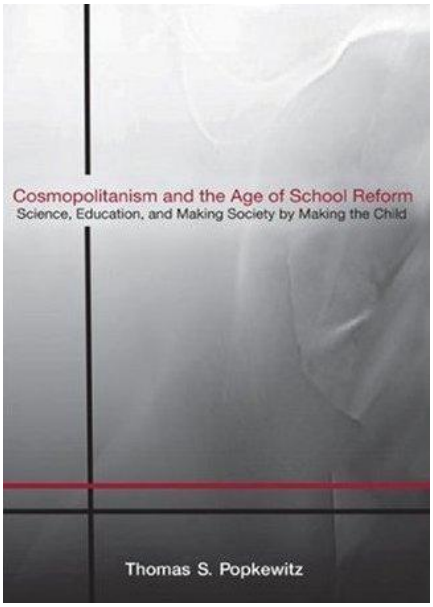
Though the roots of cosmopolitanism stretch as far back in the West as the Greek philosopher Cynic Diogenes, who referred to himself as a citizen of the world (or *kosmopolite*) in the 4th century BCE, Thomas Popkewitz's book *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform: Science, Education, and Making Society by Making the Child* (2008) is preoccupied with an Enlightenment orientation of the term. For Popkewitz, cosmopolitanism, the Enlightenment, and scientific reasoning appear to be interchangeable concepts; and these concepts, he argues, have had a profound

influence on schooling in the West since the 19th century. Not concerned with tracing the history or etymology of the term itself in forming his school reform thesis, Popkewitz is specifically preoccupied with exploring "faith in cosmopolitanism as the emancipatory potential of human reason and science" (p. xiii) in which he suggests that cosmopolitanism, as understood in relation to public schooling, is a form of pedagogy (or social engineering) which educates children to "act and think as a 'reasonable person'" would. In addition to equating cosmopolitanism with rational behavior, Popkewitz elucidates the "double gesture" of cosmopolitanism—also referred to as "abjection" (p. 6) —which simultaneously includes and excludes (p. xv) children in educational projects, such as that found in one of the text's main illustrations, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.



What makes Popkewitz's thesis on cosmopolitanism particularly incongruous is that he rarely builds upon, rejects, or reconsiders cosmopolitan thinking purported by its main contributors in situating his own thesis. The Stoics are referenced once (see p. 13), and Kant, *the* Enlightenment-cosmopolitan thinker, is brushed over casually in several places throughout the text—and is somewhat misrepresented. In addition, Appiah, one of the most well known contemporary cosmopolitan philosophers, is given a brief nine lines of attention (see p. 12), while other leading scholars in the field, such as Derrida, are given little consideration at all—all of which raises concerns for the plausibility of Popkewitz's entire formulation which rests dubiously upon a direct relationship between "the tale of American exceptionalism" (p. 49), science, and cosmopolitanism. Rather, cosmopolitanism has more to do with the ethics of negotiating the space between the universal and particular, the local and the global (Pinar, 2009), hospitality to those in need (Derrida, 2001), and learning from and compassion to each other's differences (Appiah, 2006) than the "territorial expansions as manifest destiny" (Popkewitz, p. 46) and "taming" the untamed (p. 27), "civilizing" the uncivil (p. 36, 95) that Popkewitz purports. As this critical assessment of *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform* will illustrate, while Popkewitz provides a sound and comprehensive historical overview of how enlightenment thinking and scientific reasoning influenced modern schooling and reforms, the arguments connecting these ideas to cosmopolitanism fall considerably short. In this review, I suggest that Popkewitz's thesis surrounding "performance standards, school subject teaching, and research

programs" (p. 113) and "the lifelong learner who acts as the global citizen" (p. 112) have more to do with neoliberalism and educational reform (Ross & Gibson, 2007) and the globalization of education phenomenon (Spring, 2009) than what cosmopolitanism might mean for modern school design and instruction.

Thomas S. Popkewitz is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research addresses politics of knowledge as it relates to the systems of reason that govern education policy and research related to pedagogy and the issues of social inclusion and exclusion in educational research, focusing on research paradigms, the changing terrains of knowledge about teaching and teacher education, and reforms in school subjects.

In the section on "Progress in the Taming of Agency," Popkewitz outlines the shift of a society built on certainty (i.e. Medieval Church authority) to uncertainty (i.e. Enlightenment human agency) as instrumental in understanding the modern design projects found in schools which aim, ironically, to determine the indeterminable, creating a pedagogy which attempts to control a world that is seen as having the potential for human greatness and progress but also one filled with anxiety and "fears about degeneration and decay" (p. 14). This fear was rooted in man's newfound perspective that it was no longer God or the Church but man himself who controlled one's destiny. Using a Foucauldian framework (p. 28), Popkewitz traces agency, the pedagogy of reason and rationality, and the focus on the scientific method to enlightenment cosmopolitanism (in schooling) which attempted to create "the 'reasoned' citizen who acts 'sensibly' with self responsibility and motivation" (p. 29). This "tamed" citizen, Popkewitz suggests, is categorically understood as cosmopolitan, as it is the cosmopolitan who maintains "the proper modes of reasoning and living" (p. 31). Following this line of quasi-post-colonial thinking, modern instructional design has become about controlling (i.e. taming) the unreasonable and/or irrational child who has the potential to be dangerous to the republic (Krug in Popkewitz, p. 29). Like many places in Popkewitz's text, this section is packed with a sweeping history of ideas that evoke more questions than elucidate unique or surprising connections—connections that Foucault himself was known to make quite brilliantly.

For example, Popkewitz's notion of "taming" as tied to the waning authority of the Church and the subsequent enlightenment (i.e., scientific) desire to control the uncontrollable is problematic from a historical and theoretical perspective. Like

cosmopolitanism itself, the idea of taming agency goes much farther back in time in the West than the Enlightenment; perhaps the most potent illustration can be found in the ancient Greek tragedy, Sophocles' *Antigone*. Antigone, the transgressor of gender norms and State Law, has so much agency that patriarchy and State power (played by King Creon) attempts to "tame" her into total submission. Speaking symbolically, the Chorus sings: "And he masters by his arts the beast whose lair is in the wilds, who roams the hills; he tames the horse of shaggy mane, he puts the yoke upon its neck, he tames the tireless mountain bull." These images of disciplining feral creatures are rooted in the prominent ancient Greek tension over Fate vs. Free Will, a universal theme which is not restricted to a particular culture or time period, despite Popkewitz's attempt to place it within man's burgeoning sense of freewill at the onset of the Enlightenment, arguing that the "procedures in science" (p. 28) are a kind of proof that the scientific new world order is *the* explanation for the desire to control agency. The concept of cultivating a particular kind of person is not, as Popkewitz indicates, exclusively tied to a pedagogy of science any more than cosmopolitanism is restricted to enlightenment-scientific thought, a point to be developed later.

Nonetheless, Popkewitz appropriates Auguste Comte, French philosopher and founder of Positivism, to construct an image linking positivism to cosmopolitanism despite a lack of evidence and/or analytical thought to support this peculiar alignment. "The cosmopolitanism of Comte" says Popkewitz, "was 'the Religion of Humanity, and all true Positivists sought to unite science and religion'" (p. 15). While it is no surprise that the academic world turned from a faith in metaphysics to faith in empirical procedures (take, for instance, the persistence of Bobbit's scientific method in curriculum making), Popkewitz does not clarify how Comte's positivism is tied up with notions of cosmopolitanism other than simply announcing so. Ironically, Appiah (2006) argues quite to the contrary that cosmopolitanism is about "the escape from positivism" (p. 13)—something that Popkewitz withholds mentioning when referencing this particular thinker. For Appiah, "the Positivist picture *can* get in the way; in particular, it often gets in the way of the cosmopolitan project, when it leads people to overestimate some obstacles to cross-cultural understanding while underestimating others" (p. 18).

One of the prevailing differences between the cosmopolitanism of Appiah and that of Popkewitz has to do with their respective understandings of how human reason operates. There's a reductionist quality to Popkewitz's work which sees the scientific method as the exclusive gates to acting and thinking reasonably, implicitly suggesting that other disciplines, particularly the Humanities, function outside of reason altogether. When Popkewitz does reference the school subjects of literature and music

(see p. 106-9), it is for the sole purpose of noting that academic knowledge is ordered or "mapped" into disciplines through a calculated social psychology of "scientific administration" (p. 85), keeping in tow with his Foucauldian sensibility of disciplinary power. It is here that Popkewitz turns to Hall, Thorndike, and Dewey—educational icons who appear to come from different ideological perspectives—in arguing that there are "embodied cultural theses about cosmopolitanism in which the individual was an actor whose behavior, development, or action needed governing to guarantee the future of the republic" (p. 86). Clearly ignored in this equation is the role that the economic theory of neoliberalism and globalization play in contributing to that same future republic.

Popkewitz does, however, provide a richly documented and explicated discussion of how mathematics education has acted to "govern the moral conduct of the child" (p. 139)—as if literature education has nothing to do with teaching toward ethical conduct! Mathematics knowledge holds a "privileged" place in "the learning society" which embodies "cosmopolitanism principles of the individual acting through the use of reason and rationality" (p. 141). Yet what mathematical thinking has to do with cosmopolitanism leaves much to be explained in this particular study. At the same time, mathematics *is* about problem solving, elucidating one of Popkewitz's main arguments regarding the modern-enlightenment compulsion to control (i.e., tame) that which we fear to be dangerous: the child. (p. 29)

Different from Popkewitz, Appiah understands reason in value-driven terms. After all, says Appiah quoting Hume, "reason is…'the slave of the passions'." (p. 19) In contrast to the positivistic picture of the world, "truth and reason, values you recognize" but cannot see, I would add, "shape (but, alas, do not determine) your beliefs. Because you respond, with the instinct of a cosmopolitan, to the value of elegance of verbal expression, you take pleasure in Akan proverbs, Oscar Wilde's plays, Basho's haiku verses, Nietzsche's philosophy" (Appiah, p. 26). For Appiah, cosmopolitanism is about "openness to the world" (p. 5) and an appreciation for and desire to learn from each other's differences. Appiah not only suggests that reason might be cultivated by one's intuition ("instinct") and cultural-aesthetic appreciation for the cross-cultural, but, on a different note, his words also speak to some of the criticism aimed at cosmopolitanism, which charges it with "an aspiration of the elite intellectual class" (Schlereth, 1977, p. xii).

While the main through-line in his argument purports that "narratives and images of cosmopolitanism circulate" in relation to "performance standards, school subject teaching, and research programs" (p. 113), a more prosaic, stereotypical image of

Popkewitz's cosmopolite can be found in the fears surrounding "The Urban Child Left Behind" (p. 166) who poses a threat to society. It is the urban child who needs to be included because of his/her socio-economic and/or racial differences but is simultaneously excluded for these very same reasons while, it is suggested, the "urbane" cosmopolitan, "culturally sophisticated" persons "who live in the high rise apartments and brownstones of American cities" (p. 167) have total access and are completely oblivious to and disconnected from their urban neighbours. In this tableau, one can almost hear Popkewitz's cosmopolitan-aristocrat calling down to the commoners from a Central Park West apartment flat: "let them eat cake!"

The "rooted cosmopolitanism" of Appiah (2005) in which one has heartfelt affiliations with local and global concerns, or the cosmopolitanism described by Derrida (2001), which argues for creating a "city of refuge" for asylum seekers, is clearly not the same image Popkewitz paints—and one that doesn't appear to be supported by anyone other than Popkewitz himself based on his choice of citations, the vast majority of which have little if nothing to do with the subject itself. Part of being cosmopolitan, for Popkewitz, is having the consciousness of the "homeless mind" (p. 29). "The 'homeless mind' placed individuals in a relation to transcendental categories that seem to have no particular historical location or author to establish a home, yet belonging and home are re-inscribed with the anonymous qualities of thought" (p. 30). This vision of the vagabond, shape-shifting cosmopolitan person—who has "a quality of exile and strangeness"—bares an uncomfortable consistency with the assault against "rootless cosmopolitanism" (Arendt, 1951/1976, p. 378) concocted by Stalin which targeted Jewish intellectuals with not showing enough national pride. Drawing a connection between this brand of anti-cosmopolitanism and the image of cosmopolitanism portrayed by Popkewitz is made even more strangely real when considering the legend of the wandering Jew which was, in an ironic twist of fate, fully realized under the Third Reich when the Jews were stripped of their homes and livelihoods, forced out of Germany "passportless and penniless" (Arendt, p. 415), searching for that sanctuary of hospitality yet to come, Derrida proposes in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (2001).

As an alternative to Popkewitz's abstract, faceless cosmopolitanism which seems to be about many different things including developing policy statements aimed at school reforms which, under the federal mandate NCLB, "all children will learn" (i.e. must learn) in order to "produce a progressive society" (p. 112-3), curriculum studies scholar William Pinar (2009) offers a radically different vision of what cosmopolitanism means for education. Pinar appears to reject the argument that cosmopolitanism is aimed at developing "institutional allocations of coursework," suggesting instead that "a

curriculum for cosmopolitanism cultivates comprehension of...self-knowledge that enables understanding of others" in which "self understanding can never be an 'objective' for which teachers can be held 'accountable'" (Pinar, p. vii). I would add that the teacher "accountability" demands described by Popkewitz (p. 124) and inscribed under NCLB have little to do with a cosmopolitan ethos either. Pinar's cosmopolitanism has a human face which rests on a "worldliness" (p. ix) that is cultivated through thoughtful self-reflection of one's own subjectivity *and* commitment to the world outside oneself; an idea that is in sync with Appiah's cosmopolitanism but situated more specifically in the realm of educational experiences. Supporting this thesis, Pinar provides biographical sketches of three "passionate public individuals" (p. x)—Jane Addams, Laura Bragg, and Pier Paolo Pasolini—who, in very different ways, embody the cosmopolitan pedagogy he describes. While Popkewitz, Appiah, and Pinar might agree that there is a "double gesture" form to cosmopolitanism, Popkewitz sees this double quality (i.e., abjection) as a contradiction that excludes while claiming to include, leaving the urban and rural child behind by "reinscrib[ing] their differences." (p. xv) Rather than understanding cosmopolitanism as an irreconcilable contradiction, Appiah (2006) sees the "two ideals" which constitute its makeup as the challenge—not the answer—it faces (p. xv).

The precarious foundation upon which Popkewitz's theses rest becomes even more magnified with his misappropriation of Kant's essay on the subject of the cosmopolitanism right to universal hospitality, "Perpetual Peace," (1795/1983). Popkewitz argues that "Perpetual Peace," "maintained a place for a political community of freely acting people guided by cosmopolitan reason and rationality (science)" (p. 14); in fact, Kant's enlightenment is infinitely more about moral responsibility to others than scientific rationality. The translator of Kant's essay, Ted Humphrey, states in explicit terms that Kant's enlightenment "as derives from mere scientifically applicable knowledge is subordinate to enlightenment of a moral nature" (p. 2). To reinforce this point, Humphrey adds that enlightenment for Kant is firstly about "overthrowing the intellectual bondage inherent in rationalism and empiricism"; secondly, that progress comes about through "moral growth." Thus, Popkewitz's argument that "cosmopolitan reason became foundational to ... mass schooling" (p. 14) and a pedagogy of science which constitutes such schooling falls short. Popkewitz is implicitly (and rightfully) critical of: 1) the teaching "agent who embodies and imparts the norms of policy and research" and who is more of a "manager" of knowledge and evaluator of results (p. 124), 2) school reforms aimed at "making the child," 3) and the "lifelong learner" whose role it is "to reclaim the lost dream of American exceptionalism" (p. 129). I suggest that a more appropriate target for his criticisms would be the phenomenon of the globalization of education (Spring, 2009) and

neoliberal educational reform projects "where the state defines the knowledge to be taught" (Ross & Gibson, 2007).

In *Globalization of Education*, Spring states in straightforward, lucid prose that the "growth of worldwide educational discourses" is aimed at "developing human capital, lifelong learning for improving job skills, and economic development" (2009, p. 3) in a global economy. Citing multiple international organizations including the World Bank, the United Nations, and OECD, Spring formulates a comprehensive picture of a network of multinational corporate machines which aim to maximize profit through standardized testing and teacher training programs which are "knowledge-rich, assessment driven, and community connected" (p. 49). The World Bank, in particular, encourages a type of learning in which "students learn from each other and their learning is connected to the world outside of school" (p. 48). In addition, preparation for working in the knowledge-economy "results in changing the role of the teacher" particularly as educational software becomes an increasingly vital component of (distance) learning. While on the surface the above-mentioned "interconnected learning" pedagogical strategy might appear to be one strand of cosmopolitanism, such collaborative work projects are promoted for the exclusive *economic* purpose of "working with others" in a global knowledge-economy. Appiah (2006) is clear to point out the differences between cosmopolitanism and globalization: "'globalization'—[is] a term that once referred to a marketing strategy, and then came to designate a macroeconomic thesis, and now can seem to encompass everything, and nothing" (p. xiii); cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, has two components says Appiah: "one is the idea that we have obligations to others...the other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives" (p. xv). This emphasis on the particular is echoed in Pinar's (2009) own work on cosmopolitanism and education, which emphasizes the recognition and understanding of one's subjective experience in the world.

Shifting back to Spring and his careful documentation of the World Bank report on *Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Economy* (2003), the Bank advocates lifelong learning for the purpose of preparing workers to "keep pace" (p. 49) in a global marketplace. These "nomadic worker[s]" must be able to "adapt to new living conditions" within a constantly shifting world market in order to maximize capital. It is here, if anywhere, that Popkewitz's vision of the "homeless mind" is fully realized. Yet Popkewitz doesn't connect the lifelong learner or homeless mind with global economic imperatives; rather, he proposes the following: "I call the lifelong learner *the unfinished* cosmopolitan, a mode of life in which there is a never-ending process of making choices, innovation, and collaboration" (p. 115) for the purpose of

enlightenment reason guided by "compassion for others." Furthermore, "...the child who is the lifelong learner" and who is "cosmopolitan" personifies "universal qualities that are to enable personal fulfilment in an equitable world" (p. 116). Based on today's public schooling which, as Popkewitz points out, is driven by policymaking performance standards, the notion that lifelong learning is about "personal fulfilment" seems doubtful indeed. Yet Popkewitz insists that "neoliberal economic theories of the trickle-down economic model provide one path to the cosmopolitan life" (p. 2). I don't see the connection. On the "unfinished cosmopolitan" turn of phrase, Popkewitz offers an endnote: "The phrase *unfinished cosmopolitan* emerged in a conversation with Ruth Gustafson. I appreciate her thinking through with me some of the intellectual and historical questions raised in this chapter" (p. 192). What documentation!

Another key point in Popkewitz's text is the narrative link he draws between "American exceptionalism" and "the cultural thesis of cosmopolitanism in pedagogy" (p. 42). What American exceptionalism and cosmopolitanism in schooling have in common, Popkewitz argues, is that both systems create "processes of abjection" which "differentiates and divides the citizen from its 'others'" (p. 45). These "others" are considered unreasonable because they lack the "moral and ethical qualities" that the "cosmopolitan citizen" embodies. American exceptionalism, which is closely linked to manifest destiny and the territorial expansion (p. 48) and acquisition of what is now the western part of the United States, "was told in the narrative of the school" (Popkewitz, p. 49). In fact, the public school became the perfect breeding ground to promote patriotic notions of United States "national destiny" which included "the settlement of new territory by pioneers" and, later in historical time, the industrialization of an entire nation. In teaching toward these stories, "the future republican citizen" was being formed, laying the groundwork "necessary to fulfill the dream of the nation" (p. 56). This new cosmopolitan citizen, Popkewitz argues, referencing Thomas Paine, "adopted new liberal, enlightened, and rational ideas" (p. 49). There is a totalizing, deterministic quality to this line of reasoning which ascertains that one cannot be reasonable without being cosmopolitan and one cannot be cosmopolitan without being reasonable. In addition, American exceptionalism, from a 21st century liberal's perspective, is often connoted with jingoism and imperialism, hardly qualities of the cosmopolitanism I've come to understand, and a point that Popkewitz eludes to as well—"the Enlightenment's cosmopolitanism were to transcend the parochialism of the nation" (p. 46)—but then downplays in forming his thesis that the "responsible cosmopolitan individual...guarantee[d] the progress of the nation" (p. 54). In order for the nation to progress, he says, it was vital to "civilize" and educate toward the values of American greatness.

What is surprising about Popkewitz's argument surrounding the "virtuous [American] individuals" (p. 97) is that it is tied exclusively to a pedagogy which aims to create "like-minded," "urbane," "cosmopolitan[s] in which 'able and good men of affairs would direct American society'" (Franklin in Popkewitz, p. 97). It seems to me, pedagogy (and subsequent cultural attitudes) of an American sort has more often than not been downright suspicious of the cosmopolitan, urbane person Popkewitz describes—i.e., the culturally sophisticated, intellectual individual (see p. 167)—preferring the (anti-intellectual) rugged individualism captured most poignantly by the myth of the self-reliant trailblazing pioneers who "settled" the West complemented by the swashbuckling outdoorsman (e.g. John Wayne, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush) to direct the nation. These "capable" men, if any, embody the "virtuous" imagined American-ness—hardly illustrations of urbane, cosmopolitan national leaders.

For Popkewitz, however, exceptional American-cosmopolitanism can be understood as part of 'the 'civilizing mission' of the nation" (p. 48) projects found in the 19th and 20th century in the United States. In the 21st century, such attitudes, I would add, have reterritorialized into a more global context. The "tale of American exceptionalism as the most advanced civilization" (p. 49-50) is now influencing schooling throughout the world. World system theorists and postcolonial/critical analysts argue that "Western-style schools spread around the globe as a result of European cultural imperialism"; the "core zone[s]" of power such as the United States "legitimate one form of knowledge" (Spring, 2009, p. 13) that promotes "neoliberal school reforms" in the interest of "rich nations and powerful multinational corporations" (p. 14). Thus, I would argue that the American exceptionalism discussed by Popkewitz is more closely connected to neo-colonial and neo-liberal domination than cosmopolitan narratives.

However subtle its form might take, cosmopolitanism is transmogrified and nearly criminalized as a form of Foucauldian disciplinary power, hegemony, and/or emerging fascism depending on the chapter in Popkewitz's book – even while some of its most renowned contributors and proponents like Kant (1795/1983) express it as a peace-driven response to "the inhospitable conduct of civilized nations in our part of the world...the injustice that they display towards foreign lands and people (which is the same as *conquering* them), is terrifying" (p. 119). Perhaps the only thing that Kant and Popkewitz's cosmopolitanism might share is their abstract qualities concerning man—Kant's being an ambitious, optimistic model of man's potential to live in harmony with each other "by the virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface" (p. 118), while Popkewitz's cosmopolitanism shows a deep-seeded suspicion if not paranoia of what it brings to schooling and children who are systematically included and excluded from becoming "the future citizens of the nation" (p. xv).

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