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The Question of Cosmopolitanism: An Essay Review

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Pinar, William. (2009). *The Worldliness of a Cosmopolitan Education: Passionate Lives in Public Service*. New York, NY: Routledge.

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Todd, Sharon. (2009). *Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Pp. 208 ISBN 9781594516214

Nava, Mica. (2007). *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalization of Difference*. New York, NY: Berg.

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In this essay review, I hope to describe in part how disparate, complicated, and contradictory the landscape of cosmopolitanism is both inside and outside

the field of education by considering five books published on the subject in the last several years. Three of those books are written by internationally renowned scholars

of education: *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform* by Thomas Popkewitz (2008), *The Worldliness of a Cosmopolitan Education* by William F. Pinar (2009), and *Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism* by Sharon Todd (2009). I earlier reviewed the Popkewitz text in this journal (Spector, 2010). The other two texts I take up here come from within the realms of cultural studies and socio-political thought, respectively: Mica Nava's (2007) *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalization of Difference* and Fuyuki Kurasawa's (2007) *The Work of Global Justice: Human Rights as Practice*. I include these latter two pieces to not only highlight "the difficult conceptual issues" (see Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, & Chakrabarty, 2000, p. 577) which arise when trying to figure out what cosmopolitanism is, but more so to reconsider Sharon Todd's own rethinking of what cosmopolitan(ism) is and isn't, of what it does and doesn't do. As such, the text which stands at the heart of this essay, and which can thus be seen as a kind of book review-critique in light of the others mentioned is Sharon Todd's. I place hers at the center of this critique because of its sense of judiciousness – it neither rejects nor embraces cosmopolitanism in full – which makes reviewing it *thoughtfully*, "thinking" being one of Todd's key terms, a particularly challenging endeavor.

It is Todd (2009) herself who notes that "[c]osmopolitanism is not easy to define" (p. 2) – though she seems to want to name it at different points along her journey. Perhaps the problem with defining cosmopolitanism

rests on the fact that it escapes definition altogether as Pollock, Bhabha, Breckenridge, & Chakrabarty (2000) understood in their now noteworthy essay, "Cosmopolitanisms": "We are not exactly certain what it is...Cosmopolitanism may instead be a project whose conceptual content and pragmatic character are not only as yet unspecified but also must always escape positive and definite specification, precisely because specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do" (p. 577). Indeed, the Pollock *et al.* essay is particularly prophetic as the texts juxtaposed here have the potential to cause more confusion than clarity on the meaning of cosmopolitanism. That said, a mapping of the terrain must begin somewhere, and because our main interest falls within the domain of education, that somewhere begins with Thomas Popkewitz, whose cosmopolitanism shares some similarities with Todd's despite the fact that these two texts are quite different in substance.

Popkewitz (2008) takes up what he sees as the role that cosmopolitanism has played in modern school reform. His is a Foucauldian influenced critique of cosmopolitanism as a normative project in education which aims to "'tam[e]' the untam[able] (p. 27), "'civilize' the uncivil (p. 36, 95)" (cited in Spector, 2010, p. 2). Popkewitz is "preoccupied with an Enlightenment orientation of the term" in which "cosmopolitanism, the Enlightenment, and scientific reasoning appear to be interchangeable concepts" which have had "a profound influence on schooling in the

West since the 19th century” (Spector, 2010, p. 1-2). For Popkewitz (2008), the “double qualities of inclusion and exclusion” (p. xv) that characterize “the problem of cosmopolitanism” (p. xv) simultaneously include “reasonable persons” (p. xiii) in “the politics of schooling” (p. xv) and its un/spoken rules while excluding those individuals deemed irrational or unreasonable.

In stark contrast to the cosmopolitanism of Popkewitz stands Pinar’s (2009) study which looks at the lived, ontological experience of cosmopolitanism through “the lives of three passionate public individuals” (p. x) whom he describes as having worldly sensibilities, each of whom become curricula for cosmopolitanism. For Pinar, “[a]s rich and varied as the scholarly literature on cosmopolitanism is... what it lacks is attention to subjectivity and its cultivation through education” (p. x). What Pinar and Todd’s texts have in common is that Todd (2009) does pay respect to what she calls “new cosmopolitanism[’s]” (p. 25) attention to pluralism and “the production of subjectivity as something not founded on abstract notions of human nature” (p. 26) – though her thesis is grounded in a critique of what she sees as the stronghold of its “classic” form, specifically within the context of human rights education.

As a philosopher of education, Todd “faces” the subject of cosmopolitanism with a sense of detached interest – quite different from her curriculum theorist counterparts, Popkewitz and, particularly, the ever-passionate Pinar – in that she provides a

philosophical overview of cosmopolitanism beginning with Kant’s cosmopolitan project as described in his 1795 essay “Perpetual Peace” and ending with Derrida’s study of un/conditional hospitality as a precondition for a new cosmopolitan ethics. Todd’s book acts, in part, as a kind of primer for education scholars interested in understanding the field in both its “classic” and “new” forms (p. 25) – classic as understood according to its “appeals to universal humanity, rights, and/or world citizenship” and the new, which “emerged in the 1990s” as a “direct response to the mounting pluralism in societies around the globe” (p. 25) and the importance that postcolonialism and poststructuralism now play in scholarship across the disciplines.

While there have been books recently published outside the field of education on what Todd (2009) refer to as “the second strand” (p. 25) of cosmopolitan thought – texts I mention in this essay’s introduction such as:

Nava’s (2007) psychoanalytical discourse on cosmopolitanism which examines the ‘unconscious factors’ and ‘the non-intellectual, emotional, inclusive’ and ‘intimate’ features of an individual’s ‘feelings of attraction for and identification with otherness’ (p. 8) [and] Kurasawa’s (2007) political perspective on what he calls ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ (p. 194) exercised through ‘public discourse and action’ as a ‘form of world-making’ (p. 88) (cited in Spector, in press)

and which are not cited in Todd's (2009) book – her overall thesis rests on the argument that “most educational initiatives...reflect more clearly the classical strand of cosmopolitan thought” (p. 29) which “seeks to educate for global awareness and...a ‘shared humanity’ as a condition of world citizenship” (p. 7).

Such an understanding of cosmopolitanism is rooted in Kant's (1795/1983) “Third Definitive Article for a Perpetual Peace” in which he calls for “peaceful relations that will eventually become matters of public law” so that humanity “can gradually be brought closer and closer to a cosmopolitan constitution” (p. 118). From a 21st century poststructural and postcolonial perspective, there is much to critique about the Enlightenment philosopher's grandiose vision, which Todd does do indirectly quite well in her study. That said, Kant's (1983) hope for universal hospitality was in direct response to what he saw as “the inhospitable conduct of civilized nations...[and] the injustice that they display towards foreign lands and peoples” (p. 119). In short, the Third Article is about human rights, and it is human rights education, specifically the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (Todd, 2009, p. 51), that Todd is critical of. Such education, Todd argues, “is often perceived to be instrumental, a vehicle through which students learn about rights and how to apply them to particular cases of abuse, but are rarely engaged in the very dilemmas of judgment as an everyday exercise in negotiation” (p. 155). The critique that education (of virtually any form and in any subject) is technical-instrumental

is certainly nothing new, but a critique nonetheless that continues to be reiterated because mass education and, more specifically, curriculum-making has “produced little more by way of sophistication and refinement” (Kliebard, 1975/2004, p. 45) since the publication of Franklin Bobbitt's two major works (1918; 1924) – as curriculum scholar Herbert Kliebard noted over 35 years ago.

I would add to Todd's short list that not only UNESCO but also the International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools – the latter not mentioned in Todd's study – teach toward the classic cosmopolitan values of world citizenship and global awareness as described in its mission statement¹ and within a plethora of research devoted to IB schooling (e.g. Rodway, 2008; Roberts, 2008; Bent, 2009). And with the rapid growth of the IB program across the world, such cosmopolitan educating goes beyond the more strict confines of *human rights* education Todd (2009) focuses her argument upon. In addition, as someone interested in better understanding how it is that Todd has come to the conclusion that the majority of cosmopolitan educational initiatives are classical in orientation, “leaving discussions of ‘actually existing cosmopolitanism’ largely to the side” (p. 29), her argument, from my perspective, would be strengthened with more evidence from different sources to back up this position. The endnote in which she mentions that she “was head of a project that involved investigating notions of justice as they were portrayed in Human Rights Education policy and curricula in both Canada and Sweden” (p. 64n) as

support that human rights educational materials displayed an “uncomplicated manner in which rights themselves were treated” (p. 51) lacks the kind of substance that this reader was looking for in order to fully appreciate her overall critique of how cosmopolitanism gets played out in education.

Comparatively speaking, what Pinar’s (2009) study of cosmopolitanism does so remarkably well is that over half of his book is devoted to examining the worldly lives of public philosopher Jane Addams whose concept of “education *was* experience” (p. 71), museum educator Laura Bragg “and her remarkable Boxes” (p. 97), and Pier Paolo Pasolini whose life was “characterize[d] [by] the cosmopolitan curriculum Pasolini taught” (p. 104) as concrete illustrations of a cosmopolitan education which “invites an ongoing self-reflection associated with solitude while engaged with others in a world that is not only human and historical” (Pinar, 2009, p. ix). In short, even as a conceptual thinker, there is nothing abstract about Pinar’s actually existing cosmopolitan humanity despite the fact that thinkers such as Todd (2009) claim that cosmopolitanism needs to be reframed in light of its “abstract” features of “global harmony and peace” (p. 2). Indeed, Todd’s (2009) position regarding the “ism” of cosmopolitanism being about the “how-to’s” (p. 6) of behaving like good global citizens within a “harmonious world order” (p. 2) are not the first words which come to mind when considering Pasolini, the man, or his filmography. If anything, Pasolini’s films expressed intolerance ““in the face of a new

regime that was taking place then in Italy, namely the regime of tolerance’ (quoted in Greene 1990, 73). For this regime, Pasolini felt only contempt” (Pinar, 2009, p. 119). Nonetheless, Todd ends her book with a question asking her readers to rethink the cosmopolitan project: “So, although we do not share humanity, we do share a world with others and this demands nothing more and nothing less of us than to face the individuals we share it with. Can this not be where a renewed cosmopolitan project in education begins?” (p. 155). One suspects that this project has already begun not only in Pinar’s study of the same year, but in texts written several years before Todd’s publication by such thinkers as Nava (2007) and Kurasawa (2007), each of whose studies will be considered in further detail after giving more attention to Todd’s text first.

The bulk of Todd’s (2009) book, specifically the middle chapters, focuses on human rights education which seeks “to inculcate knowledge toward a *just* education,” for “the purpose of human rights” (p. 67). In setting up the argument that rights are taught as principles, fixed in time and space, Todd’s worry about the cosmopolitan educational project is two-fold: 1) that humanity should not be understood in the abstract (universal) but ought to be recognized for its particular (plural) contexts – otherwise “hegemony” (p. 104) lurks on the horizon; 2) when cosmopolitanism becomes a set of ethics to follow (blindly), teachers are at risk of engaging in “uncritical—dare I say thoughtless—stance[s] toward those ideas that are meant to be implemented” (p. 139).

Her concern with the latter is that if teachers follow “yet another script” (p. 139), cosmopolitan or otherwise, teaching and learning will be devoid of thinking and judging the particular case, a dangerous notion indeed that echoes those Eichmann-like “lessons from evil” (p. 142-3) that Hannah Arendt teaches human rights educators so much about.

It should be noted that a great deal of Todd’s argument regarding *thinking* and *judging* in light of cosmopolitan values rather than swallowing cosmopolitanism whole draws from the work of Arendt and Levinas. For Arendt (as cited in Todd, 2009), “[p]articular questions must receive particular answers...there are no general standards to determine our judgments unfailingly” (p. 138). For Todd, cosmopolitanism’s “contradictory logic” and “double demand” (p. 139) to the universal and plural is thus seen as a problematic paradox – not unlike Popkewitz’s (2008) complaint toward what he sees as cosmopolitanism’s “double gestures” (p. 19) which he refers to as a “process of abjection” (p. 6) illustrative of the immigrant experience in America – that cannot be reconciled without “sacrificing the project of cosmopolitanism itself” (Todd, 2009, p. 139). Are we to thus conclude from Todd’s word choice – i.e. “sacrificing” – that at the end of the line, cosmopolitanism cannot be sustained?

In “The cosmopolitan imagination in Philip Roth’s ‘Eli, the Fanatic,’” Spector (in press) sees the cosmopolitan paradox in different terms:

the problem with these two studies [Todd’s and Popkewitz’s] are that they understand cosmopolitanism in abstract, arguably reductive terms, choosing not to turn to material or imagined examples that speak to a more nuanced, complicated understanding of contradictions which feed rather than fail the human spirit and the projects the spirit creates. Literature professor, Posnock (2006) understands contradictions altogether differently: “[s]ince the motor of Roth’s sensibility is contradiction...the regional and cosmopolitan interact—the one containing the other—in productive ferment.” (p. 7)²

Todd (2009) casts the cosmopolitan educational project as technical know-how, means-end learning toward “the Good” – the good being democratic citizenship that “supports consensus” (p. 6) at the cost of, drawing from Chantal Mouffe, “a radical democratic project” (p. 104) in which “conflict must assume a place in human pluralism and difference” (p. 103). Framing cosmopolitanism as a “how-to” project makes it that much easier to then undermine. Like Popkewitz (2008, see p. 10-13), much of Todd’s (2009) critique is aimed at “cogent apologist for cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum[’s]” “dream of a better world” in which “humanity is also regularly placed in the company of such words as ‘cultivating,’ ‘nurturing,’ ‘promoting,’ or ‘caring for’” (p. 8). One cannot help but notice a remarkable resemblance between the way Coca-Cola once marketed itself and the way Todd markets cosmopolitanism – a

cosmopolitanism which she sees as a “comforting philosophy” “couched in some nice language of ‘care,’ ‘love,’ or ‘empathy’” (p. 20). In a famous 1970s American television commercial advertising Coca-Cola, people of different ethnicities and cultures stand shoulder to shoulder holding lit candles, smiles on their faces – in almost cult-like fashion – singing such lyrics as: *I’d like to buy the world a home, furnish it with love...I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony, I’d like to buy the world a coke, and keep it company.*

But I digress from the seriousness of scholarship. The desire, particularly in education, to “smooth over” (Todd, 2009, p. 75) that which is uncivil in civilization is what cosmopolitanism is about for such thinkers as Todd and Popkewitz. The difference between the two is that Todd hedges her bets; she does not throw out the baby (cosmopolitan) with the bathwater (cosmopolitanism). Popkewitz (2008), on the other hand, is downright suspicious of what he sees as an elite class of “urbane,” not urban people. The “cosmopolitan urbaneness,” are the “civilized and culturally sophisticated” who “live in the high-rise apartments and brownstones of American cities” yet also “coexist with the spaces of poverty and racial segregation” (p. 167). The cosmopolitan, for Popkewitz has a nice home but has a “‘homeless mind’ ...seem[ing] 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. 30-1). This is the real clue that clues us in to Popkewitz’s anti-

cosmopolitanism. Indeed, the confusion surrounding what cosmopolitanism is and who are deemed cosmopolitan is magnified when Popkewitz’s version of cosmopolitanism is juxtaposed with that described by Pollock *et al.* (2000): “Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity...Refugees, peoples of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitical community” (p. 582). It is hard to imagine these same people living the lifestyle Popkewitz imagines they do. But this is part of the problem with naming cosmopolitanism; it “raises difficult conceptual issues” (Pollock *et al.*, 2000, p. 577).

For Todd (2009), cosmopolitanism acts as a new-wave response to a humanity that is unsettlingly *imperfect* and which needs to be “rescued from the bed of destruction” (p.1) that constitutes what it means to be human, “all too human” (Nietzsche as cited in Todd, 2009, p. 1). Education, still caught up in the optimism of the Enlightenment, hopes to perfect that which is imperfect about humanity. As Todd (2009) notes, “education needs to salve the wounds that have been inflicted on individuals and communities, it has done so largely on the basis that such imperfection does not exist as part of humanity as such” (p. 2). Such an argument must be looked at within the larger critique of education writ large for its “failure to recognize the limitations of the institution of schooling” (Kliebard, 2004, p. 42) to not only teach that which is of most worth but to also recognize that education can only accomplish so much. That said, Todd (2009) states in straightforward terms

what her “critical focus” is: “I take as my point of departure the way in which this idea of humanity” – i.e. humanity “expunged” of its imperfection – “has become a hallmark of the recent turn to cosmopolitanism and education (and other disciplines)” (p. 2).

It is interesting that both Popkewitz and Todd build much of their case against Nussbaum’s (1996; 1997) cosmopolitanism when there has been a wealth of works written about it in the 12 years leading up to their respective publications. But a target is meant to be aimed at. Drawing from Papastephanou, Todd calls Nussbaum’s position on a shared human existence “naïve” and “idealistic at best” (p. 30). It is here where I would now like to turn to two different understandings of cosmopolitanism in order to break open the confines that constitute Todd’s (2009) argument that cosmopolitanism needs to be rethought to include more “attention to alterity and the way the individual ‘I’ is commanded by it” (p. 17). Drawing from Levinas, “that which is fundamentally connected to alterity” is thought while “thoughtlessness remains contained within the one, the same” (p. 147). Todd asks: “how much thoughtlessness can we tolerate...?” (p. 149).

The first text I will look at is by cultural studies scholar and psychoanalytical thinker Mica Nava (2007) whose objective in *Visceral Cosmopolitanism* is “to show how the term [cosmopolitanism] changes not only according to the object of research – the historical episodes, texts – but also according to the theoretical and political context in which the research takes place”

(p. 3). While Todd (2009) ends her critique on the note of needing to “think cosmopolitan” (p. 150) and “through concrete situations with others” (p. 149), Nava (2007) opens her study of cosmopolitanism “as a structure of *feeling*” (p. 3) “characterized by a readiness to embrace the new” (p.5) as specifically situated from within the context of early 20th century England. And while Todd (2009) looks to world agencies such as UNESCO (p. 8) to build her critique, Nava (2007) has a more down to earth, “domestic” (p. 12) appreciation of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism for Nava “takes place at home, in the family, in the neighborhood, in the interior territories of the mind and body” (p. 12) and it exists within “the street, the school, the gym, the shopping centre and the dance floor” (p. 13).

What a relief: cosmopolitanism is also about shaking one’s hips and having a bit of fun – and between people of different colors! “Tangomania” – “an astonishingly cosmopolitan and modernizing force” – “extended from the aristocracy to the lower middle classes” across the globe in which “body-to-body encounters of unprecedented sensuality and intimacy...took place in the public domain” between “young ladies and men who might be of ‘American and South American negroid origin’ (Collier *et al.*, 1997:83)” (Nava, 2007, p. 33). Nava does recognize that “it is tempting to be cynical about...the production-consumption cycle” that her examples elicit, particularly from those “critics schooled in the work of neo-marxis[m]” (p. 58). She also appreciates that “a cosmopolitan habitus...does not consist

only of feelings and practices of inclusivity; it is also the breeding ground of loss, humiliation and rebellion” (p. 14).

Rather than calling for thinking (cosmopolitan) about those “lessons from evil” (Todd, 2009, p. 142) “which entails an aspiration for justice for my neighbors” (p. 140), Nava (2007) describes the cosmopolitan disposition as “instinctive” and “spontaneous” (p. 63). Indeed, it was spontaneous and “partly unconscious...feelings of benevolence” (p. 63) that certain heroic and selfless people possessed who saved Jews from their deaths in Nazi occupied Europe. The “‘instinctive extensivity’...towards inclusivity” (Cohen as cited in Nava, 2007, p. 63) that such people held does not begin or end with *thinking* and *judging*, weighing the pros and cons, but rather is “often rooted in non-rational unconscious factors” (p. 64) of hospitality toward others which frequently “operated against the grain of, dominant political...regimes” (p. 63-4). As Derrida (1994) knows, the real gift does not think about giving before it gives. Though Todd’s (2003) previous book, *Learning from the Other: Levinas, Psychoanalysis and Ethical Possibilities in Education* reveals her interest in psychoanalysis, indeed a section of her 2009 book is devoted to the thought of Julia Kristeva’s cosmopolitanism in which she “locates an ‘uncanny strangeness’ *within* the human” (p. 41), it is clear that Todd does not see psychoanalytic versions of cosmopolitanism operating within the domain of education.

As a former high school English teacher, I hold a different perspective than Todd about cosmopolitanism and education; the traveling imagination – “train[ing] your imagination to go visiting” (Arendt, 1978, p. 257) – that reading about other places contains there within a psychic cosmopolitan experience, and such an experience becomes worldly in the often spontaneous conversations that take place among teachers and students (of similar and different backgrounds and identities) during and after reading such texts. In short, cosmopolitanism does take place in schools as Nava claims. As Pinar (2009) knows, “[s]tudying the alterity of actuality cultivates cosmopolitanism...Its cultivation constitutes a self-reflexive discipline of self-overcoming; it may even involve working against oneself” (p. viii). It is Dwayne Huebner (as cited in Pinar, 2009) who understood that “educational ‘content is otherness’” (p. 35).

Of the education-scholar triumvirate, it is Pinar who takes up the notion of the visceral aspects of cosmopolitan in education. Pinar (2009) is blunt: “Sexuality is...a structure of cosmopolitan subjectivity for which the present historical situation calls” (p. 6) yet because of “the right’s hysterical allegiance to abstinence” (p. 7) sexuality is not studied in high school even though it is experienced. And “[e]xperience without study can be stupid” (p. 7). “A cosmopolitan curriculum” Pinar goes on, “enables students to grapple with...the ‘problem of my life and flesh’” (p. 8), yet because such study does not contain any explicit use-value, those subjects of intrinsic worth are left out of a

curriculum in which consumer capitalism has triumphed (p. 9). It seems that Todd and Pinar are not in disagreement in that they both are critical of the stronghold of means-end learning in education. Todd, however, sees cosmopolitanism as part of this stronghold while Pinar (2009), in true Pinarian fashion, envisions a cosmopolitan education in which “[s]tudying the agony and ecstasy of the particular attunes us to the actuality of alterity” (p. 35).

The second text I would like to consider in relation to Todd’s is Kurasawa’s (2007) *The Work of Global Justice*. In Todd’s (2009) chapter “Promoting a just education: Dilemmas of rights, freedom, and justice,” she argues that the work of human rights education “cannot be dictated at them [children]” (p. 67) but justice and responsibility toward others “must be made in everyday living.” For Todd, understanding and working through ethics in the particular constitutes “the project of facing humanity itself” (p. 67). Todd introduces the work of Lyotard who asks modernity to carefully reflect upon “the universality of principles, like freedom and justice, which frequently have been used as a means of oppression” (p. 69-70). For Lyotard, justice takes place on a “case-by-case” basis and “without definitive criteria” (Todd, 2009, p. 70).

“[J]udgment,” now drawing from Arendt, as well, “occurs in action” (Todd, 2009, p. 71). Todd reiterates this point in the last chapter of her book: ethical questions must be “adjudicate[d] in concrete circumstances” (p. 139), but her argument about how

cosmopolitanism usually functions leaves this reader a bit confounded. In these last pages, Todd now says: “it seems to me that privileging rights on principle denies the very cornerstone of human plurality upon which cosmopolitanism is usually grounded” (p. 139). If cosmopolitanism is “usually grounded” in the plural, in difference, I don’t know how to interpret what she has said about cosmopolitanism up to this point, a cosmopolitanism which she claims in the prologue “often” “supports consensus” (p. 6) rather than radical democratic “cross-cultural conflict” (p. 105). How is it that “the cosmopolitan dream of empathy and reciprocity across cultures” which does not “provide us with an adequate model” (p. 103) for democracy can also mean the following?:

My suggestion here is instead to make the difficulties of judgment itself a central part of any cosmopolitan outlook, acknowledging that it is precisely the difficulties to be countenanced in adjudicating between rights and particular contexts where the heart of cosmopolitan thought truly can be found. (p. 139)

As far as I can tell, either Todd has changed her mind about what cosmopolitanism boils down to or she is trying to have it both ways. But paradoxes can be confusing.

Perhaps Kurasawa’s (2007) discussion of a critical cosmopolitan practice from below (rather than a top-down model) in which “cultural difference and distributive justice, produc[e] a vision of all of humankind’s incorporation into a pluralist yet just world

order” (p. 160) is what Todd is actually calling for. While Kurasawa’s (2007) focus on “solidaristic ties without bounds” (p. 161) is somewhat different from Todd’s predilection for alterity, he sees cosmopolitan solidarity as a “transnational mode of practice whereby actors construct bonds of mutual commitment and reciprocity across borders through public discourse and socio-political struggle” (p. 160). This mode of “ethico-political labour” (p. 194) does not, in my mind, sound all that different from what Todd terms “thinking cosmopolitan.” One begins to wonder if this not a case of splitting hairs.

Interestingly, Todd uses Arendt’s political theory to support a vision of alterity while Kurasawa uses Arendt to support a vision of solidarity. “For solidarity,” says Arendt (in Kurasawa, 2007, p. 157) “because it partakes of reason, and hence of generality, is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually.” And Kurasawa’s discussion on human rights does go in a different Arendtian direction from that of Todd’s: he deepens and extends one of Arendt’s key, albeit brief, concepts essential to the work of global justice: that of “the faculty of forgiving” (Arendt, 1958/1998, p. 237). For Arendt, the “expected and even calculated” (p. 241) response to a transgression is revenge. Forgiveness, on the other hand, “can never be predicted; it is the only reaction that acts in an unexpected way” (p. 241); forgiveness, for Arendt, is thus a form of natality because it “acts anew.” The beauty and grace of forgiveness is that it releases us “from the consequences of what we have done” (p. 237) thereby allowing us

to recover from that “single deed” which otherwise we would be confined to forever, unable to act in the presence of others which is the world. Forgiveness, for Kurasawa (2007) “amounts to no more and no less than an ‘ethical gamble’ (Morin 2000: 25)” (p. 93). Forgiveness, nonetheless, is “a risky and unending endeavor...that is eminently worthwhile to take if global justice is to survive” (p. 93). Kurasawa (2007) does touch upon the relationship between forgiveness and love (see p. 90), but it is the worldly Arendt (1998), drawing from Jesus of Nazareth, “[t]he discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs” (p. 238), who goes (momentarily) in the direction scholarship dare not go: the unworldly. It is “only love”, – the un/worldly subject of Arendt’s (1929/1996) dissertation, I might add – “one of the rarest occurrences in human lives” and “by its very nature, is unworldly” that “has the power to forgive” (Arendt, 1998, p. 242).

While the title of Pinar’s 2009 study indicates the importance that worldliness plays in relation to cosmopolitanism, it is he of the three education scholars noted in this essay review who points out that there is also a spiritual dimension to cosmopolitanism. Pinar (2009) defines spirituality “simply as a subjective sense of the sacred” which he links to “life, and not only human life (Nussbaum 2006, p. 21). Such spirituality can inspire political action...It is a reverence for life that infuses the spiritual structure of subjectivity” (p. 5). As I see it, such reverence for life is connected to the heart – “the gift of an understanding heart” (Arendt, 1994, p. 322)

– more so than it is to the mind. And following one’s heart in making some but not all decisions, such as those “spontaneous,” (Nava, 2007, p. 63) “non-rational” (p. 64) and “frequently unconscious” (p. 63) decisions to save a stranger’s life at the dire cost of possibly losing one’s own, is something so profound that it defies rational explanation. While thinking and “rethinking” is good in the way Todd describes it, too much thought can also lead to paralysis. With that in mind, I cannot describe to you what cosmopolitanism is exactly, but I ask you: Are you cosmopolitan?

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About the Reviewer

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¹ <http://www.ibo.org/mission/>

² Like Posnock, Ellsworth (2005) considers the notion of a paradox to be productive rather than irreconcilable. While her study focuses on public pedagogical sites (that might or might not be cosmopolitan) to examine the challenges of teaching and learning, her understanding of contradictions also speaks to the arguments I'm raising about the paradox of cosmopolitanism. Ellsworth contends that the power of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's pedagogy "lies in its indeterminacy" (p. 100). "[F]ar from leading to paralysis or despair...the paradoxes of teaching and learning can be productive and can assist teachers and students in accessing moral imperatives without absolutes" (p. 100). Like the unending of "Eli, the Fanatic," the museum contains a "paradoxical possibility, of a narrative without closure" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 104).

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