The new cosmopolitanism, peace and intercultural learning[1]

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Summary

In this article I argue that intercultural education should be connected to the so called new cosmopolitanism, that is, one should apply a cosmopolitan outlook on education. The new cosmopolitanism which has emerged during recent years is rooted in an old tolerant multicultural view and at the same time it disassociates itself from a cosmopolitanism which actually represents hidden Western universalism. It is often combined with concepts such as critical, dialogical and vernacular in an attempt to find a middle way between mono-culturalism and particularistic multiculturalism. Arguing that intercultural education should be connected to the new cosmopolitanism is in line with Ulrich Beck's reasoning in applying methodological cosmopolitanism to the social sciences. Applied to education, this means to view education as a global matter and differences as something positive, a challenge which is a prerequisite for developing new knowledge. In this article, it is also discussed if intercultural education can contribute to the forming of genuinely peaceful societies, especially when it comes to interethnic relations.

Key words: Peace - Cosmopolitanism - Intercultural Education.

Introduction

We are all citizens of one world, we are all of one blood. To hate a man because he was born in another country, because he speaks a different language, or because he takes a different view on this subject or on that, is a great folly. Desist, I implore you, for we are all equally human ... Let us have but one view, the welfare of humanity, and let us put aside all selfishness in considerations of language, nationality, or religion.[3]

These famous words by Comenius were written in the sixteenth century at the end of the Thirty Years' War. Comenius, who is considered one of the founders of modern education, is often quoted in connection with peace education and by advocates of global democracy. He was born in Mähren, an area which today is part of Czech Republic. At the age of twelve, Comenius became an orphan and at fourteen he had to escape from his home area. Most of his life he spent as a refugee, hiding in abandoned huts, caves and even in hollow trees. His first wife and two of his children died from The Plague, and even his second wife died early. For 42 years he roamed around Europe as a homeless refugee and eventually, at the age of 78, he died in Amsterdam. He lived and worked in many countries: in Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, Transylvania, the Holy Roman Empire, England, the Netherlands and Hungary.

Comenius' ideas about education were revolutionary at his time, and much of what he wrote seems surprisingly modern even today. He wanted learning to be pleasurable, and he emphasized the importance of education to be adapted to the needs and the interests of the pupils. Both boys and girls of all social classes should according to him receive education. But to him, education had a higher aim: to create world peace.

Comenius was born in a family belonging to the Czech Brotherhood, a pacifist Evangelic, Christian church. The members did not regard themselves as representatives of the only, true doctrine, but rather as part of a universal church. The bitter experiences of war and disruption caused Comenius to work hard to unite all Christian schools. But he was not prepared to obtain unity at any price. Love, truth and peace had to go hand in hand, and to him truth had to come first. His life philosophy was based on what could be expressed through the words of Jesus quoted by John (14:6): "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one goes to the Father except through me." Therefore, Comenius could not envision world peace in any other way except for everyone becoming Christian. In order to realize his dream about world peace, Jews and Muslims had to become part of the Christian church.

For many, especially for us who live in Sweden, one of the most secularized countries in the world, it is easy to dismiss Comenius' conviction with an indulgent smile. Most of us probably believe that world peace can be very well obtained

without the help of world religions – perhaps even better, considering all the wars that have been fought in the name of religion. Moreover, the norm of religious freedom and the respect for other religions are commonly acknowledged. Today other values are important, at least in most of the Western countries. Ideals, such as democracy and equality, and the idea of cosmos as a scientific phenomenon are dominating, and it is close to taboo to question these ideas. Today the West is waging wars in the name of democracy, not of religion. In Swedish schools such ideals predominate and it is difficult to tolerate opponents to those dogmas.

Comenius' ideas about world peace must be understood as part of the belief system at the end of the Thirty Years' War. At that time it was revolutionary to advocate a united Christian Church. The idea of such a tolerance being also extended to other religions was unthinkable. The knowledge of other religions was limited, and the Ottoman Empire was threatening the borders of Europe. The sultan occupied the Balkans, and the Turks were regarded as the enemy of the Christian world. Comenius was well-intentioned in his belief that it would be much better for the Jews and the Muslims to be converted to Christianity, a religion which according to his belief represented the truth.

The Cosmopolitan Outlook and Interculture

Now, times have changed. The knowledge of religions and world views other than one's own is greater, even if it could be questioned whether this knowledge is good enough. The fear of the Ottoman Empire and "the stranger" of Comenius' time has disappeared, but it is still part of Western historic memory and today is replaced by intolerance towards Muslims and "the Other". Such intolerance is not, of course, specific to the West. History has shaped the view of "the Other" in different ways all over the world.

Globalization has lead to an intensification of encounters over cultural borders, both personally through travels and because of migration, and digitally through transnational communication. This does not mean that all cultural encounters are equal or that the tolerance and the understanding over cultural borders have increased. Precisely the fact that we meet more often has resulted in more confrontations when it comes to different systems of ideas and for economic and political reasons. It would be naive to believe that increased knowledge and more intercultural contacts would automatically result in world peace.

There is, however, a crucial difference between Comenius' time and ours. Today we can imagine global unity, which is related to the fact that the world is connected in a network of mutual dependencies in a completely different way than earlier in history. This has both positive and negative effects. The German sociologist Ulrich Beck (2006) argues

that we have to gain a cosmopolitan vision or outlook. This is different from an active stand taken by philosophers such as Kant, who wanted to impose a new world order on the society of his time. A cosmopolitan outlook rather means to adapt to the fact that the world today is interconnected globally. Beck distinguishes between cosmopolitanism as an ideology and cosmopolitanization as praxis. According to him, the national outlook of today is simply false. The idea of society as part of a system of distinct national states does not exist anymore, and the social sciences have to adapt to this fact, that is, to apply methodological cosmopolitanism. There is however nothing new with cultures mixing. Because of world wars, mass migrations, slave trade and colonization, there has been a forced mixing of cultures since long time ago. The global market requires the mixing of peoples. What is new is not the forced mixing of cultures, but the awareness of it, its self-conscious political affirmation, its reflection and recognition before a global public, in the news and in the social movements of blacks, women and minorities (Beck, 2006).

Ulrich Beck's interpretation of cosmopolitanism can be described as "critical cosmopolitanism". When he advocates a "cosmopolitan outlook" he refers both to cosmopolitan realism and cosmopolitan consciousness. Cosmopolitan realism emerges as a result of the realization that reality is characterized by high consequence risks such as nuclear and climate threats.

This gives rise to a consciousness of the subject about the cosmopolitan realism. He also speaks of cosmopolitan empathy and illustrates this with the global protests against the war in Iraq (Beck, 2005).

My own view is that intercultural education has a clear connection to cosmopolitanism, which means that a cosmopolitan outlook has to be applied to education. Education and learning should be seen as global processes, and diversity as a positive phenomenon and a challenge for developing new knowledge. Mass education has played an important part in forming national identities and modern nation states. Sometimes this has resulted in discrimination of ethnic groups and immigrants and even genocide. Thus, this type of violence is both open and structural.

Within peace research the concept "peace" is used rather than nonviolence in order to give it a deeper significance. It comprises not only absence of open violence and war but also peaceful relationships in general (Galtung, 1985). A society is not necessarily peaceful even if it is not in a state of war. Galtung identifies three types of violence which are all connected: direct (physical) violence, indirect (structural) violence, and cultural (symbolic) violence. He started to use the concept "structural violence" in order to describe the situation that he witnessed in Rhodesia. Statistically, there was not much racial violence in the colonial society and it was characterized by cooperation, integration and harmony. Yet, black people were exposed to hard exploitation and discrimination and did

not have the same rights and possibilities as whites. The latter were often paid twenty times more than the first for the same job. In the long run, structural violence might result in just as much suffering and death as direct violence (ibid).

Thus, an important task of intercultural education is to contribute to social justice, equality between men and women, and among economic, ethnic and other social groups; which can be considered a prerequisite for structural peace.

The researcher Paul Gorski (2010) argues that peace cannot be attained unless oppressive structures first are removed and justice and equality is achieved. However, education is part of this work. If intercultural education, both as a social science and as a practice, includes developing the awareness of power relations in relation to cross-cultural meetings, this will in the long run contribute to peaceful relations.

Cosmopolitanism from a historical perspective

Historically, cosmopolitanism emerged within empires, as a result of the spread of world religions and as a result of long distance trading. Christianity offered a cosmopolitan world view for medieval Europe, but at the same time it excluded the so-called pagans and heretics. The Ottoman Empire housed a large degree of cosmopolitanism, considering the integration and tolerance among a large number of peoples and religions, even if the political position of the minorities was unequal. This also applied to the European empires, though tolerance was even less (Calhoun, 2008).

Another type of cosmopolitanism emerged during the Enlightenment, which coincided with the spread of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism. At the same time the interest for Hellenistic philosophy and the idea of common human rights revived. This was expressed in the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789. The cosmopolitanism of Immanuel Kant must be understood as a reaction against growing nationalism, both the positive and the negative side of it. He argued for a cosmopolitan law common to all people in the whole world and this would be the basis for perpetual peace. However, his patronizing - even racist and sexist - views on non-white races and women, which were usual at the time[4] are not acceptable to the new cosmopolitanism. Later, the horrors of the Second World War gave birth to another kind of cosmopolitanism. The Nazi crimes were defined as crimes against humanity. In 1948 the Declaration for Human Rights was adopted by UN.

The new cosmopolitanism which has emerged during the last twenty years is rooted in a traditional tolerance of multiculturalism, but at the same time distancing itself from a cosmopolitanism which actually represents concealed Western universalism. It is often an expression of a New Leftist policy, trying to find a middle way between monoculture and particularistic multiculturalism.[5] It might be a vision of global democracy and world citizenship, a quest for creating

new transnational frames of cooperation between social movements or post identity politics for hybrid or heterogenic groups, contradicting the conventional view of belonging, identity and citizenship (Vertovec and Cohen, 2008). According to Stuart Hall, cosmopolitanism means to fetch cultural traits from many cultural and ethical systems. This vernacular cosmopolitanism differs from a liberal, universal cosmopolitanism. The latter appears to be neutral and to advocate a global conversion based on reason, however, it is actually nothing but Western particularism reinterpreted as universalism. A vernacular cosmopolitanism does not mean that the individual liberates him or herself from cultural meaning, but it is created in a dialogue with the Other. Stuart Hall, who grew up in an ethnically mixed family in Jamaica with African, Jewish, Portuguese and East Indian roots[6], emphasizes the importance of being able to live together in the same place but simultaneously keeping up a certain degree of sense of difference. He does not believe in the traditional liberal universalism which presupposes a neutral state with autonomous, liberal citizens without cultural or ethnic bonds. According to him, the idea of a neutral nationalism which is not based on the culture of the citizens is pure nonsense (Hall, 2002). Therefore it is necessary to find a way in between universalism and particularism.

Critics against Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism has been criticized both by the Left and the Right. For the Right, cosmopolites are regarded as divergent, vague persons refusing to define themselves according to place, descent, citizenship or language. During extreme nationalistic or totalitarian regimes, such as in the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, or in fascist Italy, the cosmopolites were regarded as enemies to the state. It is no coincidence that Jews and Roma belonged to the groups that first were sent to the concentration camps and the Gulag, as they were seen as nation-less, unreliable, disloyal and precisely "cosmopolites" (Vertovec and Cohen, 2008). In the collective symbolic system of the Nazis the word cosmopolite was equal to a death sentence and was used as a synonym for Jew (Beck, 2005).

For the Left, the criticism against cosmopolitanism was inspired by Marx's view of bourgeois cosmopolitanism. In the Communist Manifest the bourgeoisie is said to have given the production and consumption of all countries a cosmopolitan shape. But Marx also speaks of a proletarian cosmopolitanism which can be illustrated with the well-known quote: "Workers have no nation of their own" (Marx, 1848).

Marx's view of the cosmopolite as an exploiter of the world market has given rise to the stereotype of the businessman who feels at home on all the airfields of the world, eats Indian food in London and keeps himself updated with the latest news on BBC and CNN.

That stereotype recalls Craig Calhoun's term "consumer cosmopolitanism" (Calhoun, 2002). Such cosmopolitanism is according to Ulf Hannerz (1996) no real cosmopolitanism but refers rather to globally mobile persons. Real cosmopolitanism is, according to him, a genuine interest in the Other, an esthetic openness to different cultural experiences and a search for contrasts rather than homogeneity.

Peace, Identity and Interculturalism

To Comenius and Kant cosmopolitanism was closely connected to the question of peace. Today, when the globalized world becomes increasingly more interconnected and people can envision themselves as part of one humanity more than in any other time of world history, cosmopolitanism can contribute to the increase of peaceful values. Cosmopolitanism represents, however, no simple solution to foster peace. Even if interstate wars have decreased during globalization, wars within states have increased. Wars and violence have become privatized and are interlaced with the informal economy. Violence toward civilians, violations to human rights and human sacrifices in lives are extensive. They often concern conflicts in the name of identity: religious, ethnic and linguistic (Kaldor, 2008). Most of these conflicts are not caused by the fact that ethnic groups and peoples want more freedom and a larger part of the social resources. Rather it is the states that deny them this freedom that react with military violence

(Rothman, 1997). Seen in the longer term, cosmopolitanism can offer opportunities for peaceful relationships by advocating social justice and a tolerant view of multi-culture even if demands for justice initially might result in state violence. In relation to such peaceful strivings intercultural education, both as a science and as a practice, can play a significant role.

It is naive to believe that simply increased knowledge about cultures other than one's own and more cross-cultural meetings automatically will lead us closer to world-peace. Struggle for power and economic assets is often waged, inciting national, ethnic or religious feelings.

In his great work on globalization, Manuel Castells maintains that our society has undergone a technological revolution, centered on information technology. A totally new type of society has emerged, the network society, where a global network has largely replaced the nation state and the local society. In this society, power no longer belongs to the nation states, but power flows through the global network.

What happens then with personal identity under these new circumstances? Castells argues that in today's uncontrolled and changing world people like to group themselves around primary identities: religious, ethnic, territorial and national. Religious fundamentalism, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist, is according to him probably the strongest foundation for personal security and collective mobilization. In a world where wealth, power and images freely float around, the hunt for identity becomes a main source for social belonging. Identity, especially religious and ethnic identity,

has always been important for meaning making, but today, in a time of volatile cultural expressions when old institutions lose their legitimacy, identity becomes the most important and sometimes the only source of meaning in life. Castells arrives at the conclusion that there arises a fundamental difference between an abstract, universal instrumentalism and historically rooted particularistic identities. According to the author, this gap takes its form between a bipolar opposition between the Net and the Self. In the intimidating future which he describes, social communication patterns are coming under increasing strain in a "schizophrenia between function and meaning", social groups are alienated from each other and perceive one another as strangers, and identities are becoming more specific and harder to share (Castells, 2000).

I agree with Castells that religious and ethnic identities have become more important during globalization, but at the same time there is another identity movement which he does not mention. In a research project financed by the Swedish Research Council about globalization and identity carried out by Maria Borgström and myself, we noted the emergence of a kind of "third identity", a border-crossing identity that is neither purely national nor trans-national. This is especially common in multiethnic neighborhoods. It can be described as an identity, not based on a sense of "we" versus "them" or "either-or", but of "both-and" (Goldstein-Kyaga and Borgström, 2009). Adopting such a hybrid identity also entails a rejection of the idea of pure, distinct identities and cultures, which sets up boundaries against other groups.

Such realizations are important resources for peace-work and conflict management.

In an ongoing research project regarding young people's values regarding peace and violence in Sweden, Czech Republic and Poland our interviewees discuss their own views compared to the earlier generations.[7] Even if young people are influenced by earlier generations, they find themselves in a new situation compared to their parents and grandparents. A young interviewee in Poland spoke about the generation of his grandparents, who experienced war, and his parents, who experienced state communism. He said that the older generation hate, because they feel victims. This has changed in his generation. The present society is more open to the world, and the ability to actively search for information makes them more critical to the information which is presented to them.

In the discussion with the students we also discussed how education can contribute to good interethnic relations and peace. Most of them regarded simple lectern teaching as more or less useless. Instead, grouping students of different background in such a way that they had to cooperate and get to know each other was considered more effective. In addition, the kind of discussions which we conducted was good to increase consciousness of the importance of improving interethnic relations.

This comment by a young man in Poland could be extended to society in general. There will never be a simple way to reach a balance between monoculture and particularism. The discussion has to continue.

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Notes

[1] Original work in English.
[2] Professor Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga, Södertörn University.katrin.goldstein.kyaga@sh.se
[3] Comenius quoted in Sharpes (2002, p. 203).
[4] Hill & Boxill (2001). argue that racism did not infect Kant's basic critical philosophy and moral theory.
[5] Particularistic multiculturalism means in this context a rejection of the idea of eternal, generally valid moral principles and an acceptance of the thought that these are situation-bound.
[6] See Kuan-Hsing Chen (1996).
[7] The project *Peace, New Constructions of Identity and Cosmopolitan Intercultural Learning Processes in the Global Society. Young peoples' values in the Baltic Area: Czech Republic, Poland and Sweden* is carried out by María Borgström, Ana Graviz and Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga and is financed by the Swedish Research Council.

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