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Moral Education and Cosmopolitanism

Meeting Kant and Durkheim in Joyce

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ABSTRACT The central problem of citizenship and political culture in the ‘postnational constellation’ is the cultivation and institutionalization of cosmopolitanism as a political identity. The cultivation of citizenship in the postnational constellation echoes the problem Durkheim confronted at the turn of the twentieth century, when he faced the task of developing a systematic programme of moral education as a basis for social solidarity in a secular national French republic; a programme that would perform the same functions of social integration previously organized in terms of a religious discourse. While nationalism provided a discourse of political identification throughout the twentieth century, critical theory and psychoanalysis (for example, the Frankfurt School’s studies in prejudice and the authoritarian personality) have shown how nationalism has now become a problematic basis for political identification and citizenship. This article explores Habermas’s and Beck’s present problem through an examination of Kant and Durkheim. It suggests that an appropriate pedagogical model of cosmopolitanism, one that combines elements of transcendental and situated reason, may be found in Joyce’s representation of Leopold Bloom; a pedagogical representation wherein transcendental ideals grounded in universal reason are combined with various discursive and communicative encounters with the Other, in cosmopolitanizing experiences of the workplace and organizational life, international travel and migration, and urban neighbourhoods and milieus.

KEYWORDS cosmopolitanism, Durkheim, Habermas, Joyce, Kant, moral education

In The Postnational Constellation (2001), Habermas poses the moral-political problem raised by globalization as that of cultivating ‘cosmopolitan solidarity’. The specific context in which the problem is formulated is the anomic which arises
from the individualizing effects of a ‘whirlpool of an accelerating process of modernization’ (Habermas, 2001: 112), and from the eclipse of the nation state as the basis of social solidarity. What is needed, Habermas suggests, is ‘the construction of a multicultural civil society’ built on ‘a “politics of recognition”, because the identity of each individual citizen is woven together with collective identities, and must be stabilized in a network of mutual recognition’ (2001: 74). This entails a ‘de-coupling of political culture from majority culture’ so that ‘the solidarity of citizens is shifted onto the more abstract foundation of a “constitutional patriotism”’ (2001: 74). Constitutional patriotism may, Habermas argues, provide the basis of a moral authority and a sense of duty that transcends ethnic difference: a compulsory cosmopolitan solidarity. The twentieth-century model of the nation state can no longer provide the basis of social integration and moral authority, because, as Beck expresses it, ‘the metaphysical essentialism of the “nation” … inevitably give[s] rise to those consequences which made the 20th century one of modernized barbarism. Thus, someone who affirms and elevates “his own” will almost inevitably, rejects and despises the foreign [sic]’ (2002: 38). But the converse of Benjamin’s thesis that ‘there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism’ (1992: 248) is also true. The metaphysical essentialism of the nation, if it is the cause of barbarism, is equally the cause of civilization. As Durkheim had shown throughout his analyses of solidarity, morality and education, it is precisely the metaphysical essentialism of the nation, now commonly disparaged as a source of extremism, chauvinism and ethnocentrism, that provides the very basis of the moral authority of a collective society that transcends particular interests, that inspires self-sacrifice of such interests, and that commands duty.

The task of cultivating a constitutional patriotism and a compulsory cosmopolitan solidarity, as delineated by Habermas and Beck, echoes the problem Durkheim faced at the turn of the twentieth century, when, as Professor of Education and Adviser to the Education Ministry, he was assigned the task of formulating a secular morality to promote social integration in the Third Republic. But rather than formulating religious traditions as sources of barbarism, as Beck does of nationalism (and Durkheim could easily have identified religion with inquisitions and pogroms), Durkheim sees a religious inheritance as the repository of morality, a rich cultural legacy, the resource within which a new secular rational morality may be found:

We must seek, in the very heart of religious conceptions, these moral realities that are, as it were, lost and dissimulated in it. We must disengage them, find out what they consist of, determine their proper nature, and express them in a rational language. In a word, we must discover the rational substitutes for those religious notions that for a long time have served as the vehicle for the most essential moral ideas.

(Durkheim, 1973 [1925]: 9)
Is the same not true of modern nationalism? The national society and its institutions were, for Durkheim, rational substitutions for religious morality. In the present postnational constellation, we must now look for substitutes for the moral reality of national identification. The question Durkheim addresses in *Moral Education* – how to preserve and provide rational substitutes for moral ideals that have heretofore only appeared in religious guise – now applies to morality in the postnational constellation. It is not enough to throw out the baby of modern secular morality – especially *duty*, the compulsory element of solidarity, which has up to now been institutionalized in *national* patriotism – with the bathwater of the solidarities of national society. If nationalism is, as Habermas and Beck say, an outdated ‘barbarism’, then we must look for the forms of civilization that it has up to now enclosed.

Before we can begin this exploration of moral education for a postnational constellation, we should consider the metaphysical fiction of the ‘cosmopolitan’ that Beck hopes will supplant that of the ‘nation’.

In one of the very few places where Beck fleshes out his notion of a cosmopolitan subject, he gives us the example of an elderly woman who is ‘place polygamous’ (Beck, 2000: 72–3). Though she is German, she spends half her time in Kenya, and is equally ‘at home’ in both places; she ‘loves them both’. What is revealing in Beck’s vignette of cosmopolitanism here is the particularity with which we know the European subject – she is from ‘Tutzing, on Lake Starnberg, near Munich’, whereas the Other place, with which she is purportedly polygamous, is simply ‘Kenya’ (a country larger than Germany, with several languages and cultures) or, even more generally, ‘Africa’. Rather than an egalitarian ‘place polygamy’, it seems we have here an ‘African affair’. Rather than an egalitarian ‘place polygamy’, it seems we have here an ‘African affair’; an affair made possible by European resources – an adequate pension and health care system; an affair cushioned by a white and Afro-Asian post-colonial and global-tourism cultural enclave. Rather than representing a new, proto-cosmopolitan morality that transcends racial, ethnic and neo-colonial global rifts, what we have is an all too historically familiar Bavarian ambivalent fascination with *Afrika*, that, now romantic, can, at a turn, become something quite opposite. Setting aside for a moment (if one can) the deeply ingrained problem of German provincial romantic primitivism, now mis-recognizing itself as cosmopolitanism, and the astounding lack of critical self-reflexivity revealed in the example, it is further taken for granted in Beck’s illustration that cosmopolitanism is a phenomenon of the adult world – indeed a quality associated with wisdom accruing to the conditions of age and retirement. Cosmopolitanism is a state of mind and a quality of subjective culture gained through the cumulative effects of a lifetime of experiences, of encounters and interactions with the Other – through work, international travel, exposure to world cultures, appreciation of alternative lifestyles, the experience of multicultural neighbourhoods in world cities; all of this premised on relative affluence, education, social and geographical mobility.
The parental discursive masterframe of such a contemporary metaphysical fiction of the cosmopolitan is the Enlightenment, and specifically the moral idealism of Immanuel Kant. But Kant was resolutely a provincial. He lived his entire life within the confines of the town walls of Königsberg. His habits were so rule-bound, routinized and systematically regularized that townspeople literally used to set their clocks by his comings and goings. The outside world (except as mediated by philosophical discourse) made him nervous and uneasy: ‘All change frightens me,’ he said. To what extent is this a caricature? Haden (1991) suggests that Kant was sociable, a card-player who took his meals at the inn, and lived in a whirl of social distraction until his later years, and then disciplined himself to produce his life’s work. However, he was slight and never robust, though he lived for eighty years. He had a strict, pietistic upbringing. His parents died while he was young. Not only had he never married, nor loved, but his friendships were few and formal. Indicating the life he might have liked to live, were he not so repressed and earnestly conventional, Kant’s only decoration was a portrait of Rousseau. Heinrich Heine once said of Kant that the history of his life would be hard to write, since Kant had neither life nor history (Zweig, 1970: 13).

**Benjamin: On the Limits of Kant’s Cosmopolitanism**

The limits within which Kant actually lived his life form the basis of Benjamin’s critique of the limitations of Kant’s philosophy in his essay on Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* (Benjamin, 1996). According to Benjamin,

> Critique seeks the truth content of a work of art; commentary, its material content. The relation between the two is determined by that basic law of literature according to which the more significant the work, the more inconspicuously and intimately its truth content is bound up with its material content.

(1999: 297)

The material content and the truth content are so intimately bound up with one another that it is the art of the critic ‘to read the enigma in the living flame as it consumes the logs of history and the ashes of experience’ (1999: 297). If what applies to art applies equally to life, Benjamin implies, then this problematizes what Kant’s philosophy can teach us, about life in general and about cosmopolitanism in particular.

The subject of *Elective Affinities* is marriage, ‘one of the most rigorous and objective articulations of the content of human life,’ Benjamin says (1999: 299). Benjamin prefaces his discussion of Goethe’s work by reminding us of Kant’s definition of marriage: ‘the union of two persons of different sexes for
the purpose of lifelong mutual possession of their sexual organs’. Kant, Benjamin says,

... made his gravest mistake when he supposed that from his definition of the nature of marriage, he could deduce its moral possibility, indeed its moral necessity, and in this way confirm its juridical reality. From the objective nature of marriage, one could obviously deduce only its depravity – and in Kant’s case this is what it willy-nilly amounts to… its [truth] content can never be deduced from the real Matter [material content] … In such a materially real determination of marriage, Kant’s thesis is perfect, and in the consciousness of its cluelessness, sublime.

(1999: 299–300)

Kant’s bachelor’s cluelessness regarding marriage problematizes also his provincial cluelessness about cosmopolitanism. The paucity of material content in Kant’s monkish life suggests not so much that he has very little to teach us about marriage or cosmopolitanism, but rather that what he has to say concerns only their sublime aspects: that is, specifically, their absolute limits. He can show us little of the beautiful: the forms of life – of marriage and cosmopolitanism – wherein people’s praxis reconciles inner lives with outer absolute principles in the harmony of a life lived as a whole. Kant’s philosophy explicates only a sublime principle of modern cosmopolitanism, one that is relevant to the Law. But Kant’s own cloistered life reveals that he cannot provide any grounds for anchoring contemporary cosmopolitanism in a sociological lifeworld. He provides no pedagogical guide for its practice, no inspirational model that contemporary people might emulate.

In stark contrast to Kant, Goethe was an ardent traveller. His carriage, still on display at his house in Weimar, is a marvel of contemporary design: light, fast and equipped with an ingenious suspension, it contrasts starkly with his Spartan study, attesting to the premium he placed on mobility over routine and stasis. Goethe was born in Frankfurt, educated in Strasburg, moved to Weimar, went on an extended tour to Italy, and returned to live out his days in Weimar. Goethe’s intellectual and artistic interests were diverse and varied. He lived a full and an unrestrained life, with numerous love affairs and many rich and deep friendships. He was irreverent and unconventional. He lived with his partner Christine for many years before marrying. Appointed Privy-counsellor to the Court of Karl-August at Weimar (the first commoner to hold a Noble’s office), Goethe dedicated his task as educator of the young Duke to violating and subverting all the sacred and formal conventions of Court life. He set out to break open the sarcophagus of German and aristocratic Tradition. Goethe’s life and work, Benjamin intimates, represents the ‘storm and stress’ of modern subjects’ struggle to break out from inherited traditional morality and to institutionalize a new form of life. Whereas Kant explicated the sublime Ideal of cosmopolitanism, Goethe, and his crypto-autobiographical Faust in particular, exemplifies the heroic struggle of a
subject situated in a particular culture to transcend that particularity and become universal man; a quest, Goethe’s *Faust* shows us, that is equally triumphant and tragic. Goethe is an exemplary educator of a post-conventional morality, a prototypical cosmopolitan, and *Faust* is the pedagogical model he provides as an ideal for people to emulate.

**Freud: The (Im)possibility of Kantian Cosmopolitanism**

According to Kant, to act morally is to act according to principles that can be extended without contradiction to legislate for all individual wills. But when we examine a prime instance of the moral law, we find that to act morally is to act according to a principle that runs contrary to all individual wills. Towards the conclusion of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud argues that the categorical imperative of morality is counterintuitively and paradoxically grounded in the antithesis of Reason. Freud examines one of ‘the so-called *ideal standards* of civilized society, the commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”’, and finds it thoroughly unreasonable:

> What good is it to us? Above all, how can we do such a thing? My love seems to me a valuable thing that I have no right to throw away without reflection. It imposes obligations on me which I must be prepared to make sacrifices to fulfil. If I love someone, he must be worthy of it in some way or other…. But if he is a stranger to me and cannot attract me by any value he has in himself or any significance he may already have acquired in my emotional life, it will be hard for me to love him. I shall even be doing wrong if I do, for my love is valued as a privilege by all those belonging to me; it is an injustice to them if I put a stranger on a level with them. But if I am to love him (with that kind of universal love) simply because he is a denizen of the Earth … then I fear that but a small modicum of love will fall to his lot and it would be impossible for me to give him as much as by all the laws of reason I am entitled to retain for myself. What is the point of an injunction promulgated with such solemnity, if reason does not recommend it to us?

Freud continues:

> The bit of truth behind all this – one so eagerly denied – is that men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment. The result is that their neighbour is to them not only a possible helper or sexual object, but also a temptation to them to gratify their aggressiveness on
him, to exploit his capacity for work without recompense, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Homo homini lupus.*

Thus, Freud concludes:

Civilized society is perpetually menaced with disintegration through this primary hostility of men towards one another. Their interests in their common work would not hold them together; the passions of instinct are stronger than reasoned interests… hence its ideal command to love one’s neighbour as oneself, which is really justified by the fact that nothing is so completely at variance with original human nature as this.

(1961 [1930]: 38–41)

But Kant was well aware of what he called ‘The Radical Evil of Human Nature’. His categorical imperative is a post-religious, secular, rational re-formulation of the Judaeo-Christian commandment, grounded no longer in revelation, but in reason. The categorical imperative, that he is moral who acts in such a way that the principle governing his will could at the same time be valid as the principle governing general legislation, is an absolute, an impossible ideal, and its impossibility is the source of its authority. The essential ambivalence of social relations is symptomatic of the double antagonism constitutive of the social – the inner antagonism constituting the subject’s psyche, and the social antagonism constituting collective life: that is, the political. This constitutive antagonism of the subject and of the social simultaneously posits, and refutes, the basis of Kantian cosmopolitanism: it promises to enable us to transcend the radical evil of human nature, but by setting a standard that is absolute, ideal and impossible to attain.2

Freud shows the paradox of Kantian cosmopolitanism: it is impossible to be a Kantian cosmopolitan, but that impossibility is the condition of its possibility. Reason’s demand derives its authority from its being an unreasonable demand, the injunction of a transcendental super-ego. The transcendental character of the super-ego is the source of its metaphysical quality. The impossibility of a harmonious reconciliation of the sublime powers of the id and the super-ego generates neuroses and discontent. Guilt at our persistent failure to measure up to the moral standard, our failure to be reasonable, is the motivational source of civilization. Freud’s position is shared by Gadamer: one cannot but be ethnocentric, the Other will always be evaluated from a certain perspective – from within a particular interpretive horizon – and so our relations with the Other (and the Other’s with us) will always be found wanting. Eighteenth-century idealism, and Kant in particular, made abstract Man, and the unity of his ego which is essential to his identity, the individuality that is freed from all ties and specificities, and is therefore always identical in every man, the ultimate substance of personality and the ultimate value of humanity. However unholy man may be, says Kant, humanity in him is always
holy. And herein lies the problem of using Kantian idealism to underpin cosmopolitan virtue: as Goethe’s great friend Schiller observed, ‘the idealist thinks so highly of mankind, that he runs the risk of despising single men’ (Schiller, cited in Simmel, 1950: 70). Cosmopolitanism in the Kantian sense is indifference to the particularity of things: dispassionate detachment, which includes cold indifference to human suffering. Thus, if prejudice, ethnocentrism and national chauvinism are symptoms of a modern attachment disorder – over-identification with the nation and other representations of authority – then ‘indifference’ is its corollary and its equivalent for cosmopolitans in a postnational age of globalization.

Durkheim: The Sociological Contingency of Cosmopolitan Reason

Religious prohibitions are categorical imperatives.

(Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 305)

In the introductory pages of The Elementary Forms of Religious Life Durkheim makes clear his aim: this study, as an epistemological work, is a direct engagement with Kant on reason and morality. His aim is to sociologize the fundamentals of philosophical discourse of mind and reason. Kantian reason is premised on ‘categories of understanding: notions of time, space, number, cause, substance’ (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 8). ‘These fundamental notions seem to us as almost inseparable from the normal functioning of the intellect. They are, as it were, the skeleton of thought’ (1995 [1912]: 9).

But, Durkheim argues, these are not abstract qualities built into the nature of reality. Rather, when one analyses primitive religion methodically, one naturally finds the principal categories among them; they are a product of religious thought. The category of time, for example,

… is an abstract and impersonal framework that contains not only our individual existence but also that of humanity…. It is not my time that is organized in this way; it is time that is conceived of objectively by all men of the same civilization. This by itself is enough to make us begin to see that any such organization would have to be collective. And indeed, observation establishes that these indispensable points, in reference to which all things are arranged temporally, are taken from social life.

(1995 [1912]: 10)

The division into days, weeks, months, years, and so on, corresponds to the recurrence of rites, festivals and public ceremonies at regular intervals. A calendar expresses the rhythm of collective activity while ensuring that regularity. The same is true of the category of space, Durkheim argues, on the basis of extensive anthropological evidence. He concludes: ‘far from being built into human nature, no idea exists, up
to and including the distinction between right and left, that is not, in all probability, the product of religious, hence collective representations’ (1995 [1912]: 11–12).

The philosophical significance of this, Durkheim explains, is that the apriorists (he means especially Kant)

… believe that the world has a logical aspect that reason eminently expresses. To do this, however, they have to ascribe to the intellect a certain power to transcend experience and add to what is immediately given. But for this singular power, they offer neither explanation nor warrant. Merely to say it is inherent in the nature of human intellect is not to explain that power.

But, he continues,

… if the categories are essentially collective representations, as I think they are, they translate states of the collectivity first and foremost. They depend on the way in which the collectivity is organized, upon its morphology, its religious, moral and economic institutions, and so on.

(1995 [1912]: 15)

Elaborating on his critique of Kant – clearly not so much intended to refute as to provide a sociological grounding for the categorical imperative, relocating morality and reason in social and historical reality rather than in a still-mystical abstraction of reason itself – Durkheim says:

Duty, the Kantian imperative, is only one abstract aspect of moral reality. In fact, moral reality always presents simultaneously these two aspects which cannot, in fact be isolated. No act has ever been performed as a result of duty alone; it has always been necessary for it to appear in some respect as good. Inversely, there is no act that is purely desirable, since all call for some effort. Just as the idea of obligation, the first characteristic of moral life, gave us the opportunity to criticize utilitarianism, the second characteristic, that of goodness, shows us the insufficiency of Kant’s explanation of moral obligation.

(Durkheim, 1974 [1903]: 45–6)

Durkheim’s sociological critique of Kant is that the categorical imperative of morality is not grounded in the abstract quality of universal reason but rather is a historically contingent social institution. Morality is not derived from universal reason, but, inversely, is comprised of collective representations built up from particular historical experiences wherein people collectively grapple to manage and civilize the antinomies of inner and outer nature. Every society has a morality, Durkheim says, and that morality is the achievement of a particular civilizing...
process, in this instance, the Enlightenment tradition of grounding morality in reason and institutionalizing it in formal Law. Durkheim’s sociological and historical reformulation of the basis of morality points us away from Kantian universalism as the basis of cosmopolitan morality and solidarity, as this would be arbitrarily to impose the moral principles and legal practices, the collective representations worked out within particular tradition(s), as if universal. Instead, it points us in a very different and much more challenging direction: constructing a new political tradition of cosmopolitanism, not from a singular source of reason and moral authority, but from a great diversity of traditions and points in the social fabric. To return to Benjamin’s terms, this means that the truth content of cosmopolitanism cannot be separated from the material content, from the living traditions wherein tolerance of diversity is actively practised. The cosmopolitan potential of these cultures is objectified in the collective representations of these traditions, and these become manifest in distilled form as the principles that are transmitted in the socialization process, and dispersed through popular culture.

Turner (2002) draws attention to bases of cosmopolitanism in other (non-Western, non-modern) contexts and civilizations. Similarly, in a study of the dignity of working men, Lamont and Aksartova have shown the diversity of sources of cosmopolitanism that working-class men use as a repertoire to draw from. The collective representations of various cultures – often drawn from discourses that in other aspects and respects are deeply problematic and objectionable – can provide the resources which people draw from ‘to bridge boundaries with people who are different from them’ (Lamont and Aksartova, 2002: 15). Lamont and Aksartova show that non-college-educated blue-collar black and white workers in the US, and North African and white workers in France, draw not only from the discourses of liberalism, communism and republicanism, but from the traditions of Christianity and Islam, pop-science ideas of socio-biology, the experience of military service, and even the practices of consumerism.

**Durkheim on Dignity and Moral Education**

According to Durkheim,

> … all development of individualism has the effect of opening moral consciousness to new ideas and rendering it more demanding. Since every advance that it makes results in a higher conception, a more delicate sense of the dignity of man, individualism cannot be developed without making apparent to us as contrary to human dignity, as unjust, social relations that at one time did not seem unjust at all.

(1973 [1925]: 12)

Similarly, nationalist loyalties that were once the hallmarks of good citizenship now appear as chauvinistic. Patriotic duties and self-sacrifice for the nation appear
as archaic and barbaric. This is the lesson that has been so hard to learn from the
experiences of extreme forms of nationalism, fascism, Zionism, and so on, that the
Holocaust, ‘ethnic cleansings’ and Israeli ‘settlements’ were (and are) conducted
not by ‘madmen’, nor by ‘fanatics’, nor even by ‘dupes’, but by good citizens,
willingly doing what they sincerely believed and ardently felt to be their duty.
Thus, Durkheim argues: ‘When we undertake to secularize moral educa-
tion, it is not enough to cut out, we must replace’ (1973 [1925]: 11).

We must retain the transcendental quality of morality that gives it dignity
and authority. Not only must this be preserved, it must be enriched with
new elements. For a great nation like ours to be truly in a state of moral
health it is not enough for most of its members to be sufficiently removed
from the grossest transgressions – murder, theft, fraud of all kinds. A soci-
ety in which there is pacific commerce between its members, in which
there is no conflict of any sort, but which has nothing more than that
would have a rather mediocre quality. Society must, in addition, have
before it an ideal toward which it reaches. It must have some good to
achieve, an original contribution to the moral patrimony of mankind.
(1973 [1925]: 13)

Similarly, today, when we undertake to excise nationalism from the national cur-
riculum, we must then replace it with new ideals. The transcendental quality of
morality that gives it dignity and authority must be retained, because, as Habermas
argues, what is necessary in Germany and the EU and in other postnational soci-
eties is ‘consciousness of compulsory cosmopolitan solidarity’ (2001: 112).

Let us return for a moment to examine the task Durkheim was faced with,
of formulating a secular liberal programme of moral education that would pro-
mote social solidarity and ensure integration in the Third Republic, counteracting
the persistent seductiveness of sectarianism, monarchism and communism. Durkheim advocated a pedagogy and curriculum that would cultivate moral
character appropriate to the circumstances. As Durkheim argues, mythical and
religious systems are the bearers of the world’s patrimony of moral realities.

We must seek those moral realities that are as it were lost and dissimulated
in it. We must disengage them, find out what they consist of, determine
their proper nature, and express them in rational language. In a word, we
must discover the rational substitutes for those religious notions that for a
long time have served as the vehicle for the most essential moral ideas.
(Durkheim, 1973 [1925]: 9)

Durkheim’s analysis identifies three principles of morality dissimulated in myth and
religion: namely, the spirit of discipline, attachment to social groups, and autonomy,
or self-determination. To cultivate these principles of morality, Durkheim advocated
a curriculum emphasizing the teaching of science, art and history. Science, he argued, would ‘provide a sense of the real complexity of things’. Echoing Baudelaire (1972: 51), who said painting is essentially a system of moral values made visible, Durkheim argues that the study of art ‘could eliminate self-centeredness, opening the mind to disinterestedness and self-sacrifice’. History could ‘give a sense of continuity with the past and of the principal traits of the national character’ (Durkheim, cited in Lukes, 1985 [1973]: 117). The child, Durkheim argued, needed to be

… taught about the nature of the social contexts in which he will be called upon to live: family, corporation, nation, the community of civilization that reaches towards including the whole of humanity; how they were formed and transformed, what effect they have on the individual and what role he plays in them.

(Durkheim, cited in Lukes, 1985: 117)

Teaching the ‘principal traits of national character’ sounds quite at odds with cultivating cosmopolitanism, of course, and Durkheim wouldn’t deny that. Moral education is historically contingent and culturally relative, he would argue, and he is trying to specify what is appropriate for his time and place.

In *The Postnational Constellation* Habermas shows how things have become much more complicated since the eclipse of the nation state by globalization. Over the past century and a half – and this is in part exactly what Durkheim’s programme of moral education for the Third Republic sought to achieve – ‘the national basis for civic solidarity has become second nature, and this national foundation is shaken by the policies and regulations that are required for the construction of a multicultural civil society’ (Habermas, 2001: 74). In the postnational constellation, not only can this national basis for civic solidarity no longer be relied upon, but it also actually becomes part of the problem:

For nation states with their own national histories, a politics that seeks the co-existence of different ethnic communities, language groups, religious faiths, etc., under equal rights naturally entails a process as precarious as it is painful. The majority culture, supposing itself to be identical with the national culture as such, has to free itself from its historical identification with a general political culture, if all citizens are to be able to identify on equal terms with the political culture of their own country. To the degree that this de-coupling of political culture from majority culture succeeds, the solidarity of citizens is shifted onto the more abstract foundation of ‘constitutional patriotism.’ If it fails, then the collective collapses into subcultures that seal themselves off from one another. But in either case it has the effect of undermining the substantial commonalities of the nation understood as a community of shared descent.

(2001: 74)
Habermas has conceded to postmodern theory that reason is de-transcendentalized and situated. But, Habermas argues, ‘from the correct premise that there is no such thing as a context-transcendent reason, postmodernism draws the false conclusion that the criteria of reason themselves change with every new context’ (2001: 148). Habermas counted that, despite the assertion of an ‘incommensurability of different paradigms and the “rationalities” peculiar to them’ (2001: 149), universal pragmatics and the ideal speech act continue to be amongst the best resources at our disposal for the critique of ideology and for the evaluation of discourse leading to a morally binding consensus. The more abstract foundation of morality and social solidarity in the postnational constellation becomes concretized, or embodied in human rights. ‘Human rights, i.e. legal norms with an exclusively moral content, make up the entire normative framework for a cosmopolitan community’ (2001: 108). Whereas, in the modern nation state, solidarity has been based on the particularity of collective identities – ‘shared’ histories and traditions (to a greater or lesser degree) – in the postnational constellation, ‘cosmopolitan solidarity has to support itself on the moral universalism of human rights alone’ (2001: 108).

As we have seen, underpinning these conceptions of morality and solidarity in both Durkheim and Habermas is the Kantian masterframe of Enlightenment reason. There must be a rational basis for modern morality, whether that be in the material realm of the division of labour and the integrating structural functions of the modern state, or in the symbolic realm of collective representations and universal pragmatics. Even when reason is de-transcendentalized and situated, and perhaps especially now, as Habermas agrees, it needs to be supplemented with other capacities and resources. An indication of where such resources may be found is given by Kant, in a dimension of his philosophy that is somewhat undeveloped in both Durkheim and Habermas. This is what Kant identifies in the third Critique, the Critique of Judgement, as ‘the pedagogical role of the aesthetic’. Aesthetic ideas, as Kant calls them, by which he means metaphors, allegories and similes, and poetic, mythic and religious language, play a crucial role in transcending the limits to pure reason and practical reason. Aesthetic ideas, Kant says, have the cognitive effect of helping ‘to bring reason into harmony with itself’ (Kant, cited in Coleman, 1974: 160).

By an aesthetic idea I mean that representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e. concept, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible…. Such representations of the imagination may be termed ideas. This is partly because they at least strain after something lying out beyond the confines of experience … no concept can be wholly adequate to them. (Kant, cited in Coleman, 1974: 161)
For Kant, aesthetic ideas, metaphor and myth have an important cognitive value, as they give cognition greater depth and transcendence. What applications might this have for moral pedagogy and cosmopolitanism?

We can elaborate what this might entail with Wittgenstein’s help. The Enlightenment conceit of pure reason is echoed in the early Wittgenstein: the search for certainty; the attempt to be true to an Ideal that invariably he failed to live up to. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had already reached, and retreated from, the language of pure reason, concluding that questions of the nature of the good and morality could not be spoken of in the language of pure reason, and had to be passed over in silence. He was now looking for a language to speak about those questions. Wittgenstein tried the Austrian version of a Kantian moral education when he withdrew from Cambridge to become a primary school teacher in the small village of Traftenbach. Wittgenstein attempted to replicate Socrates’ famous pedagogical exercise wherein, by judicious questioning, the latter had the unschooled slave work out for himself mathematical equations, thus demonstrating the universal human quality of reason. But Wittgenstein had only mixed success, remembered by some as inspirational and enthusiastic, though eccentric, but by others as tyrannical. He was in fact charged and tried for child cruelty, and he perjured himself in court, a moral failure of his own principles; a character flaw that plagued him thereafter. Like many rational cosmopolitans, Wittgenstein professed the ideal of love of the common man, but in real life he was a misanthrope and a recluse. His failure to succeed in teaching his village children advanced algebra, and his physical cruelty towards them as a result, mark his own frustration at running up against the limit of the Enlightenment conceit of reason, and indicate his subsequent *volte face* to stress instead the situatedness of reason in language games and particular forms of life. What we need, and what education needs to cultivate, Wittgenstein concluded, is not simply – or at least not alone – the perspective of pure reason, the Apollonian, singular, unambiguous language of ideal speech; instead, we need to cultivate the capacity to see the world from different aspects and also the ability to attune to a diversity and variety of language games. Where might we find a representation of such a form of life?

The Aesthetic Image of the Cosmopolitan Subject

James Joyce characterizes himself as a ‘socialistic artist’ engaged in an emancipatory politics – the democratization of the world, and the elevation of the common man as modern hero. As a cosmopolitan subject, he models himself after Daedalus, who was the architect of the labyrinth, a civilizing machine that tamed the Minotaur, and who subsequently invented wings with which he could fly to freedom from his imprisonment by King Minos of Crete. Daedalus flew low, close to the earth, and got home safely. His son Icarus flew too near the sun, his wings
melted and he fell to his death. Joyce’s ideal cosmopolitan subject – Joyce himself, and his fictional hero – stays close to the earth. Joyce saw his work (amongst other things) as pedagogical. In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man he explicitly sets the task of the artist as representing and bringing into view an ideal subject, ‘the uncreated conscience of my race’ (1994 [1916]: 432). That ideal would serve as an aspirational horizon, a model to emulate, an aesthetic image against which his contemporaries could critically evaluate themselves, and self-reflexively try to reform themselves in such a way that they might come to approximate the ideal. Joyce’s ideal is represented paradigmatically by the heroic figure of the modern Ulysses, Leopold Bloom.

Joyce readily acknowledges an extensive debt to Goethe, and to the Goethe of Faust in particular. At the same time neither Goethe, nor Faust, nor Hamlet, nor Christ is his model for the prototype modern cosmopolitan, Leopold Bloom.

As the figure of Joyce’s Bloom as a pedagogic and aesthetic image of cosmopolitanism is so important to Joyce, and to our discussion here, let us turn to Joyce’s biographer, Richard Ellman, at some length as he reconstructs a crucial conversation between the artist and some of his friends concerning Bloom. Joyce wanted his hero to be an all-round character. He asked his friends Budgen and Suter to nominate models of complete, all-round characters in literature. Budgen suggested Christ, but Joyce objected that Christ was a bachelor, and never lived with a woman. Living with a woman is one of the most difficult things a man has to do, Joyce said, and Christ never did it. Next, Budgen suggested Faust, or Hamlet;

‘Faust!’ said Joyce. ‘Far from being a complete man, he isn’t a man at all. Is he an old man or a young man? Where are his home and family? We don’t know. And he can’t be complete because he’s never alone. Mephistopheles is always hanging around at his side or heels. We see a lot of him, that’s all.’

‘Your complete man in literature is, I suppose, Ulysses?’

‘Yes’, said Joyce. ‘No-age Faust isn’t a man. But you mentioned Hamlet. Hamlet is a human being, but he is a son only. Ulysses is son to Laertes, but he is father to Telemachus, husband to Penelope, lover of Calypso, companion in arms of the Greek warriors around Troy, and King of Ithaca. He was subjected to many trials, but with wisdom and courage he overcame them all. Don’t forget that he was a war dodger who tried to evade military service by simulating madness. He might never have taken up arms and gone to Troy, but the Greek recruiting sergeant was too clever for him and while he was ploughing the sands, placed young Telemachus in front of his plough. But once at war the conscientious objector became jusqua’au-boutist. When the others wanted to abandon the siege he insisted on staying till Troy should fall.’ Then he went on,
‘Another thing, the history of Ulysses did not come to an end when the Trojan war was over. It began just when the other Greek heroes went back to live the rest of their lives in peace. And then’ – Joyce laughed – ‘he was the first gentleman in Europe. When he advanced, naked, to meet the young princess he hid from her maidenly eyes the parts that mattered of his brine-soaked, barnacle-encrusted body. He was an inventor too. The tank is his creation. Wooden horse or iron box – it doesn’t matter. They are both shells containing armed warriors.’

‘What do you mean,’ said Budgen, ‘by a complete man? For example, if a sculptor makes a figure of a man then that man is all round, three dimensional, but not necessarily complete in the sense of being ideal. All human bodies are imperfect, limited in some way, human beings too. Now your Ulysses …’

‘He is both,’ said Joyce. ‘I see him from all sides, and therefore he is all-round in the sense of your sculptor’s figure. But he is a complete man as well – a good man.’

In subsequent conversations he emphasized to Suter and Budgen that Ulysses was not a god, for he had all the defects of the ordinary man, but was kindly. For Suter’s benefit he would distinguish in German: ‘Ulysses was not “gut” but “gutmutig” [decent]. Bloom is the same. If he does something mean or ignoble, he knows it and says “I have been a perfect pig.”’

(Ellman, 1982: 435–6)

Benjamin says that the more significant a work of art, the more inconspicuously and intimately is its truth content bound up with its material content. In Joyce’s work the Ideal – the truth of cosmopolitan virtue – is inextricably intertwined with the material – the phenomenological and mundane details of a day in the life of ordinary people. Commentary on and critique of such a work would make an important contribution to cosmopolitan education. For Joyce the important thing about Bloom is not that he is ‘good’ but that he is ‘decent’: that is, not that he corresponds to a transcendental ideal standard, of reason, of perfect communication, but that he struggles to negotiate between his ascription to those ideals and the demands of practical life in historically situated particular milieus of existence. Bloom, the exemplary cosmopolitan subject, is very much an ordinary man immersed in the quotidian.

Durkheim’s programme for moral education sought to cultivate three principles: the spirit of discipline; attachment to social groups; and autonomy or self-determination. Teaching science, Durkheim argued, served the wider pedagogical cognitive aim of cultivating a quality of mind that could grasp, appreciate and engage with complexity. Art could cultivate an ability to transcend the limits of subjective perspectivalism and egocentrism by developing capacities for verstehen, a hermeneutic and empathetic ability to enter into and understand, see and
interpret the world from others’ points of view. And teaching history, Durkheim argued, counterbalances the tendencies towards loss of historicity and collective amnesia as consequences of division of labour and individualism by revealing continuity with the past, inheritance, legacy and tradition, the necessary bases of commonality and attachment within a wider organic solidarity.

In Durkheim’s terms Joyce teaches complexity by the rigorous cognitive demands he places on his readers for their attention both to the formal architectonic structure and to the complex and intricate detail of aesthetic images that characterize his work. To read *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* entails careful attention to space, time and number, to mythic and to biological analogies, to philology, etymology and problems of translation, for example. And, in the same way as a syllabus for maths or chemistry is taught, the texts can be engaged with at several levels, from elementary principles for the beginning reader to complex formulae and theorems for the advanced student. In fulfilling Durkheim’s criterion that exposure to art should cultivate the ability to relativize one’s own perspective and adopt the perspective of others, Joyce’s work provides fully elaborated characters, lives, situations and contexts for readers to engage with. Joyce’s exceedingly rich and complex characterizations make demands not only of cognitive intensification, but of emotional amplification and elaboration. His social types are never stereotypes, his characters never caricatures. Even in the cases of minor and despicable persons whom we encounter in Joyce – the feckless rake, the pauper harlot, the philistine functionary, the bigoted nationalist, the nonentity – their humanity is uncovered for us by some detail that gives us a glimpse of their wholeness. And our moral consciousness is developed insofar as we are drawn into the complexity and emotional intensity of characters’ histories and personalities, their interior monologues as they struggle with moral and practical dilemmas in negotiating the interfaces of biography and history. All development of individualism has the effect of opening moral consciousness to new ideas and making it more demanding, Durkheim says. The pedagogical potential of Joyce’s aesthetic images is that they intensify, deepen and broaden the cognitive, conative and normative horizons of modern consciousness.

Finally, we are faced with the problem of the nation. The value of reading Joyce in the postnational constellation resides in appreciating how Joyce/Bloom’s postnational cosmopolitanism is still anchored in the particularity of the nation. Joyce’s work is unmistakably Irish, while belonging to the wider tradition of European modernism and global modernity. Joyce/Bloom resonates between the local and the global, national and international, particular and universal.

Joyce, who lived in exile, in Trieste, Paris and Zurich, who moved house and home with astonishing frequency – about forty times – who was fluent in several languages and conversant in several others, was once asked if he would ever return to Dublin, and replied, ‘have I ever left it?’ ‘I always write about Dublin’, he said, ‘because if I can get to the heart of Dublin I can get to the heart of every other city. In the particular is contained the universal’ (Joyce, cited in Ellman, 1982: 505).
Like Joyce, Bloom’s cosmopolitanism is protean and ambivalent: the son of a Hungarian immigrant to Dublin, he is Irish, though unlike most Irish he is Jewish, albeit non-practising, and a city dweller. His father died by suicide, and his ancestral homeland, part of a ramshackle empire, is crumbling. His son, Rudi, died in childhood. There is no patrilineal descent from fatherland or father. His wife, daughter of an English soldier in Gibraltar, is having an affair. But while Bloom’s life is lived on fluid and shifting sands, he is not ‘rootless’. His daughter, Milly, has moved to a Midlands town, and Bloom envisages her life unfolding and flowering there. He has a diverse network of friends and acquaintances whom he cultivates solicitously. He has a job, a rather precarious one, and he works hard to earn a living. He has duties and responsibilities to others around him, like the widow of his acquaintance Dignam, whom he assists with her insurance policy, and like his young alter-ego, Stephen, whom he extricates from a drunken fracas in the red-light district and brings to the sanctuary of his home. And Bloom has a home: a kitchen that he leaves in the morning after making breakfast for himself, his wife and their cat, and a bedroom he comes back to at night to sleep beside his wife. All Ulysses longed for throughout the Odyssey, Homer says, ‘was to see the smoke from his own chimney’, and Bloom’s aspirations are similarly homely.

Joyce/Bloom is a secular, rational modern cosmopolitan. He has Apollo’s ‘god’s eye’, and he speaks with the voice of reason, though not without difficulty, as he grapples with his own appetites and erotic predilections, his jealousies, fears and anxieties and the trials and tribulations of an ordinary life. But Joyce/Bloom has also cultivated eyes and ears, as Wittgenstein recommends, an eye for parallax and an ear attuned to polyvocality. In the famous encounter with the chauvinist antisemitic Citizen, Bloom engages his prejudice directly in rational argument and bests his adversary, who reverts to inarticulate violence. But Bloom also knows the arts of Hermes – when and how to dissimulate, to flatter and be equivocal, to be quiet and slip away (Hyde, 1998). Bloom’s polymorphous identity gives him a trickster’s capacity to shape-shift, to camouflage himself and to blend in; a capacity to put himself in the shoes of others who are very different and frequently hostile to himself, to see how the world opens itself up to their eyes and ears. These qualities are what enable him to navigate his way safely through the city while he is menaced by giants and seduced by sirens’ songs – qualities of postnational cosmopolitanism needed in a mythic age of globalization.

Cosmopolitanism is not the quality of a rationality that transcends all particularities. On the contrary, it sees such rationality as a philosophical conceit. A characteristic source of the humour in Joyce’s work is his parody of the authoritative voices of Law, Science, History and Philosophy, Imperialism and Nationalism, playing up their conceits and aspect blindness to epic absurdity. Joyce’s image of cosmopolitanism begins where the claims to totality of such discourses reach the outer limits of their extension, and grate against one another or fail to achieve the totality they had promised. The cosmos of modernity, represented in microcosm by a day in the life of his Dublin protagonists, is characterized by competing and
colliding giants and Gods – Empire, Nation, Science, Law, Church and Commerce – though, like the cosmos of Greek myth, no single power prevails in the competition for hegemony. Of all the Gods and giant powers that beset modern people, no one power rules, and neither is there one Archimedean, cosmopolitan point of view that transcends and sees beyond this turmoil (Keohane, 2002). Joyce/Bloom’s cosmopolitanism is more down to earth, a form of life that lives in the slippages between the powers that be. Bloom is the personification of the cosmopolitan as an ideal-type hermeneutic actor, who tries to see the world from many, changing points of view. The multitude of voices and views represented in *Ulysses* are always partial and imperfect. Joyce himself is partially sighted. Aren’t we all similarly handicapped? Such are the limits that the human condition places on knowledge and power, tempering them into irony and wisdom. This is cosmopolitanism as Joyce teaches us.

Notes

1. Yeats expresses the same philosophical/poetic problem when he asks:

   O chestnut-tree, great rooted blossomer,
   Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
   O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
   How can we know the dancer from the dance?

   *(Among School Children)*

2. Similarly, Theweleit (1987) explicitly criticizes the Frankfurt School for lack of attention to the content of fascism itself, which he identifies as the passionate celebration of violence. The Frankfurt School saw Freud’s Oedipal theory of internalization of authority as the key to understanding fascism. Theweleit uses Klein et al., for whom pre-Oedipal desires and impulses are an integral part of the psyche. Especially important is the Kleinian idea of ‘splitting’ and ‘projection identification’, whereby bad and for good aspects of the self are split off from the ego and projected onto the Other. Thus the Other appears variously and ambiguously – and even simultaneously – as ego-ideal desirable, worthy of love and respect, and as alter-ego, as hateful nemesis, the source of fear and object of violence.

3. During a walk in Dublin with his friend Drury, Wittgenstein suggested what we might identify as the beginning of postmodern philosophy. ‘Hegel’, Wittgenstein said, ‘seems to me to be always wanting to say that things which look different are really the same, whereas my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different’ (Wittgenstein, in Monk, 1991: 537). Wittgenstein’s motto for *Philosophical Investigations* was ‘I’ll teach you differences’.

4. See Berman’s (1985) interpretation of Mephistopheles’ saying to Faust that he should try to become a ‘mensch’ (‘a decent human being’ in Yiddish vernacular) rather than aspiring to become an ‘Ubermensch’.

References

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