

Cosmopolitan perspectives on education and sustainable development

Between universal ideals and particular values

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In this paper we draw attention to the possibilities of the philosophical perspectives of cosmopolitanism in the development of ESD. We argue that one challenge facing the development and implementation of ESD is the finding of balanced ways to deal with the normativity dilemma that take *both* the search for consensus and universal claims *and* particular contexts and dissonance seriously. The paper begins with a brief sketch of environmental and sustainability education in transition and a problematisation of the universal characteristics of ESD. Drawing on the recent works of Martha C. Nussbaum, Peter Kemp, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Sharon Todd, we then explore how scholars with different cosmopolitanism approaches balance between the cultivation of universal values and individuals' autonomous thinking and relate these approaches to ESD. Our overall claim is that ESD is in need of a critical discussion and exploration of ESD as a political project with dissonant voices that takes the particular human encounter into consideration.

Keywords: education for sustainable development, cosmopolitanism, pluralism, political thinking, normativity, universal values.

Introduction

Environmental and sustainability issues are complex and controversial battlegrounds for stakeholders with different interests and values. In addition, the critical challenges facing us today – such as climate

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change, ethnic conflicts and unfair trade – stretch beyond national borders. Not surprisingly, the philosophical and ideological basis of environmental and sustainability education has been debated by scholars in the social sciences and education fields for decades. A substantial part of this policy debate is concerned with a possible transition from environmental education (EE) to education for sustainable development (ESD). Related to this is the question of how we develop a type of education that encourages students to cultivate universally sustainable responsibilities and values and at the same time respond to local commitments and concerns that are deeply rooted in history and tradition. The problem of the universal and the particular in ESD – and the challenges to sustainable development – is aptly described by Wals (2009) in the interim report of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005–2014):

Although both the challenge of sustainable development and the call for ESD is worldwide, there is a general understanding that the local realities and manifestations of ‘unsustainability’ are often quite different and deeply rooted in local histories and political and cultural traditions (p. 16).

In this paper we refer to the educational dilemma of balancing values of openness to the (new) larger world with a feeling of connection to that which is local (and known) as *the problems of normativity in education*.

Although the controversy over differences between EE and ESD is ongoing, we claim that the current research debate about environmental and sustainability education has merely ‘stumbled over’ the above mentioned relationship between the universal and the particular. In other fields, such as the philosophy of education, various theorists have in recent years returned to the ancient and philosophical perspective of cosmopolitanism¹ as an alternative way of dealing with the new global challenges and the relation between universal claims and the different contexts of and diversity in humankind.²

In this paper we examine the re-emergence of classical cosmopolitanism and contemporary views on the perspective with the intent of discussing its potential for the development of ESD. More specifically, the purpose of the paper is to examine how a cosmopolitan perspective might contribute to an ESD practice that draws attention to the problems surrounding the relationship between universal concepts and ideals on the one hand, and the particular and local contexts on the other. In this theoretical investigation we mainly draw on theories developed by four contemporary ‘cosmopolitan-minded’ scholars of the philosophy of education that is based on or relates to a cosmopolitan perspective:

Martha C. Nussbaum (2010), Peter Kemp (2005), Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) and Sharon Todd (2009).

Environmental and sustainability education in transition

The policy perspective of ESD and the work of its task manager, the world organisation UNESCO, can be traced back to the early 1980s. Many and complex sources have contributed to the formation of ESD.³ Below, we focus on how international policy documents and UNESCO initiate and propel a shift from EE to ESD that makes it possible to talk about environmental and sustainability education as a field in transition.

The beginning of the policy shift or transformation was the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987), *Our Common Future*,⁴ in which sustainable development is defined as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” However, ESD was officially introduced at the 1992 World Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, where the Agenda 21 work programme pointed to the role of *education* as developing attitudes, skills and knowledge to reduce the human impact on the environment. During the years that followed UNESCO continuously refined the concept and key messages of ESD. It is therefore not possible to talk about ESD as a concept born out of Agenda 21 that has remained unchanged for twenty years. At the 1997 International Conference on Environment and Society in Thessaloniki, a holistic and interdisciplinary approach was emphasised that brings together different disciplines while keeping their distinctness. It was also stated that the humanities and the social sciences should balance ecological issues and thus elucidate their complex interdependency.

Five years later, at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, a shift in focus from the environment to poverty eradication took place. According to Scott and Gough, globalising tendencies, such as shame over (or the threat of?) the world’s poor, could explain “why the Summit linked sustainable development so strongly to the issue of poverty while to some degree uncoupling it, if not from the environment, at least from the focus of ‘nature’” (2003, p. 146f). An interest in intercultural issues also followed the Johannesburg summit, as is evident in the political declaration: “Recognizing the importance of building human solidarity, we urge the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among the world’s civiliza-

tions and peoples, irrespective of race, disabilities, religion, language, culture or tradition” (United Nations 2002, paragraph 17).

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005–2014) was adopted shortly after the 2002 World Summit “to integrate the principles, values, and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning, in order to address the social, economic, cultural and environmental problems we face in the 21st century.”⁵

Over the years environmental and sustainability education has clearly undergone changes. A societal perspective has gradually become more prominent, and the above review also shows a policy perspective in transition⁶ in relation to the ethical and political issues raised by underlying rival/different discourses.⁷ As a result of policies driven forward and onward by UNESCO, ESD can now be seen as the successor of the established environmental education (Jickling & Wals 2008). It is also important to note that the transition from EE to ESD does not only mean a change of educational label, but also new ethical ideals, namely that we are responsible for social justice and the future environment as well as promoting economic development (WCED 1987).

This global and future-oriented ethics can be discerned in international policy documents from the Brundtland Report onwards. For example, the global network The Earth Charter Initiative seeks to collaborate with the efforts of the UN DESD, and in 2003 UNESCO adopted a resolution recognising the Earth Charter declaration (2000) as an important ethical framework for sustainable development. The declaration states that:

[W]e must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world.

In the policy perspective ESD it is argued that a common global ethics is needed in order to deal with the interconnected issues facing us. With regard to the DESD, the UNESCO High-Level Panel stresses that “the ethical dimension of ESD needs to be enhanced, through for instance, a simple clear common message highlighting global responsibility, community of life, and interdependence (UNESCO 2007, p. 4).

By way of summary and emphasis: based on the above description, ESD, like for example citizenship education and human rights education, can be regarded as an “ethical education” that embraces universal aspects and concepts. Such an ethical education renews the

classical dilemma of the double educational assignment, e.g. how do we deal with an education that aims towards cultivating students to adopt certain desirable responsibilities and attitudes in line with (universal) sustainability ethics and at the same time allow them to form their own (particular) decisions on these issues in relation to their particular social and cultural context. We refer to this as the problems of normativity in education for sustainable development.

The problems of normativity in education for sustainable development

As we might imagine, implementing a universal educational concept is a difficult and controversial task. Hopkins (2010) expresses it like this: “ESD was unanimously accepted as a crucial element of the sustainability agenda and it seemed logical that the world’s education systems would take this on as a key piece of the global implementation plan. This was not to be the easy task that the leaders anticipated” (p. 23). Several debaters have highlighted the different kinds of problems that are associated with an education based on a specific ethics. Fundamental discussions about normativity and whether it is possible for a liberal state to conduct or promote specific environmental and sustainable values in compulsory education without it conflicting with its neutrality have been spearheaded by researchers like Andrew Schinkel (2009), Derek Bell (2004), Andrew Dobson (2003) and Simon Hailwood (2005). For example, Schinkel (2009) asks: “if the state is to abstain from endorsing or favouring particular conceptions of the good life, can it legitimately make compulsory for all schools a type of education that explicitly tries to *form* rather than just inform pupils?” (p. 509.)

Jickling and Wals (2008) respond to this question with a definite no when it comes to what they call the “expert-driven” concept of ESD. In ESD they discern a homogenising tendency, where education is a means for world bodies such as UNESCO to present a standardised education that does not question a neo-liberal agenda:

The powerful wave of neo-liberalism rolling over the planet, with pleas for ‘market-solutions’ to educational problems and universal quality-assurance schemes, are homogenizing the educational landscape (p. 2). /.../ At the same time, globalization can also be seen as a process that allows powerful world bodies, such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the UNESCO, to influence educational policy agendas on global scale with lightening speed (p. 4).

The authors also criticise consensus thinking as an approach to complex issues like sustainable development in an educational practice, since it would only have an opposite effect on education:

Forcing consensus about an ambiguous issue such as sustainable development is undesirable from a democratic perspective and is essentially 'mis-educative'. Democracy depends on differences, dissonance, conflict, and antagonism, so that deliberation is radically indeterminate" (p. 5).

In short, Jickling and Wals (2008) claim that ESD turns education into a political tool that promotes a certain ideology which excludes other possibilities and thus leaves less space for action and autonomous thinking.

In response to the normativity dilemma, Vare and Scott (2007) suggest two complementary ESD approaches (ESD 1 and ESD 2). The authors argue that in ESD 1, the solution to the environmental and development problems we are facing today "is to bring about social change, where learning is a tool to facilitate choice between alternative futures which can be specified on the basis of what is known in the present" (p. 1), whereas ESD 2 sees learning as an open-ended and reflective process that involves "the development of learners' abilities to make sound choices in the face of the inherent complexity and uncertainty of the future" (p. 3). According to the authors, the dilemma, or the double bind, is that "the more we focus on delivering ESD 1, the less likely it is that we will be asking people to think for themselves through essential ESD 2" (p. 3). In other words, the more schools focus on teaching students to learn to value what others tell them is important based on what we know today, the less likely it is that students will learn to think for themselves and make sound choices in order to live more sustainably in the future. Therefore, the authors argue, we need both these approaches, since one cannot do without the other.⁸

Other researchers have focused more on the anthropocentric implications of sustainable ethics and argue that responsibility for the environment has been marginalised in ESD. According to Stables (2001), what underlies this is the "paradoxical compound slogan" of SD which is made up of two concepts from different discourses: 'sustain' from an ecological discourse based on the idea of nature as a cycle that constantly renews itself and 'develop' from an economic discourse that rests on a idea of progress and growth. Joining these two conflicts of interest into sustainable development "allows us to feel that the two key terms are unproblematically complementary: that

we can ‘have our cake and eat it’” (p. 251). Sachs (1991) stresses how the Brundtland Report (WCED 1987) opened the way for an alliance between environment and development that legitimised the fact that poverty had a negative impact on the environment and that the environment could only be protected through a new era of growth.⁹ To Sachs the report put the blame on the poor populations of the world and identified them as “agents of destruction” (p. 45).

Defenders of the ESD concept agree that there is a clear shift of emphasis compared to EE, and that what we can see is a development of the social dimension as presented in Agenda 21 that points to “a more balanced approach to addressing the plight of both the environment and society’s need for quality of life, which includes environmentally appropriate development” (McKeown & Hopkins 2003). Breiting (2009) stresses the seemingly obvious but nonetheless true, that sustainable development is always about conflicting interests in human societies and never about nature isolated from these interests. In view of this, he says that “adding a strong focus on intergenerational conflicts related to the use of natural resources to this, emphasizes a dimension to ESD that is not that well represented in traditional formulations of environmental education” (p. 201).

The purpose of the above exposition is not to dismiss the possibilities of the ESD concept, but to stress that one of the greatest challenges now facing the development and implementation of ESD is the search for balanced ways of dealing with the normativity dilemma that take *both* the search for consensus and universal claims *as well as* particular contexts and dissension seriously. Despite the fact that several researchers within the field have highlighted this dilemma, we maintain that a deepened problematisation is needed. Within the perspective of cosmopolitanism, a qualified philosophical discussion about similar issues has been taking place for many years. In order to contribute to the normative challenges in ESD, in the second part of this paper we therefore explore the cosmopolitan perspective of the relationship between universal and contextual values, how this has been dealt with and what a more contemporary cosmopolitanism can offer ESD.

Cosmopolitanism – between the universal and the particular

Cosmopolitanism – as a philosophical perspective and its implications – has been used by scholars since the Classical Greek era to describe the idea that all human beings belong to a single community. Cosmopolitanism dates back to Diogenes the Cynic in the 4th century

BCE, who described himself ‘a citizen of the world’ and not from a particular culture or local group. According to Nussbaum (1997), the Stoics followed this lead and also suggested that one does not need to abandon local affiliations, but that we can think of ourselves as being surrounded by a series of concentric circles where the first is drawn around the self and the next around one’s family etc., and that “beyond all these circles is the largest one, that of humanity as a whole” (p. 60).

This Stoic attitude, i.e. a universal concern where I stretch beyond myself, can symbolise classical cosmopolitanism. In the late 18th century Kant made a major impact on cosmopolitan universal thinking in his essay *Toward Perpetual Peace*, in which he argued for the generation of world-wide peace among states by suggesting a cosmopolitan law where “the stranger entering foreign territory” has rights as “citizens of the world” rather than as citizens of particular states.¹⁰ Traditionally, cosmopolitanism as an ideal and as a term has thus been applied in the singular, since there can only be *one* cosmos of humans sharing universal values in accordance with ancient ideals.

Here we will focus on the tension between the universal and the particular, or the cosmopolitan dilemma – whether one’s obligations to others stretch beyond or override one’s loyalty to particular and local human lives. We argue that the tension between the universal and the particular and how cosmopolitan thinking suggests ways of relating to the allegiance to universal humanity and at the same time considers cultural diversity could contribute to new ways of dealing with complex issues like sustainable development and the problems of normativity in education. Today, contemporary scholars of Kant’s work challenge the idea of abstract universalism and classic forms of cosmopolitanism and problematise these thoughts by relating them to the particular communities and the fact that human lives take many forms (Bohman & Lutz-Bachmann 1997). Bruce Robbins (1998) claims that nations and cosmopolitanisms are both plural and particular and says that “cosmopolitanism is *there* – not merely an abstract ideal” (p. 2).

Hansen (2010) reminds us of the relevance of a cosmopolitan perspective and explains why researchers have returned to the idea of cosmopolitanism as a way of handling and balancing global challenges:

They [*scholars the world over*] discern in the idea ways in which people can respond creatively to shifting patterns of human interaction generated by migration, rapid economic and political change, and new communication technologies. They perceive in cosmopolitanism a vibrant alternative to forces in globalization that uproot established ways of life, entrench consumerist individualism, undermine notions of collective responsibility, and degrade the physical environment (p. 2) [*our italics*].

Hansen (2008) also suggests that although the cosmopolitan idea does not offer solutions to the challenges facing us today, it does offer a way of thinking about these predicaments. Kemp and Witthøfft Nielsen (2009) take this a step further and argue that instead of being an abstract conception of an ideal humanity that belongs to a single moral community, the notion of cosmopolitanism is now concretely about, e.g. how we are to achieve sustainable development for the global citizenry.

A cosmopolitan perspective that considers the tension between the universal and the particular might therefore offer a language that is applicable to an ESD context as well as other ways of thinking about the problems of normativity in education. In the sections that follow we will assess the extent to which this is the case.

The problems of normativity from a cosmopolitan perspective

In this paper, it is not our aim to find the right answer to the educational dilemma of balancing values, but rather to present different approaches to this issue in order to explore the possible spectrum of ideas, and we do this by specific references to the work of four philosophers of education, namely Martha C. Nussbaum (2010), Peter Kemp (2005), Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) and Sharon Todd (2009).

These scholars each have a philosophical bent and contribute ideas from a cosmopolitan perspective. In short they argue that ethical and political aspects underlie education. In some of their recent work they demonstrate and challenge the potential value of cosmopolitanism and explore the situations and contexts to which it can be applied. The choice of texts and scholars has been made in relation to the differences in cosmopolitan perspective and attention has also been paid to geographical origin and gender balance. In our view the chosen scholars contribute perspectives that are relevant to sustainability ethics – especially the intragenerational dimension – and the normativity problems in ESD.

We have chosen to present these authors individually in an attempt to give a reasonably fair picture of the main core of their arguments for taking (or not taking) a cosmopolitan turn and to indicate how they in their work relate to sustainability ethics and normativity in education. In a final section we discuss the relevance of their arguments for – and how they might add to – environmental and sustainability education. We argue that although Nussbaum and Kemp both hold universal ideals they have different approaches, in that Nussbaum is

programmatic in her approach while Kemp is not. Appiah and Todd have different starting points. Appiah argues that the actual exchange is both fruitful and inevitable, while Todd takes this further and reminds us that universal claims are always subject to cultural translation and that this exchange has both a political and an ethical dimension.

Martha C. Nussbaum: cosmopolitan education for cultivating humanity

Nussbaum (1997) starts from a Stoic reasoning with strong historical roots in her argument for a cosmopolitan education based on a shared humanity and Socratic values. Even though there is an obvious tension between obligations to particular humans and a more universal concern within the cosmopolitan perspective, her idea is to cultivate a humanity that stands out. In this she emphasises three crucial capabilities that she believes are necessary in order to cultivate students' humanity: *Socratic Self-Examination* (a critical examination of oneself and one's traditions), *Citizens of the World* (relating to the local region or group but above all to society as a whole of which we are all part) and *Narrative Imagination* (imagining what it might be like to be in the situation of the other).

In *Not for Profit – Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Nussbaum (2010) widens and develops her thoughts on abilities for a democratic citizenship. She also suggests that every nation should strive to promote abilities that constitute what Nussbaum terms “the Human Development model” – a democratic model based on inviolable, universal and liberal values (pp. 24–25) – that education should strive to “to produce citizens in and for a healthy democracy” (p. 45). In this educational model, as in earlier work (Nussbaum 1997), a social aspect and an intragenerational responsibility are quite distinctive. The author stresses the ability to be concerned about the lives of those who are distant from us. The model is also imbued with a historical and cultural dimension. For example, Nussbaum mentions how the history of global economy and the role of colonialism are important if we are to understand the origins of the products we use on a day-to-day basis: “We cannot understand where even a simple soft drink comes from without thinking about lives in other nations. When we do so, it makes sense to ask about the working conditions of these people, their education, and their labour relations. And when we ask such questions we need to think about our responsibility to these people” (p. 82).

Nussbaum's (2010) educational model carries a promising sense of the possibilities of education. Education is regarded as cultivating

students' "inner eyes", i.e. cultivating capacities and addressing cultural blind spots that "require a normative view about how human beings ought to relate to one another" (p. 108). In other words, good education has a democratic purpose and promotes certain universal values. In this sense, normativity, or education 'for', is not a problem for Nussbaum but is essential for producing cultivated, developed and active citizens. The double bind of education in Nussbaum's version tallies with the Socratic ideal – how education is meant to cultivate a certain type of citizen who enables democracies to survive and at the same time is critical and curious (p. 72). In other words, according to Nussbaum these approaches complement each other and are possible to combine in education.

In the chosen texts, Nussbaum appears as a strong universalist guided by utopian ideals that she translates into a model. In relation to the problems of normativity in education, she takes a programmatic approach when delivering her 'manifesto' and does not discuss the concrete political consequences of this approach but remains excessively utopian.

Peter Kemp: the citizen of the world as the education ideal

Kemp (2005) opens *Citizen of the World* by reminding us of that humanity can only last if we strive for a sustainable development and a world for future generations. Here he re-introduces the citizen of the world as "a person who confronts global issues and contributes solutions that can be beneficial to whole of humanity" as an education ideal (p. 17).¹¹ This citizen must face certain "epochal typical problems" such as globalisation, cultural and national clashes and threats to a sustainable development.

The challenge to a sustainable society is above all regarded as an ethical issue. Kemp explores how an ethics for sustainability views life and offers a twofold answer. The first part of the answer is that we imagine "the good life" as a life where we give and take unconditionally – or that we recognise an idea of reciprocity without symmetry. The second is that this non-reciprocal responsibility includes a responsibility for future generations whose lives we already affect. In other words, consideration of the other is the only way of giving the present generation a good posthumous reputation (p. 85), but social justice in the future is meaningless if we do not fight for justice between people today. Therefore, in Kemp's cosmopolitan citizenship intragenerational justice *precedes* intergenerational justice (p. 78).¹²

Referring to Emmanuel Lévinas, Kemp locates the ethics in the relation to the other – and in his reading the other includes *both* hu-

man beings and non-human nature: “Nature is as little as the other human being, just raw material to control or exploit. Like the other, nature is also the ‘strange’ which is irreplaceable.”¹³ According to Kemp, by viewing nature as something that is experienced from our human perspective, but that can never be a subordinated part of us, it is possible to dissolve the contrasts between anthropocentric and eco-centric perspectives. If we argue that non-human nature has rights of life – just as a human has human rights – and admit that these rights go *beyond* the rights of the human other to embrace those of other species and the whole biosphere, we maintain an “anthropocentrifugal perspective”, i.e. a citizenship with a responsibility for our ecosystem, including intragenerational and intergenerational dimensions, where responsibilities are asymmetrical and consideration of the other over time is the only way to develop the moral self-assuredness needed for a global ethics.

What points does Kemp make concerning the normativity of teaching and learning related to environmental and sustainability education? Kemp holds a Deweyan vision that education is a constant reorganising or reconstructing of experience (Dewey 1916/1944, Chapter 6) and remarks that “becoming a citizen of the world means not only assuming that idea, but acquiring it as a key concept for acting in a globalised world.”¹⁴ Kemp suggests a multicultural education where we learn from each other’s differences, which in turn requires openness to other perspectives and to what the other holds true and a response to that. He argues that the citizen of the world must be the ethico-political ideal for our time. In line with Nussbaum, Kemp is also universal and does not problematise the teaching approach or deal with the educational dilemma. He does however include the perspective of our responsibilities for nature, which is an important contribution for enhancing the ethical dimension of ESD.

Kwame A. Appiah: rooted cosmopolitan education as conversation

By taking a more critical stance toward universal cosmopolitanism than Nussbaum and Kemp, Appiah explores abstract cosmopolitanism and its search for universal responsibility. In *Cosmopolitanism* (2006), Appiah defends an intermediate position that he names as *partial cosmopolitanism*, which is intertwined by two strands: “the recognition of our responsibility for every human being, and the recognition that human beings are different and that we can learn from each other’s differences” (p. xv). Here Appiah draws on his earlier work, in *The Ethics of Identity*

(2005) he describes this position as rooted cosmopolitanism. This rooted cosmopolitanism – between the universal and the particular – raises the question of relativism, and how much we really owe strangers. Relativism, Appiah replies, is grounded in a scientific worldview that makes a sharp distinction between facts and values, which he denounces. What you as an individual value and see depends on what you believe in, and “what it’s reasonable for you to think, faced with particular experience, depends on what ideas you already have” (p. 39). In other words, our beliefs are only relative to the ideas to which we have been introduced.

With relevance to the subtitle of his book – *Ethics in a World of Strangers* – Appiah addresses the importance of a global ethics today. He indicates that two things have changed over time: not only are we able to *know about other people* and learn about life anywhere through the global network of information, but also that whatever we do *affects other people*. We can, for example, choose to buy fair trade coffee, and when we do (or don’t) we affect a tiny fraction of the world economy and at the same time are connected to the global coffee industry. And that, Appiah argues, makes a difference to the contexts of how we live our lives: “Each person you know about and can affect is someone to whom you have responsibility: to say this is just to affirm the very idea of morality” (p. xiii). Our intragenerational responsibility or obligations must not require us to abandon our own lives. On the contrary, they must be partial to those closest to us and take account of many values, since “no sensible story of our obligations to strangers can ignore the diversity of things that matter in human life” (p. 165). The challenge, then, is to develop habits of coexistence, given that we share the planet and have different views about how this should be done.

Appiah reminds us that we cannot reach a final consensus on values since some are – and should be – universal and some are local, and the model he advocates is that of conversations between people. Conversation has particular implications for education and here Appiah advocates a ‘cosmopolitan curiosity’, i.e. that we take an interest in other people’s lives and arguments – not in order to come to any agreement but because this will help us get to know the other. His advice is to start with the things that people share in a cross-cultural conversation:

They do not need to be universal; all they need to be is what these particular people have in common. Once we have found enough we share, there is the further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not share. That is one of the payoffs of cosmopolitan curiosity. We can learn from one another; or we can simply be intrigued by alternative ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (p. 97).

In other words, Appiah claims that we can only care about someone with whom we share an identity and that when the stranger is no longer visionary but real we might learn something – not despite of, but thanks to our differences (p. 98).

So what conclusions concerning the normativity of education can be drawn from Appiah’s works? We read Appiah as suggesting a pluralistic approach, since the multiplicity of values, valuable ways of living and the cosmopolitan commitment to fallibilism are all emphasised in his work (p. 144). The educational model he returns to is that of interacting respectfully by conversation – across lines of difference and without the purpose of agreeing – and being imaginatively engaged in the lives of strangers as a way of balancing universal values with respect for particular human lives. With his rooted cosmopolitanism, Appiah avoids a programmatic and universal cosmopolitan outlook, and by concretising the actual human encounter he lifts the discussion to a political level regarding human interaction in real life.

Sharon Todd: toward cosmopolitan and political thinking in education

Like Appiah, Todd is somewhat critical of claims of universal principles. Drawing, for example, on the work of Chantal Mouffe, Todd (2010) has a political orientation to cosmopolitanism and suggests cosmopolitics¹⁵ as a term that explores a more nuanced view of cosmopolitan education:

[C]osmopolitics takes a sober view of pluralism, seeing politics as the project of confronting dissonant voices, affiliations, and practices and as such puts into question the cherished political aim of harmonizing diversity through dialogical models of democracy (p. 216).

Todd (2009) suggests that instead of “cultivating” or “promoting” humanity – words that are often used by organisations like UNESCO when striving to educate “for” universal tendencies – education should seek to *face* humanity without doing away with dissonance and conflict (p. 8f.). According to Todd, if we educate for a universal ethics – or unquestionable and shared values – and deal with the interconnected issues facing us by avoiding differences and imperfection, the danger is that we will not take pluralism seriously. The ethics that Todd’s pluralistic and “cosmopolitical” approach generates questions a cosmopolitan ethic – supported e.g. by Nussbaum (2010) and Kemp (2005) – committing to both diversity of values *and* universal princi-

ples. According to Todd, this double demand creates a contradiction that risk sacrificing the project of cosmopolitanism itself (p. 139).

Placing the above argumentation in the ethical dimension of ESD and the educational dilemma of balancing values, one could argue that teaching students that they have a responsibility towards people in other parts of the world, future generations and the environment is not done by appealing to universal values of what we share (Todd also wonders whether universal claims are products of cultural translation). Rather, it is a question of putting particularity (cultural differences) and universality (universal values) *in conversation with one another* and thus making “the difficulties of judgement itself a central part of any cosmopolitan outlook” (p. 139). In short, when we face others who are not like us, it is not only an encounter but an exchange that will provoke our thoughts and carry with it the hope of potential new thoughts and insights that will help us live with the uncertainty we face.

When dealing with the role of education or, as Todd puts it, what education can itself bear and the weight that children should themselves shoulder, she leans on Hannah Arendt who has written eloquently about the dilemma of education.¹⁶ Arendt (1961) states that children and adults belong to different worlds, an educative and a political, and that these two worlds need to be separated. She also emphasises that the function of education is “to teach children what the world is like and not to instruct them in the art of living” (p. 195). The crucial point Arendt raises here is that any political use of education – any “attempt to produce the new as a *fait accompli*” (p. 176) and as it already existed – can only be regarded as indoctrination.

Drawing on Arendt’s line of argumentation, we should be vigilant about education turning into a political tool, or, to use Todd’s own words: “in educating *for* humanity, we run the risk of creating for children a world that does not respond to it *as it is*, and create instead a harmonious image of what we adults *want the world to be*” (2009 p. 16). Here we read Todd as suggesting that when responding to the normative dilemma in education we need on the one hand to challenge our ideals but on the other also to avoid cynicism. Dealing with this tension seriously – to refrain from cultivating people and at the same time acknowledging diversity – and locating it in the classroom is an approach towards pluralistic education and an education of humility. Todd (2009) argues that we cannot import universal principles into education in the belief that students will secure justice and responsibility by abiding by normative rules. On the contrary, it is through critical reflection in situated contexts that we undergo change, provoked by others in all their differences (p. 154).

Thus, what we learn from Todd is that important aspects to be considered when developing ESD are how universal sustainable ideals are culturally translated in specific environments and how dissonant political and ethical voices are reflected in the educational encounter. The position developed by Todd is that being mindful of different voices – and allowing for uncertainty and disagreement – can offer education a political language.

Summary and conclusion

In this paper we have described the philosophical perspective of cosmopolitanism and examined the possibilities of this approach for environmental and sustainability education. We have analysed the recent works of four scholars and used the fundamental aspects that seem appropriate for relating to the problems of normativity in ESD. We believe that the most important contribution the cosmopolitan scholars have to make is the philosophically informed discussion about the relation between universalism and particularism, which also raises ethical and political questions relating to the policy perspective ESD.

Cosmopolitan-minded scholars position themselves differently in the universal vs. particular discussion. While Nussbaum defends universal values, Todd voices a warning not to hide behind appeals for cosmopolitan harmony. The latter argumentation suggests that the philosophical grounding of a sustainable ethics should not only be the universal ideal we all supposedly share, but includes that which is imperfect about us and needs to be faced: the unsustainable, the irresponsible etc. A critical cosmopolitan perspective advises us to try to move away from instrumental methods for sustaining the future world and instead turn towards an inquiry into the ethical grounds of our responsibility by recognising that values do not need to be universal – all they need to be is what particular people have in common. As argued by Appiah and Todd, in the interstices of the universal and the particular – where universal claims are subject to cultural translation and alternative ways of thinking and acting – we might learn from the stranger.

In view of the above discussion on the groundings of a sustainable ethics, what then is the role of education in response to the normativity dilemma? How do these scholars balance between cultivating universal values and individuals' social and cultural situatedness? If we take Nussbaum's educational model first, cultivating certain universal values requires a normative view. It seems to us that both Nussbaum and Kemp relate to the balance between universalism and particularism

by suggesting that universal values trump all other values, although they also argue for a multicultural education in which we learn from each other's differences and show openness for what the other holds true through communication. Nussbaum (2010) sees that the arts and the humanities play an important role in cultivating students' "inner eyes", provided that they are stably linked to democratic values and that "a normative view about how human beings ought to relate to one another" is required (p. 108).

Being somewhat less normative than Nussbaum, Appiah advocates a cosmopolitan curiosity in which we start with that things that people share, and where the goal is not consensus but understanding. Appiah shows a strong belief in establishing a communicative link between the universal and the particular, and the making of conversation is the model he returns to simply because it is, in his words, inevitable.

Todd's critical examination of cosmopolitanism exposes the limits of a normative education for universal values. In Todd's view, universal claims are always subject to redefinition, and she suggests an education involving thinking and judging that recognises the imperfection of both our "universal" values and human nature. The critical cosmopolitan perspective reminds us that when developing the policy perspective ESD we should try to avoid ending up in what can be described as "either a position in the particular (defending difference and diversity) or a position for the universal (defending rights or justice for humanity)" (Gustavsson 2007, p. 67). It can be concluded that such a discussion is not part of the ongoing debate on ESD. On the contrary, ESD aims at promoting and developing *universal* values and claims regarding e.g. justice, equity and responsibility. However, that does not imply unawareness of the fact that once implemented ESD takes many forms due to local and *particular* realities. We therefore argue that the cosmopolitan discussion pays direct attention to universal claims in relation to the particular and therefore moves and adds to the critical debate on ESD. Since ESD is based on principles that underlie sustainability (UNESCO 2005), such an education easily ends up in universal ideals. If we instead understood ESD as a political project comprising dissonant and conflicting voices, that in itself could be an important contribution to the development of an environmental and sustainability education that takes the particular human encounter and its implications into consideration and offers a future-oriented commitment to educating for better ways of living together.

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Notes

1. For a recent Special Issue on “Cosmopolitanism in the Making”, see *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (2010), no 29.
2. A cosmopolitan orientation on environmental and sustainability education has also been developed by scholars from the social sciences; see e.g. Beck (2006) and Dobson (2003).
3. Hopkins (2010) acknowledges the importance of the parallel processes within the worlds of formal and nonformal education and training, i.e. sectors and organisations addressing sustainability issues and thus intertwining with the world of ESD, e.g. the private sector, popular culture, NGOs, healthcare etc. (p. 23).
4. Also called the Brundtland Report in recognition of the Chairperson of the World Commission.
5. United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005–2014) Web portal: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/>
6. See González-Gaudiano (2006) for a discussion on environmental education as a field in tension *and* transition.
7. For a discussion on the concept of ESD see e.g. Hesselink et al. (2000), Scott and Gough (2003), Scott and Gough (2004), Sund (2008), Öhman (2006), UNESCO (2010).
8. Bonnett (2002) refers to two similar main lines in which it might be thought that education can contribute to the goal of sustainability which he names “the environmentalist approach” and “the democratic approach” (p. 10).
9. ”Poverty reduces people’s capacity to use resources in a sustainable manner; it intensifies pressure on the environment. /.../A necessary but not a sufficient condition for the elimination of absolute poverty is a relatively rapid rise in per capita incomes in the Third World. It is therefore essential that the stagnant or declining growth trends of this decade be reversed” (WCED 1987, Chapter 2, 1:29).
10. In addition to constitutional law and international law, Kant suggests a cosmopolitan law. “A constitution formed in accordance with cosmopolitan law, in so far as individuals and states, standing in an external relation of mutual reaction, may be regarded as citizens of one world-state (*jus cosmopolitanicum*) (Kant 1795/2003, p. 57).
11. All the quotations from Kemp (2005) have been translated from Swedish by the authors as the book has not yet been published in English. Swedish original: “en människa som tar upp nutidens stora och brännande globala problem för att bidra till lösningar som är till gagn för hela mänskligheten.”
12. Dobson (2003) develops a similar theory of a “post-cosmopolitan” or ecological citizenship with asymmetrical responsibilities, where he links citizenship education with ecological responsibility and insists that ecological education must raise the issue of international, intergenerational and interspecies obligations (p. 183).

13. In Swedish: "Naturen är lika lite som den andra människan bara råmaterial att kontrollera och exploatera. I likhet med den andra människan är även den »främmande» det, som är oersättlig" (Kemp 2005, p. 86).
14. In Swedish: "Det innebär att eleven blir världsmedborgare för när han eller hon inte bara övertar idén om världsmedborgarskapet från kulturhistorien, utan tillägnar sig den som ett nyckelbegrepp för handlande i en globaliserad värld" (Kemp 2005, p. 233).
15. Todd refers to cosmopolitics as a term that has been used by theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins and Bonnie Honing "to explore the specifically political dimensions of cosmopolitan thought beyond the rigid attachments to universalism" (Todd 2010, p. 216).
16. Arendt (1961) describes it as being caught between on the *one* hand the hope of starting "a new world with those who are by birth and nature new", meaning that teachers should foster newness and revolutionary in children (p. 176). And on the *other* hand, the task of teaching for conserving values and tradition and thus preparing and gradually introducing children to "a world for which they must assume responsibility although they themselves did not make it, and even though they may, secretly or openly, wish it were other than it is" (p. 189).

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