Review of: "International Education and the Crises of Cosmopolitanism and Global Citizenship"

Augustin Holl

The paper "International Education and the crises of Cosmopolitanism and Global citizenship" proceeds to interrogate the concepts of Global citizenship and cosmopolitanism within the frame of international education relying on critical review of a number of scholarly takes on these and closely related topics.

The discussion is structured along 4 well delineated axes: (1) main concepts definitions, precisely: International Education (IE), Global Citizen (GC), and Cosmopolitanism; (2) brief case studies from the West, Asia and Africa; (3) the current crises of GC and Cosmopolitanism from the IE perspective; and finally (4) some recommendations.

The developments singled out by the contribution are asserted, rightly in a certain sense, to have been initially kicked off by globalization, a direct allusion to European powers expansion across the globe. However, in the strict sense of theterms, "International Education", "global citizenship" and "cosmopolitanism" precede by far the 16th century that witnessed the linkage between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean "world systems". This does affect the core arguments of the author but simply suggests that the variables under investigation – IE, GC, and cosmopolitanism - were already at work in earlier civilizations. There is no doubt that many most important Greek scientists and thinkers, like Eudoxus, Plato, Solon, and Thales for example, have studied in Egypt before the foundation of Alexandria. International education was conducted by monks using Latin as scholarly language, circulating through a dense network of monasteries throughout Medieval Europe, then promoting the cardinal values of Christianity or more precisely the Catholic church. BoudhistMonks spread scholarship all over Central and Eastern Asia, and Muslim scholars did the same in the Dar al Islam starting from the 7th century CE on Southern Europe, East, North, and West Africa, the Near and Middle-East, India and Southeast Asia. Contemporary IE, undoubtedly strongly influenced by the Western variantpredominantly discussed in the paper should have deserved a historical analysis similar to that conducted in the "Cosmopolitanism" section.

GC is a much more challenging concept. While a "globetrotter" may rightly claim to be Cosmopolitan", the self-identification as "Global Citizen" is simply a state of mind. Right or wrong, "citizenship" is a legal construct controlled by an institution, a city, a state, a nation. It is difficult to figure out what is the meaning of the suggestion that "citizenship can exist in the absence of institutions that govern it". It deserves further elaboration and clarification. The assertion according to which "one of the kernels of global citizenship and or cosmopolitanism is that it is deemed to be predicated on equality in the treatment of people while no preference should be given to a particular group based on its cultural, political, linguistic, and national affiliation at the expense of other groups" is generous and well-intended but entirely abstract. In the

contemporary world and at any place, there is always a distinction - not-necessarily discriminatory - in terms of rights and duties between citizens and non-citizens. And this varies enormously between countries and academic traditions. During the last 40 years, the reviewer had university professorships in Cameroon, China, France, the United States, and Senegal and experienced that diversity of situations. Intellectual and scientific cosmopolitanism is not equivalent to smooth and problem-less adjustment to the actual academic communities. International scholars, depending on their origins and other characteristics are treated differently depending on contexts and circumstances.

It is highly understandable to wish to steer IE to contribute to the construction of a peaceful and harmonious future for all humankind. It is one leverage – a powerful one indeed– among many that can help implement these honorable goals. IE, that spans all the research fields represented in Higher Education is also about training young people in skill and knowledge necessary for the sustainable operations of human activities. It can be expected from international students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to have ambitions and goals that differ from those of students in art, social sciences, and humanities. Assigning an overarching moral and ethical mission to IE is accordingly a misleading over-simplification. The expressed "hopes that people in the world could eventually supplant identity politics and cultural relativism with a global view of morality, bearing in mind that shared worlds are never found but always built" while desirable and touching is overtly hyperbolic. IE is not about the production of "moral heroes". As everything human, it has multiple facets, significant indeterminacy, and ambiguities. The "great disparity within the IE sector worldwide" is accordingly not "due to the absence of consensus over GC education and its purpose" but the product of different evolutionary histories.

Despite brief excursions into an African and Chinese case studies, the paper is structure predominantly on Americano-British views of IE but does address issues of power imbalances and academic domination. The field is not levelled. There are major players who set the rules and standards and those who are dominated. The author is well aware of that situation and appears to have addressed it tangentially in the second recommendation as follows: "… globalism and the cosmopolitanism of higher education should incorporate the series of experiences from various countries and continents as legitimate and valid objects of academic inquiry without jettisoning the contributions and or 'injections' from all and sundry to the peculiarities of different countries in the world."