

Beyond citizenship?: Some conceptual and practical concerns

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concerns*

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Agenda

- Citizenship: Why talk about, study, teach it?
- Citizenship: Identity, society and politics
- What kind of thing am I?
- What is my identity?
- Citizenship and values (moral and other)
- Whither teaching and research (I)?
- A richer concept: “Grounded cosmopolitanism”
- Whither teaching and research (II)?

Citizenship: Why talk about, study, teach it?

- Citizenship is central to our sense of identity: who we are (who I am)
- Citizenship is central to who we are in a socio-political sense
- Citizenship education is the proper home for teaching values (including moral values)
- Students have ideas about citizenship which are worth knowing about

Citizenship is central to our sense of identity: who we are (who I am)

- As in: “I *am* Australian/Chinese/HK”, etc.
- This is based on a mistake about what identity means (come back to this).
 - It is really about *identification*, at best
 - It does not say what is truly unique about *me*
 - It sets up the conditions for two kinds of conflict:
 - “Are they British or Muslim?” (asked in July 2005) (Sen’s *Fallacy of Singular Affiliation*)
 - “You are not an Aussie so keep out of my country!”

Citizenship as socio-political

- In recent times, citizenship is associated with national or state affiliations and differences.
- This association has both intensified (especially since 9/11) and been called into question (especially since the end of the Cold War)
- In so far as citizenship is seen as addressing the question “Who am I?”, the nation-state – or an ethnic or tribal subunit thereof – is implicated in our very identity – or, at least, in our ownership of certain rights and responsibilities.

Thus construed, citizenship is necessarily divisive

- To be a citizen is to be a citizen of N1, which makes sense only if there are others who:
 - Are also citizens of N1
 - Are citizens of N2, not N1.
- So what? This difference could be purely organizational, practical, etc. But like cultural difference, it is often invested with more significance (e.g. by individuals, by governments, by media and by various extremists).

Recall the alarming climate after 9/11: one ideology versus another; one good, the other evil! (But which is which??)

It is a characteristic of extremism to be obsessed with one particular characteristic (religion and race can work in the same way as nationality), thence to divide the world into *us* (“Good”) and *them* (“Bad”).

A logical or semantic error:

- “I *am* (He is) Australian/Chinese/HK”
Is semantically distinct from
- “I *am* the (very same person as the) person you spoke to on the phone”.

Only the latter has the logical form of an identity statement. The former is a statement of *predication*.

No amount of predication – i.e. the conceptual and linguistic act of assigning properties or characteristics to objects – yields identity in the strict sense.

What does yield the conditions for identity in the strict sense?

- For you and me, i.e. human persons*, it is the concept of *personhood* itself which achieves this.
Being a person:
 - Is a property that I cannot shake off without ceasing to exist
 - Defines the *kind* of thing that I and you are (in fact, it specifies that we are not *things* at all!)
 - Specifies *criteria* for *tracking* persons, i.e. identifying, re-identifying, and distinguishing persons (You and I are persons, I am the same person over time, I am not the same person as you).

A simple illustration of tracking

Show someone an old (very old!) school photo of your 3rd grade class. Ask them:

“Which one *is* me?”.

Reflect on what this means? (It does not mean:

Which one is like me, or will grow to become me, etc.). Understanding what a person is allows us to understand the idea of identity over (space and) time for persons – no matter how many changes have occurred along the way.

Personhood, in contrast to collectivist notions such as citizenship, religion, ethnicity,...:

- Is relational but not collectivist
- Does not divide we persons into groups (but does distinguish us from non persons?)
- Highlights the importance of the individual over the collective. The *fallacy of the institution over its members (IOM)*:
 - “Gay marriage would destroy the sanctity of the Family” (or religious freedom)
 - “The State is more important than the individuals in it”
 - “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country!”
 - “That’s not the way we do things in this family/culture/society”.

But personhood is not purely individualistic!

- It is *relational*. Each of us is – and needs to see her/him self as –

One among Others.

- I am valuable, important, worthwhile, but:
- So are you, and:
- These elements are inter-dependent (as in the Golden Rule, etc.)

Basis for morality

- A contentious issue, but:
- The relational concept of personhood is a better prospect than such collectivist concepts as citizenship.
- Why do some writers claim that moral values are a proper subset of civic or citizenship values?
 - Because of an alleged distinction between *private* and *public* values. Suggest that this does not stand up conceptually (“the myth of the subjective”). We are at once private *and* public beings. (Important implications for theory of mind, as well as for constructivist pedagogies!)

Where does this leave the school and moral/citizenship education?

- Less interested in how these are organized (stand-alone classes, one within the other, etc.)
- A number of countries have compulsory courses in civics or citizenship education, including (England?), Denmark, Germany, and the USA.
- Such courses are aimed at “developing informed, participating citizens.”
- I do not oppose schools teaching civics or citizenship education (as long as children are allowed to see themselves as citizens *right now*), but suggest that, over and above teaching *about* the workings of government and society, the main focus is ethics/morality/values education, and the development of *persons*.
- Does the state, as provider of (moral) education, have special rights thereby? (No! See IOM Fallacy)

Pedagogic and classroom organization implications

- Support Kerry Kennedy's notion that to investigate the concept of *mind* is, inevitably, to see persons (i.e. beings with minds!) as *inter* dependent thinkers. G.H. Mead, but also C. S. Peirce, Vygotsky, Dewey, *et al* are important here.
 - ◆ Note that this interdependence actually *undermines* the idea that there are "public" citizenship values that go beyond "private" moral ones. A good theory of morality and values education will, accordingly, have no need for the concept of *citizenship*.
- *Knowing the minds of others and mind-interdependence* require *dialogue* and a form of classroom organization based on the idea of a *community of thinkers*.

Research-related questions.

According to search engines such as “Education Research Complete”, and “ERIC”, the numbers of studies on Civics and/or Citizenship have *tripled* since 2001.

Compare citizenship to *phlogiston* and race (assuming that the former does not exist and the latter is fading as a categorization of significance).

Two types of questions here:

1. What are these things? How many kinds of phlogiston or races are there? How important are they for...?
2. What do students *believe or think* about these things? How important do they believe these things are?

Only questions of type 2 would have validity, because they do not assume that the “things” in question exist, are conceptually coherent, etc.

- If citizenship has no key role in determining our identities, or in moral/values education, and given that citizenship and other collectivist notions are used to divide and shore up nationalism, extremism, etc., what moral responsibilities apply to researchers who study this concept? (Only “Type 2” questions retain validity?)

Are we left with the bland, insipid notion that we are all basically the same?

- Yes and no! We are all persons, “there are no foreigners among us”, but we are each “one among others”.
- Move to a similar but importantly different conception: *Cosmopolitanism*.
 - Not the same as *global citizenship* (whatever that is!)

“Grounded Cosmopolitanism”

Recent work by David Hansen on how this concept figures in an account of who we are and how we should treat ourselves, one another, and the world.

Some key points:

- Dissolve unnecessary dualisms: self/other, familiar/unknown, local/global,...i.e. think in terms of *AND* not *OR*
- Our affiliations, loyalties, associations, etc. have fluid and shifting intensities and boundaries, subject to judgements of salience
- There are tensions but we can (learn to) deal with them
- The issue is not one of personal identity *per se*, but one of searching for what makes life meaningful and worthwhile
- Research suggests “ordinary” folk understand and live this conception of grounded cosmopolitanism.

Implications for teaching and learning

- Situate individual topics time and place (e.g. historical understanding of scientific ideas, seeing music and paintings in cultural contexts, etc.)
- Model forms of activity that reflect and build a “grounded cosmopolitan” perspective, e.g.
 - Inquiry-focused (sees issues as problematic and intriguing, not settled)
 - Dialogue and other inter-personal links (sees dialogue as the means or production and re-production of ideas, in and beyond the classroom)
 - Understand and appreciate different perspectives
 - Balance talking and listening; regard for self and others; have commitments (“rational passions”) but be open
 - Learn to deal with, respond to, and celebrate uncertainty, tensions, difference....

I suggest that grounded cosmopolitanism provides a frame for developing the basic concept of *person* in the context of the world in which we now live (and, hopefully, will continue to live and thrive). In this context:

- People of many different groupings live together
- We all live in an increasingly perilous environment in which genuine cooperation, empathy and a grasp of the local/global dialectic are crucial
- We need to understand and appreciate our relationships with others and the world
- But I disagree with Hansen that no large changes in curriculum and pedagogy will be necessary.

Much room for further research here!

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