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Indirect cosmopolitan education: on the contribution of national education to attitudes towards foreigners

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ABSTRACT

Many rich countries are witnessing the rise of xenophobic political parties. The opposition to immigration and global redistributive policies is high. How can we pursue global justice in such non-ideal circumstances? Whatever the way we want to pursue global justice, it seems that a change in the political ethos of citizens from rich countries will be necessary. They must come to internalize some genuine concern for foreigners and relativize national identities. Can education contribute to the promotion of such cosmopolitan ethos? An overtly cosmopolitan educational agenda is not likely to be endorsed in these societies where national ties and national priority may be considered fully legitimate by the majority. Nevertheless, this paper argues, some more achievable educational aims may have desirable cosmopolitan spillover effects although it is not their primary purpose. Decentration, empathy, critical thinking, understanding of social reality and social mix can be defended as necessary for a better *domestic* society. Yet these aims also make the widespread development of a cosmopolitan ethos more likely. This paper thus considers the arguments that can be made for these educational aims and their potential effects on citizens' attitudes towards foreigners. Then, it discusses a possible tension with another aspect of national civic education: national integration.

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1. Introduction

Many rich countries are witnessing the rise of xenophobic political parties blaming immigration for most societal diseases. In reaction, traditional parties from the right and especially from the left face some pressure to endorse more strict or less open migration policies.¹ In this context, the prospects of global justice seem quite poor.²

Migrations from poor to rich countries may contribute to global justice by reducing some global inequalities (while creating others) (Oberman 2015), but they are mainly perceived by citizens of rich countries as a threat to either national culture, or social protection, or both. Hence the political resistance to this path towards a more just world is strong, especially among less-skilled workers who are led by their position to perceive (rightly or wrongly) that most immigrants are direct competitors for scarce jobs (O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Murard 2017). Another path towards more global justice, which would

reduce the direct competition between immigrants and domestic workers, is the global redistribution of resources aimed at reducing inequalities in the standard of living between countries (Beitz 1979; Caney 2006). But there does not seem to be much more political support for this option than for pro-immigration policies. A common perception is that states are already struggling with their domestic budget and failing to provide the social protection that justice would require at the domestic level – which is often considered as a priority. Therefore, parties likely to govern seldom endorse a generous foreign aid agenda.

Whatever way we want to pursue global justice, it thus seems that a change in the political ethos of citizens from rich countries will be necessary. They must come to internalize some genuine concern for foreigners, which will come more easily with a change in group identification. People would have to relativize their national group identification and identify with humanity as a group – which does not impede more local complementary identity ties. In other words, we should hope for the development in each person of a *cosmopolitan ethos*, understood here as a ‘commitment to the idea that we have a moral obligation to care for all human beings, without preference to those who happen to be our fellow nationals [or] co-religionists’ (Wilde 2013, 4). This ethos would be an embodiment of *strong* cosmopolitanism. In contrast to *weak* cosmopolitanism – the mere recognition that all humans have equal moral standing and a right to justification in case of unequal treatment (Miller 2016, 153) – strong cosmopolitanism considers national boundaries as morally arbitrary and rejects the idea of special *moral* obligations towards compatriots in virtue of the mere fact that they are compatriots³. Our belonging to a specific state may generate particular *political* obligations such as paying our taxes and contributing to organized solidarity, but our first moral allegiance should be ‘to the worldwide community of human beings’ (Nussbaum 2002, 4). This does not necessarily imply the promotion of a world state, but it certainly challenges the moral salience of existing boundaries.

This paper is not intended to argue for this strong cosmopolitan view, but to consider the ways it can be promoted in our non-ideal world. The global spread of a cosmopolitan ethos may seem excessively utopian, but a retrospective look at the history of humanity shows the progressive and ongoing development of the concept of common humanity (McFarland 2011). Looking into schoolbooks all over the world, one can see a longitudinal trend towards greater emphasis on universal human rights and the value of diversity (Bromley 2009)⁴. Furthermore, nationalist ties are importantly created and maintained through state action (Axelsen 2013). Hence, although in-group identification certainly has an evolutionary basis (Singer 1981), nationalism is not *intrinsic* to humanity.

Among levers of action, education often appears as the most promising way of transforming citizens’ political ethos and making them care more about foreigners (see Nussbaum 2002, 2010)⁵ – although some essential drivers of cosmopolitanism and nationalism are already shaped by early child rearing (McFarland 2011, 17) and hence partly occur outside of schools’ scope of action. From a strong cosmopolitan perspective, an ideal public education would promote the development of this cosmopolitan ethos, with the purpose of making future citizens more open either to immigration or to global redistributions, or to both if they consider that migrations contribute to global justice. More indirectly, the educational system could also try to make citizens care about transnational democracy, which might lead towards a more just world (Culp 2018). Nevertheless, transnational democracy without a widespread cosmopolitan ethos would offer no guarantee

of just decisions. As we can see at the national level, making decisions together is not enough to foster solidarity.

The problem at the heart of this article is that this kind of strong cosmopolitan educational agenda is not likely to be endorsed in contemporary societies, where national ties and national priority are probably considered fully legitimate by a majority of citizens. The reason is that an effective cosmopolitan education would not merely affirm that we are all equals (as many schoolbooks already do), or all brothers and sisters (most religions do that with scant success). It would need to disqualify narrow nationalism, to characterize nations as accidents, to affirm explicitly that a compatriot has no more moral value than a distant foreigner – and this is what is likely to face public resistance⁶. This realistic worry is based on empirical evidence. Although globalization processes have some positive effects on cosmopolitan orientations, and although ‘young people and the well educated are usually found to be less nationalistic than older and less-educated groups’ (Norris and Inglehart 2009, 178–179), the idea of national priority is still dominant. Thus, for example, when people around the world were asked in a World Value Survey whether governments should give priority to fighting poverty abroad or at home first, 77.6% of respondents gave priority to domestic poverty (World Value Survey 2005–2009)⁷. Even among those who identify as global citizens, about 62% would give priority to their own country’s problems (Bayram 2017). Regarding immigration, only 16% of those identifying as global citizens favored unrestricted movement of people (Bayram 2017)⁸.

We also know from social psychology that, despite some progression of cosmopolitan identification, most people still identify primarily with subgroups of humanity and tend to develop stereotypes and prejudices towards outgroups (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010). Observing national political debates, one can also notice a general reluctance to adopt strong cosmopolitanism. Even socialist political parties, historically linked to internationalism, are at unease with migration issues and tend to prioritize (if not openly, insidiously) national workers’ interests. As a result, an overtly cosmopolitan educational agenda is likely to face the same resistance as policies favoring openness to immigration or global redistributions⁹. Many people are likely to perceive it as a politically biased educational agenda, or even as indoctrination or propaganda. To be sure, this does not make the proposal of a cosmopolitan (or postnational or transnational) education less desirable from a normative viewpoint. Public opinion is neither monolithic, nor given once and for all. Hence, there are good reasons to defend this proposal in public debates. But a pragmatic perspective, trying to pursue global justice in non-ideal circumstances, presses us to consider how education can contribute to changing attitudes towards foreigners in a context of widespread ethnocentrism and xenophobia.

From this pragmatic perspective, it seems at first sight that public education cannot by itself lead us towards a more just world where people would have a genuine right to free movement (but no economic pressure to emigrate). Another dynamic would be necessary for the cosmopolitan ethos to spread independently, which would then make cosmopolitan education politically acceptable.

In this paper, I will nonetheless argue that education can contribute to global justice under existing conditions – in an indirect way. The idea is that several educational policies or aims that can be defended as necessary for a better *domestic* society – and thus resist anti-cosmopolitan political reactions – can have desirable spillover effects from a cosmopolitan viewpoint, although it is not their primary purpose¹⁰. Hence they should be

promoted by strong cosmopolitans – yet without necessarily appealing to very controversial cosmopolitan premises. In the first part of the paper, I will examine four such educational aims – decentration, critical thinking, understanding of social reality and social mix – and their plausible cosmopolitan spillover effects. In the second part, I will pay attention to a possible tension between these aims and civic integration. If the educational aims highlighted in the first part are pursued alongside anti-cosmopolitan aims such as national integration, their cosmopolitan spillover effects might be jeopardized. However, I will argue that *civic* integration is more desirable than *national* integration and is not incompatible with cosmopolitanism.

2. Critical national civic education and its spillover effects

Civic or democratic education in a wide sense refers to all the practices shaping people's political convictions, capabilities and actions. In a narrower sense, it refers to public educational practices having these effects (Crittenden and Levine 2016). It is on this narrow conception of civic education that I will focus here. In this sense, civic education occurs only at the state level, and is usually endowed with the mission to prepare future citizens to interact within a specific political community. This, by itself, does not entail a necessary link between civic education and nationalism (Gutmann 2002), but it explains why there might be a tension between a cosmopolitan aim and practices usually performing a 'statist' function.

In some countries, such as Belgium, France, the UK, or several states in the US, there is a specific course (in primary and/or secondary education) devoted to civic education. Yet it can also be diffused into several courses, such as history, philosophy, social sciences, politics, or even literature. As the skills necessary to be a good citizen are varied, civic education necessarily occurs at a broader level than a single course. It even probably occurs without explicit educational agendas, by the mere fact of spending several years in schools with people one did not know beforehand. Hence, I will not focus here on any specific course of civic, moral or political education, but on general politically salient competencies and skills that many pupils develop or could develop in schools around the world.

I will assume that public schools have the legitimacy to provide this kind of education, provided that it focuses on the ethics of living *together* – democracy and social justice, basically – and leaves room for a plurality of private convictions and practices (see Gutmann 1987).

2.1. Decentration

If the function of moral norms is to suppress or regulate egoism, as some argue (Haidt and Kesebir 2010, 800), then any moral theory will promote the individual capacity for *decentration*, i.e. the capacity to take the others' interests and aspirations into account in one's judgments and actions (Vandamme 2017). Hence, this moral capacity – and its affective corollary, empathy – should be uncontroversial educational targets (Vandamme 2013). Of course, some people care little about morality, or think that schools should not mingle with morality. Yet the point is that it should not be difficult to make a public case for this kind of education. One reason for that is that it is a very *thin* moral

requirement. It says little about the kinds of lives we should live, but merely argues that we should look beyond our self-interest (and beyond narrow group interests). Thus, although it is incompatible with an exaltation of egoism à la Rand (1964), it seems fit for an overlapping consensus (Rawls 1993) and could quite easily resist anti-perfectionist arguments. The other reason is that it is less demanding and hence less controversial than *impartiality*. Although a fully decentered attitude would be an impartial attitude, promoting decentration does not imply the rejection of particular ties of affection¹¹. Decentration merely refers to the inclusion of other perspectives in one's judgment.

Even under existing conditions of widespread (mild) xenophobia, it is likely to be almost politically costless to argue for the promotion of decentration and empathy. Most people, in contemporary democracies, have integrated a social norm of impartiality condemning egocentrism and ethnocentrism¹². Racist people, for example, have turned into 'modern racists': they will not publicly affirm the superiority of one race or ethnic group over others, but they will deny the persistence of racial or ethnic discrimination despite available empirical evidence (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010, 1044). Hence, they might be more difficult to convince about the importance or priority of educating to decentration, but they will likely not publicly¹³ oppose such a program, although they would more likely oppose an overtly cosmopolitan educational agenda.

One additional reason that makes achievable educational aims out of decentration and empathy is the self-serving bias that makes us picturing ourselves in a flattering way (Forsyth 2008; Pinker 2011, 489–492), as moral agents (Moshman 2004). Given this bias, we tend to consider ourselves as morally impartial and capable of empathy. People suffering from xenophobia will thus rationalize their feelings (and/or interests) and find pseudo-impartial reasons in favor of homogeneous societies or restrictive immigration policies (such as 'It's better for all humans to stay in their birth country'). The upshot is that few people will see the educational promotion of decentration and empathy as a threat to their political opinions. Everyone sees him/herself on the side of the angels, i.e. on the side of reason and positive emotions. Thus, although more decentration and more empathy might lead people to revise their views, and although many people are not willing to revise their political views, these educational aims are not likely to be perceived as a threat.

And in fact, decentration *can* have cosmopolitan spillover effects (I will come back to empathy later). Decentration is an intellectual process of overcoming positional biases, combatting egocentrism and questioning one's prejudices. Once one starts this reflective process of overcoming positional biases, it is difficult to predict where it will stop. If, for example, you realize that your opinions are importantly determined by your family membership, the next natural step is to consider possible class determinations. Then, if you keep enquiring about the origins of your prejudices, you will come to realize how likely it is that you are affected by an ethnocentric bias. This process is what Singer (1981) describes as the 'escalator of reason', illustrating the fact that you never really know where your reasoning will lead you. You may start questioning racism and end up rejecting speciesism as well because you are looking for consistency in your moral judgments and you suddenly notice continuity between racism and speciesism.

I do not mean to say that this decentration process is easy and natural for everyone (nor that it necessarily leads to anti-speciesism). It is intellectually costly. Yet it is important to realize that we spontaneously embark upon this process from our early childhood. One

major lesson of developmental psychology is that we all develop from deeply egocentric creatures¹⁴ to a more other-regarding attitude, as we are progressively forced by our social interactions to take others into account (Piaget 1964)¹⁵. Hence, all psychologically healthy individuals are moved by this process – some taking it steps further through critical reasoning.

However, besides the decentration process, most of us also go through a process of *centration*. After having reached somewhat beyond inner egocentrism, our sympathy tends to extend very generously. We are not nationalists first and cosmopolitans second. Children may have more natural sympathy towards foreigners – and even towards animals – than many adults (Nussbaum 2002, 141–143). It is socialization and ideology that tend to narrow our sphere of concern to the nation or the religious group. Hence, we go through a phase of decentration, then a phase of centration, and then possibly (but not necessarily) through a new phase of decentration thanks to new experiences, encounters or rational thinking. Although centration on one's circle of relatives is natural, or spontaneous, because we develop strong affective ties through interactions, centration on an imagined community as the nation has nothing natural (Anderson 1991). It is socially and politically created, and hence deconstructible (Axelsen 2013)¹⁶. Countering this centration process is obviously the most politically-sensitive part of an education to decentration, as it involves questioning widely valued identity ties. It is less likely to be adopted as a goal of public education, but it could be a spill-over effect of educating to critical thinking.

2.2. Critical thinking

Besides decentration, *critical thinking* should be another important educational target. Following Matthew Lipman, it can be defined as a form of 'thinking that is aware of its own assumptions and implications as well as being conscious of the reasons and evidence that support this or that conclusion' (Lipman 2003, 26).¹⁷ Thinking critically, one must also be 'prepared to recognize the factors that make for bias, prejudice, and self-deception' (Lipman 2003, 26). It involves the 'ability to understand the logical structure of an argument, to detect bad reasoning, to challenge ambiguity' (Nussbaum 2010, 72). Finally, critical thinking includes an attitude of 'reflective skepticism' (McPeck 1981) that makes us reluctant to take any affirmation that we face as a truth.

Critical thinking differs from decentration by the fact that you do not necessarily take the others into account. It can thus be a more 'monological' exercise, as Habermas would say. However, it is highly complementary with decentration, because taking the perspective of others into account helps for observing one's beliefs and convictions with a more critical eye.

How consensual can we expect the promotion of critical thinking as an educational aim to be? At first sight, it should be uncontroversial. No one wants future citizens to be vulnerable to domination, intellectual manipulation or bigotry. And as already mentioned, most people like picturing themselves as autonomous and critical, although some value these much more than others, who might also value obedience and blind faith. In any case, once specified a bit more, this educational aim immediately becomes more politically sensitive. A good critical education would likely insist on questioning the pupils' beliefs and exposing them to adversary views. But we know how difficult it already is to

merely teach scientific facts in societies with widespread dogmatic religious beliefs (see Macedo 2000). Hence, an appropriate critical education is most likely to face resistance from parents and religious communities.

Once again, I do not want to pretend that it is an easy political struggle to fight. However, it seems to me that it can more plausibly be achieved than a strong cosmopolitan agenda. Some countries have already incorporated critical thinking among their primary educational targets, which by itself would be sufficient to make it plausible. The OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation also notices ‘a growing consensus that formal education should cultivate the creativity and critical thinking skills of students to help them succeed in modern, globalised economies based on knowledge and innovation’ (OECD 2018). What they have in mind with the words ‘succeed in modern globalized economies’ is more likely to be ‘being winners’ than ‘being committed to global justice’. Nevertheless, it shows that there might be some kind of overlapping (yet not full) consensus on the importance of critical thinking. For example, there also seems to be a demand for critical skills from the point of view of employers (Pithers and Soden 2000; Nussbaum 2010, 52–53). Although they might have different purposes in mind than educational theorists promoting critical thinking¹⁸, the fact that critical thinking enables many things – problem-solving, innovation, information-processing, emancipation – adds to the political plausibility of pursuing this educational aim.

Yet, what would be the cosmopolitan effects of critical thinking? Obviously, there is no guarantee that children trained to it will adopt cosmopolitan norms. Yet critical thinking, with its impetus to question prevailing social norms and its awareness of the risks of bias, makes it much more likely to lead one to question one’s country’s immigration policies, one’s economic privileges compared to those of others in poor countries, and the insignificant impact of desert on the worldwide distribution of advantages. Only someone who develops an ability for critical thinking will come to question what first appears as obvious – that we should be proud of our nation, that we have the right to protect our borders, that we are not responsible for the world’s misery, and so on. Critical thinking brings in questions such as: What if I was born elsewhere? How come I have the same beliefs as my parents? Why should the death of an unknown person be more tragic when she is a compatriot? Most of our prejudices that run counter to cosmopolitan values are unreflectively reproduced by custom. For centuries, we have been educated to love our group – and then our imagined community. Yet when we start thinking about it, the evidence loses weight. There may be *reasons* to be patriotic (Van Parijs 1993), or to recognize some obligations to our fellow countrymen (Goodin 1988), but what does not hold as a reason is the mere accident of being born in *this* country. This is how critical thinking – combined with decentration – makes cosmopolitan identification much more plausible: by helping us recognize ‘the factors that make for bias, prejudice, and self-deception’ (Lipman 2003, 26). Hence, from this viewpoint, the more education will move from the transmission of a tradition to the dialogic exercise of reason, the more pupils and students will tend to universalize their perspective (Stojanov 2016), and the more likely they will be to adopt a cosmopolitan ethos.

Moving from tradition to rationality, however, is not a road without pitfalls. Challenges to the traditional sources of authority may also make it more difficult for young people to discern the truth or identify reliable sources of information. In the process of developing critical thinking, many people first adopt more critical attitudes towards traditional sources

of authority than towards publically available views that confirm their biases, such as may be offered in fake news. Hence, they become more vulnerable to conspiracy theories, for example. And some of these theories have important nationalist implications. For example, about 48% of French people seem to believe in a plot organized by elites to replace native populations through immigration (Reichstadt 2018, 13). In this case, some form of critical thinking is directed towards the elite, but much less towards the conspiracy theory itself. However, in the long run, education seems to foster a more balanced use of critical thinking. Several studies have thus shown that ‘high education levels predict a decreased likelihood that people believe in conspiracy theories’ (Van Prooijen 2017, 50). This is another example of how education can help people resist simplistic explanations of social reality, with interesting cosmopolitan spillover effects in this case. Yet ‘higher education levels’ refers not only to a higher critical competence; but also to wider knowledge.

2.3. *Understanding of social facts*

Questioning oneself is an essential feature of a good critical civic education. However, in order to build answers to our questions, or to discriminate between plausible and implausible theories, we also need positive knowledge. Critical thinking and decentration must therefore be articulated with an appropriate understanding of social facts, which social sciences are supposed to foster. A person can be very decentered and yet promote massively unjust policies just because she misunderstands social reality. The best example is desert. If you believe that desert is the most important determining factor in one’s wage, for example, you may altruistically be hostile to wage taxation, because you believe that it deprives people of what they deserve. In addition to this, holding people responsible for their distress is the best way to counter spontaneous empathic feelings (Hoffman 2000). But once you realize, for example, that your country of origin accounts for about two thirds of your income (Milanovic 2016), and inheritances from past generations for about 90% of it (Simon 2001), you might come to change your mind. If you receive a minimally good education in economics, you will be able to understand that one’s wage is merely the result of scarcity and demand for one’s professional skills on a given labor market, which is largely independent of effort or desert¹⁹. You might already have come to doubt the impact of effort through exercises of decentration and critical thinking. But until you master some fundamentals of sociology and economics, you might remain insufficiently intellectually equipped to revise your views. As already highlighted years ago by McPeck (1981), critical thinking cannot be exercised in the void. You can start thinking critically about something when you have acquired some knowledge and skills in the relevant field. To come back to the previous example, you can only develop a genuinely critical appreciation of economic facts if you have some knowledge of economics and some mathematical and philosophical skills required by it.

Teaching social sciences and their epistemology would therefore be an essential component of a good national critical civic education, as it would lay the ground for an accurate and critical understanding of social reality – being able to ‘read the world’ as Freire (1985) would say. This is likely to have interesting spillover effects if you consider that many people lack a good understanding of the extent of domestic inequalities (Forsé and Parodi 2007; Norton and Arieli 2011) and the sources of these inequalities (Piketty 1995; Barry 2005). If it is the case at the domestic level, we can expect a similar ignorance

(if not worse) at the global level. What is more, many people seem to overestimate the share of national budgets going to foreign aid and to underestimate the positive economic impact of migrations (Van Heerde and Hudson 2010; Brennan 2016, 26, 192). Hence, a better appreciation of some findings of social sciences such as sociology, economics and social psychology is likely to contribute to the development of a more cosmopolitan ethos. As Nussbaum (2010, 81) puts it, '[k]nowledge is no guarantee of good behavior, but ignorance is a virtual guarantee of bad behavior'. Think about the biased perception of Islam by people who only hear about it in the context of terrorist attacks. The natural emotional response is to (unconsciously) associate Islam with violence. Learning that most victims of Islamist violence in the world are Muslims (M. E. Hayden 2017) might already change one's perspective on the issue. Learning about the violence contained in the Old Testament (see Pinker 2011, 6–12) or the bloody past of the Catholic Church also helps for appreciating the issue differently – maybe fundamentalism is more a matter of how one relates to one's beliefs than something intrinsic to such or another religion.

Of course, being exposed to information, to facts, is not sufficient for people to revise their prejudices and to change their view. We tend to only take on board the information that confirms our initial views so as to reduce cognitive dissonance or protect our firmly held beliefs (Nickerson 1998; Taber and Lodge 2006). Hence, depending on our ideological preconceptions, information is processed very differently. For example, confronted with facts about the increase of inequality in the US, liberals tend to take the information on board, but the proportion of conservatives believing in an increase of inequality *diminishes* (Bartels 2008, 155–158). People thus tend to distrust a piece of information when it goes against their convictions – in particular when the information is delivered from 'above'. This is why, from a pedagogical viewpoint, social facts should preferably not be *taught* as truths delivered by the teacher, but *discovered* by pupils and students in a process of collective inquiry. There is thus a need to provide them with the critical skills and willingness to look for information and identify reliable sources. The so-called 'confirmation bias' is a formidable challenge to this aspect of education, but the earlier we start this education, the less vulnerable we are to this problem. Pupils should learn to doubt and search for truth before they form their political views. Afterwards, it becomes much more difficult.

How achievable are these aims? Many people will probably be afraid of partizan teachers in these 'politically sensitive' areas, but the case for social sciences remains quite easy to make publicly. Few people would deny the importance of providing future citizens with the intellectual keys to apprehend the complexity of the world they live in. For example, egalitarian (Nussbaum 2010) and libertarian (Brennan 2016) thinkers agree on this point²⁰. Political parties from the left and right might want to put the emphasis on different social sciences (sociology on the one hand, economics on the other), but they could agree on the general intention to make more room for social sciences in the mandatory curriculum.

2.4. Empathy and social mix

So far, I have focused on the *rational* dimension of civic education. Yet reason is not all. One of the main drivers of decentration, besides reflective reasoning, is empathy²¹, or

the capacity to experience symmetrical (not identical) emotions with others (Chavel 2011). Empathizing with people's distress, suffering or feeling of injustice helps us sympathizing with them and taking their interests and aspirations into account. For this reason, empathy should also be an educational aim of a good civic education. Although it cannot really be taught²², it can be cultivated through exposure to images, stories or testimonies. As brought to attention by Martha Nussbaum, arts and literature have an important educational role to play in this respect (Nussbaum 2010). And it can also be stimulated with exercises encouraging imagining other people's feelings, and highlighting the effects of one's actions on other people's feelings (Hoffman 2000).

However, empathy is morally ambiguous²³. It does not necessarily lead to moral behaviors. A first reason is that it can be used strategically: one may want to understand a person's feelings for the purpose of hurting that person (Chavel 2011, 117–119). A second, more important reason is that it can engender the rejection from our sphere of concern of the people we do not emotionally identify with. We tend to develop empathy towards people with whom we feel somehow connected, introducing a 'familiarity bias' (Hoffman 2000, ch. 8). But if we develop hostile prejudices towards a group, we are unlikely to experience positive moral emotions towards members of this group. To the contrary, people are capable of having at the same time very empathic feelings towards members of groups they identify with, and a dehumanizing attitude towards others (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010, 1039).

Two conclusions can be drawn from this qualified assessment of empathy as a moral emotion. First, empathy is not enough. It is the virtue of moral *reasoning* and decentration to make us widen the circle of our moral community and include in it people towards whom we do not experience (strong) empathic feelings (Singer 1981; Hoffman 2000; Pinker 2011, 590–591). Second, because empathy can nonetheless be a morally positive emotion, a driver of decentration, we should try to create conditions under which citizens or pupils can come to develop empathic feelings towards groups they would not spontaneously identify with. One way to do this is to highlight cross-cultural commonalities, or the fact that all humans share some basic emotions and aspirations (Hoffman 2000, 293–296).

In the latter perspective, fruitful encounters with alterity may be even more effective. When you are surrounded in your daily social interactions by relatively 'similar' people – same ethnic group or social class – decentration is less spontaneous and empathy limited. It is now well-known that homogeneous groups are more likely to be affected by biases and even polarization (Sunstein 2002) or increasing differentiation from outgroups (Yzerbyt and Demoulin 2010).

Nevertheless, occasional encounters with members of outgroups are not sufficient to remedy these pathologies. If the context of interaction does not foster genuine encounter and mutual understanding, the actors are likely to develop or reinforce stereotypes about other groups. One illustration of this dynamic can be found in the observation of the most xenophobic geographic areas. In France, for example, the xenophobic party Front National seems to have the most chances of success not in areas where there is a high concentration of immigrants, but in areas *adjoining* high concentrations of immigrants (Perrineau 1997). The logic seems to be the fear of those we do not know but whom we frequently see, whereas we would be likely to overcome that fear were we to *interact* with them in a normal way or to get to know them.

The contact hypothesis – the hypothesis that encounters reduce prejudice – has been the object of an enormous amount of research in social psychology. Some indications that emerge are that contact is positive only under particular conditions and that although it can help majority groups overcoming their prejudices, it can also reduce minority groups' willingness to undertake legitimate protest (Hewstone and Swart 2011). Besides, although contact can reduce prejudice, we should also be aware of the fact that prejudice reduces the chances of contacts (Binder et al. 2009).

In light of these observations, it seems reasonable to argue that an educational program aiming at decentration should go hand in hand with policies favoring *social mix*, i.e. schools and classrooms welcoming a diversity of social and ethnic origins. The particularity of school encounters is their long-lasting character. Brought together for several years, young people are likely to interact mostly in a positive way. Although there would still be risks of ethnic segregation within schools, the chance of overcoming mutual prejudices would certainly be higher than under the current situation in many rich countries involving all-white and all-black, or all-native and all-immigrant schools. And by reducing the risks of xenophobic feelings, social mix policies might indirectly contribute to the promotion of cosmopolitanism, changing attitudes towards immigrants and foreign countries.

One does not need to be a strong cosmopolitan to see the benefits of social mix. Even in a statist perspective, it is likely to improve mutual understanding among fellow citizens, which is appreciated by almost any ethical standpoint. Nevertheless, the struggle for social mix in general and mixed schools in particular is politically costly²⁴. The reason is that it necessarily entails formal constraints on formal freedom, and in particular the parental freedom to choose one's children's school²⁵, which spontaneously generates heterogeneous schools (Brighouse 2000).

Hence, the issue is the following. Social mix would likely have desirable cosmopolitan spillover effects, as it would help developing empathic feelings between different ethnic groups, while reducing prejudices and stereotypes. But as just highlighted, it could also be more difficult to achieve politically than an education to decentration or critical thinking. Nonetheless, although exercising decentration and critical thinking in (relatively) homogeneous schools is certainly less effective than in a context of generalized social mix, as an important risk of bias remains, these educational aims can nonetheless contribute to a better domestic society, which could in turn become more open to social mix. Hence, social mix will probably not be the first step towards more cosmopolitan societies, but it might be a future decisive step on this long road.

In sum, although not all components of a good critical civic education are equally politically achievable, some of them are and can reasonably be expected to contribute to the widespread development of a cosmopolitan ethos. A genuine, direct cosmopolitan education (Nussbaum 2002; Culp 2018²⁶) would most probably do better, but the assumption is that it would have less chances of political success under current circumstances than the more indirect path presented here. Thus, although indirect cosmopolitan education will not be sufficient for global justice, it might pave the way towards a more just world.

3. A tension with civic integration?

A capacity for decentration and empathy, a disposition to critical thinking, a minimal understanding of social reality and social mix are thus some educational targets likely

to have cosmopolitan spillover effects. If these aims were endorsed at the level of domestic civic education, which is already the case for some of them in some countries²⁷, it would make the development of a cosmopolitan ethos much more likely. Nevertheless, one should be aware of the risk that other components of domestic civic education could have counteracting effects. If, for example, civic education is understood as aiming at national integration in addition to these other aims, this might jeopardize the cosmopolitan effects highlighted above.

Strengthening the bonds of the political community is a perfectly legitimate aim of any civic education program. A good citizen must have some sense of community, some feelings of obligation towards his/her fellow citizens. Otherwise, people would not bother to vote, would be reluctant to pay their taxes, and we would not have an active civil society playing its roles of initiative and counter-power. The problem with community building is that, historically, it is national identity that has performed this integrating function (Habermas 1995). And national identity is one of these group identifications that may hinder the process of decentration²⁸. Not only does it increase the risk of ethnocentrism, but it also favors the development of prejudices and stereotypes towards foreigners.

The important question, then, is the following: is (strong) national identification necessary for civic integration? This question has been studied by many authors and I do not have the pretension to add something new to this debate. I would just like to make some brief remarks, capitalizing on some of the existing literature on the topic.

The first thing to say is that fostering civic integration may have been an easier task when it went with the promotion of a national identity through symbols like a flag, an anthem, an heroic national story and national heroes. Emotions seem to be the primary driver of morality or prosocial behaviors (Haidt and Kesebir 2010). Hence, it is easier to make people act in a socially desirable way through emotional stimuli. This probably accounts for the historical success of national states, as Ernest Renan already anticipated in the late 19th century (see Abizadeh 2004, 292–293).

It should nevertheless be noted that this integration through national ties is not necessarily the most promising path to follow under contemporary conditions of ethnic heterogeneization. Most affluent societies are becoming increasingly diverse as a result of immigration. In such conditions, where citizenship tends to differentiate itself more and more from national identity (Habermas 1995), firm national identities can become an obstacle to social and civic integration. Even from a statist perspective, one must recognize the importance of integrating newcomers in the host society. Where national identification leads to the rejection or even hinders the full integration of non-natives, one must admit that civic integration fails.

There are three possible ways out of this. One would be to build the sense of community on grounds other than nationalism. What I have in mind here is what has been called in the German context ‘constitutional patriotism’, i.e. a patriotism based on political principles rather than symbols or a national story (Habermas 1995; Müller 2007). One point to make in favor of this form of patriotism is that heroic national stories are deeply self-deceptive. In the European context, in particular, but also in the US, one cannot morally ignore the injustices of the past (Ferry 1991, 216–222) – and in particular the injustices made to some of the home countries of contemporary immigrants. What is more, the voluntarist transmission and preservation of national myths is incompatible with liberal-democratic commitments to public justification and contestation (Abizadeh 2004). It thus seems

that an appropriate civic education would take distance from national glorification and open the national history to critical scrutiny. This can even be defended from a statist (yet not a nationalist) perspective, as it contributes to the intelligence of citizens and to the integration of legal immigrants.

Others, however, will defend identity policies to integrate newcomers to the national community. They will argue, as has former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, that the lack of social and civic integration comes from a lack of identity ties. Whatever the empirical validity of this claim, its normative implications should be questioned. In light of nationalism's historical record of wars and violence – including symbolic violence towards minority identities – there are good reasons to have more sympathy for the constitutional patriotism project. The latter certainly raises a number of issues, among which lies the *difficulty* of creating strong ties around political principles²⁹. Hence, pragmatic worries are likely to arise. But the normative superiority of the latter model is hard to question. Liberal nationalism is an attempt to overcome the normative problems of nationalism while maintaining its 'motivational efficacy' (Banting and Kymlicka 2017, 19). If it needs to rely on historical myths or if it fails to fully include minority cultures, the normative problems remain. But if some form of open, multicultural, critical and solidaristic nationalism is possible (which is an open issue), it could be a normatively and politically attractive alternative to constitutional patriotism.

Others yet will acknowledge the tension between national identity and integration of newcomers, but conclude that heterogeneization – not national identity – is the problem³⁰. They would thus recommend closing borders completely in order to preserve national identities. This anti-immigration stance is garnering more and more support in rich countries and I do not mean to minimize the obstacle it represents for a cosmopolitan agenda. Actually, most arguments presented in this paper are unlikely to convince xenophobic citizens. The strategy is rather to defend educational aims acceptable by those from left and right who, without being strong cosmopolitans, agree that some degree of immigration is unavoidable (or even economically required) and that it is important to integrate the newcomers and create social cohesion.

To come back to the worry with which I opened this section, the risk of partial jeopardy of cosmopolitanism-friendly educational aims by nationalist educational policies must be recognized. Many conservative governments have taken measures to change history courses' programs and make them more 'national identity promoting' (see for example Crawford 1995; Osborne 2003). In these conditions, national civic education is likely to have negative effects, judged from a cosmopolitan viewpoint. Nevertheless, this does not mean that it would *entirely* jeopardize the other civilizing effects of civic education. If pupils develop critical intellectual tools, they become more likely to question the national heroic narrative even if the history course does not by itself encourage them to do so³¹. Public education will likely remain one of the main drivers of global justice, but this effect will admittedly vary depending on its degree of nationalism.

4. Conclusion

Most of us who are moved by a cosmopolitan ethos have received (to different degrees) a nationally-biased education. Yet, over the course of our intellectual development, thanks to parental education sometimes, life experiences, but also public education, we have

come to acquire and develop our capacity for empathy and decentration, a disposition to critical thinking and a better understanding of social reality. In the course of our lives, we have also been exposed to diversity and alterity, which brought the decentration process some steps further. This illustrates two things. First, public education is just a part of a larger educational process people go through during their life. All our social interactions and experiences, as well as our artistic experiences carry the potential of contributing to our civic and moral education in general and to our attitudes towards foreigners in particular. Second, as I have tried to argue in the first part of this paper, even a non-cosmopolitan public education can contribute to the development of a cosmopolitan ethos, when it succeeds in fostering wide empathy, decentration, critical thinking and a better understanding of social reality. This could explain the fact that the young and the well-educated are already generally more inclined towards cosmopolitanism than older and less-educated groups (Norris and Inglehart 2009, 178–179; Hjerm 2001), although much more could certainly be done to promote these four educational aims.

What is more, as I argued in the second part, *national* integration is not necessary for *civic* integration. And neither is it desirable (under most forms). Therefore, a good civic education need not introduce a strong nationalist bias. Hence, there is no vicious circle we are stuck in. Widespread cosmopolitanism is not a precondition for a global-justice-promoting education. Even though national identification and national priority are still considered fully legitimate by many or most people, contemporary educational systems carry the potential for change and can be made more favorable to change through some achievable reforms. These reforms will certainly face resistance from the most conservative or xenophobic parts of the population. Nobody said that the struggle for global justice would be easy. But if cosmopolitans have reason on their side, as most of them probably believe, this is a formidable advantage, in the long run, as quality education generally sides with reason.

Notes

1. The left faces such pressures because they incur the risk of losing part of the working class (their historical constituency) seduced by welfare chauvinism. (Alonso and da Fonseca 2011).
2. I understand global justice as a situation in which people's opportunities for well-being or access to advantage do not depend on their country of birth. Yet the rationale of this paper applies more generally to all the views of global justice that imply global redistributive obligations.
3. See Scheffler (1999) for a partly similar distinction (between 'extreme' and 'moderate' cosmopolitanism). However, the distinction I draw is not aligned with the one used by M. J. Hayden (2017), where 'strong' cosmopolitanism is described as 'rigid' and 'dogmatic'.
4. More precisely, 'all parts of the world except the Middle East and North Africa show an increase in human rights', 'there is a general trend towards discussing global citizenship in curricula around the world, including countries of the Middle East and North Africa', and discussing diversity has overall increased, although less than human rights and in various degrees (Bromley 2009, 37).
5. Mikael Hjerm (2001) has observed that nationalist feelings and xenophobia tend to decrease with education in ten countries with reasonably diverse educational systems and citizenship policies: Australia, Canada, Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, the Czech Republic and Hungary.
6. For an idea of this resistance among intellectuals, see the essays collected in Nussbaum (2002), for example.

7. There are nonetheless strong variations between countries. In the US, for example, the number climbs to 78.8%, but is only 55.7% in Sweden.
8. 12.3% in total (average of all countries); 6.6% USA; 17.7% Sweden (World Value Survey 2005–2009).
9. Educational reforms which seem already more plausible, in comparison, are: stressing the importance of supranational institutions or opening history courses to world dynamics. These would already be a welcome move away from nation-centered education, but not yet a post-national or genuinely cosmopolitan education.
10. This is what distinguishes indirect cosmopolitan education from a process-based cosmopolitan education (M. J. Hayden 2017) that tries to promote cosmopolitanism through the cultivation of favorable dispositions. In both cases, favorable dispositions are likely to lead to a cosmopolitan ethos, but in the former case, it is somehow involuntary.
11. Note however that moral impartiality needs not be incompatible with personal ties either, for a division of the caring responsibilities can be impartially justified. (See Singer 1981, 118; Barry 1995).
12. See McFarland and Brown (2008) for evidences of a widely shared intuition that caring for all humanity is ethically better than caring for a subset.
13. The problem is that voting is secret, one might say. This is a good point, but a policy that is not resisted in public debates already has better chances to pass. Some parties will be reluctant to include it into their electoral program, because they know that their constituents secretly reject it, but it will still be hard for them to oppose this idea publicly if it is promoted by the opposition.
14. To be more accurate, egocentrism is not exactly the starting point, as babies have to discover their proper individuality first, but we then all go through an early stage of deep egocentrism (Hoffman 2000, 6).
15. In many aspects, developmental psychology has now moved away from Piaget's theses (see Gopnik 1996), but this basic process of decentration does not seem to be questioned.
16. Even if it were natural, we might of course have good reasons to oppose this process, as we oppose spontaneous egocentrism, but the fact that it is socially constructed makes it even more contingent and probably easier to alter.
17. Although Lipman speaks about 'reflective' thinking.
18. On the diversity of understandings of critical thinking, (see McPeck 1981; Mulnix 2012).
19. Many people seem to endorse amalgamating effort, performance and desert as a unified principle of distributive justice (Miller 1992). Whether or not this is an appropriate principle of justice is another debate. Understanding that market rewards are largely independent from effort is a first important critical step.
20. Nussbaum, however, has a broader view of how the humanities in general, including arts and literature can contribute to democratic and cosmopolitan education.
21. As Martin Hoffman puts it, 'empathy is the spark of human concern with others, the glue that makes social life possible' (2000, 3).
22. A course specifically dedicated to empathy nonetheless exists in the Danish public education system (Alexander 2016).
23. Lobb (2017) suggests that it is also politically ambiguous, as some forms of (insufficiently critical) empathy are promoted by promoters of the neoliberal order. Here, the argument to couple empathy with decentration and critical thinking and to extend its scope has a clear critical intent.
24. And one should note that it is not always effective either. For example, countries where 'school maps' have been implemented in order to constrain parental choices have not always managed to achieve social mix, either because the housing market adjusts to the map, or because parents find ways to circumvent the law (e.g. by sending their kids to private schools or choosing elitist options such as Latin). Hence there can be social mix in the school, but segregation between classrooms. I thank Danielle Zwarthoed for pressing these points.

25. Yet one could easily argue that constraining this formal freedom is justified by the aim of equalizing real freedom, i.e. the effective freedom to pursue your ends – the material and social means of this freedom being secured. On the distinction between these two kinds of freedom, (see Van Parijs 1995).
26. Culp (2018) nonetheless blames Nussbaum's approach for having a 'statist bias' because it does not require the extension of democracy across borders. His defense of an 'international democratic ethos' appears as more demanding than Nussbaum's sufficientarian cosmopolitan education. It is also more demanding than what would be achieved through the indirect way presented here, as an international democratic ethos would require notably more sympathy vis-à-vis distant foreigners, more knowledge of international affairs, and probably the spread of a global language.
27. I lack the knowledge to offer a full picture here, but to take francophone Belgium as an example, the capacity for decentration is one of the competencies targeted by the new Philosophy and Citizenship course introduced during the academic year 2016–2017; critical thinking is at stake in several of these competencies; and the debate surrounding social mix is politically alive, although policies aiming at diversifying schools face a strong resistance. I have no doubt that the same evolutions and debates could be observed in most advanced democracies.
28. This, however, should be somewhat qualified. Some forms of national identity seem more open, more compatible with cosmopolitan commitments than others. See for example Kymlicka and Walker (2012) about Canadian identity.
29. See Joppke (2004), who argues that constitutional principles are 'nationally anonymous', and hence cannot explain attachment to one specific country.
30. I thank the reviewer who pointed this out.
31. One source of hope, for cosmopolitans, is Ernest Renan's contention that the progress in historical studies is often a danger to nationality (see Abizadeh 2004, 292).

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