Agamben's Theory of Biopower and Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers

Discourses of Citizenship and the Implications For Curriculum Theorizing

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I N RECENT YEARS, questions of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers have preoccupied public and educational discourses in the national and international agendas of many western states. In light of imposing harsher laws against immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (e.g., in Europe, the US and Australia), these groups are increasingly finding themselves in detention centers with their rights being violated (Tyler, 2006), while the politics of fear is becoming a major 'technology' of their dehumanization (Ahmed, 2004). These developments have important implications for curriculum theorizing and pedagogical practice, because the violation of human rights and the politics of fear provide an influential political and affective orientation for an educational system in a society (Zembylas, 2007, 2008). Contemporary school curricula, especially in citizenship education, are caught up between reproducing and critically responding to these developments.

What has caused my attention in these recent developments is an *ambivalence* in both public and educational discourses on immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers: On the one hand, these groups are increasingly defined through the fear of the Other and they are presented to be a threat to national belonging and security (Buonfino, 2004); on the other hand, liberal and humanitarian discourses of citizenship portray immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as invariably *human beings* in need to be cared for (Papastergiadis, 2006). While the contemporary *hidden curriculum of fear* (Marshall, Sears, & Schubert., 1999) constitutes immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as the symbolic figures of *fearism*—that is, "the systematic (often unconscious) production and perpetuation of fear on others" (Fisher, 2006, p. 51)—citizenship education curricula grounded in liberal and humanitarian discourses attempt to generate forms of recognition that work against identification of these groups as fearsome. But how is fearism interrelated with liberal and humanitarian discourses of citizenship, and what are the implications for curriculum theorizing?

In this essay I will attempt to map this intersection through Giorgo Agamben's work on biopolitics. Drawing on Agamben's analysis of biopower (that builds on Foucault's previous writings), this essay draws upon elements of Agamben's theory to highlight how liberal and humanitarian ideas to garner recognition on behalf of others risk perpetuating the logic of *abandonment*, which Agamben articulates in his theorization of *bare life* and the *camp*. Agamben's theory of biopower invokes a scrutinization of liberal and humanitarian perspectives in relation to issues of belonging, subjectivity, and inclusion/exclusion in citizenship education curricula. It is my contention, then, that by engaging with Agamben's work, this article produces a critique of the liberal/humanitarian appropriation of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

Furthermore, this article highlights an urgent need for a new conceptual framework to clarify the curricular implications of the intersection between fearism and liberal/humanitarian discourses on immigration, refugeedom and asylum seeking; identifying and critiquing this intersection helps to expose the complex impact of the politics of fear on the conceptualization of citizenship education curricula grounded in liberalism and humanitarianism (see also Zembylas, 2009). Agamben's analysis is not without limitations, of course, especially in that it overlooks the complex micro-forms of resistance within and across different states (Papastergiadis, 2006). Therefore, I argue that in order to explore the aforementioned intersection and its implications for curriculum theorizing, we (i.e., educators, researchers, curriculum theorists) need to understand how immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers are produced as fearsome figures across multiple cultural sites (Tyler, 2006) and critique curricular discourses that are grounded in liberal/humanitarian claims of what it means to be a legitimate subject.

This essay comprises three parts. In the first part, I outline how the public imaginary is being shaped by the fear of the Other and how citizenship education curricula often respond with liberal and humanitarian arguments. Then I turn to Agamben's work on biopower and provide an overview (not a comprehensive review) of his main ideas on biopolitics. In the final part of the article, I engage in a critique of liberal and humanitarian arguments, utilizing Agamben's theory of biopower (yet without evading a critique of his writings) and arguing that a different conceptual framework of citizenship education curricula is needed—one that recognizes the impact of fearism but moves beyond liberal and humanitarian discourses and provides opportunities for meaningful resistance to both fear and the disavowal of others.

Fearism and the Liberal/Humanitarian Response in Citizenship Education

All over the western world, there is an increasing armory of technologies of control and exclusion that are mobilized against immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Nyers, 2003) such as detention facilities and prevention of access to work, education, health care and housing (Tyler, 2006). A new kind of global imaginary is being shaped by the fear of the Other or what Fisher (2006) has termed *fearism*, that is, "a process and discourse hegemony [which] creates an experience of fear that is normalized…keeping the cultural matrix of 'fear' operative and relatively invisible" (2006, p. 51). The concept of fearism shows how popular culture and the media have been the key elements in promoting the contemporary fear culture (Altheide, 2002; Furedi, 2006) and popularizing the hostile attitudes toward immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The *politics of fear* (Ahmed, 2004) acknowledges the important role of power relations and cultural scripts (Garland, 2001) in the process of figuring immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as *fearsome*; these groups are fearsome because they are constructed as a danger to *our*

(e.g., our national group) very existence. Fear of the Other is produced, circulated and capitalized on to achieve political and economic purposes (Robin, 2004).

However, in this discourse fear is not reduced to a personal emotion, nor confined to a political sentiment that is manipulated by politicians (Papastergiadis, 2006). Rather, fear comes from individuals and is then directed toward others and thus fear becomes a dominant relational mode that aligns bodies to a particular sense of belonging (Ahmed, 2004). Therefore, fear produces fearful subjects in relation to fearsome others and secures the very boundaries between *us* and *them* (Zembylas, 2009). Fear creates boundaries between "what I am" and "that which I am not," through the very affect of *turning away* from an object that threatens "that which I am." Fear works by enabling some bodies to inhabit and move in public space and by restricting the movement of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed, such as when nation–states create policies to prevent 'illegal' immigrants, 'un–qualified' refugees or 'bogus' asylum seekers to enter the state.[1] It is the flow of fear among 'legal' citizens that establishes these boundaries between 'us' and 'them'—the fear that illegal immigrants, unqualified refugees and bogus asylum seekers, for example, threaten the well–being of a state or the character of a nation.

Public discourses and news media against immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers play a crucial role in circulating the idea that these groups pose a threat to the well–being and security of a state. Once the Other is constituted as a threat to 'our' sense of national belonging, then 'we' learn to desire and demand 'their' exclusion from the sphere of human values, civic rights and moral obligations (Papastergiadis, 2006; Tyler, 2006). It is this process that we need to interrogate, as Agamben urges us. He writes: "It would be more honest and, above all, more useful to carefully investigate…[the] deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights…that no act committed against them could appear any longer a crime" (1998, p. 171). But how do liberal and humanitarian discourses of citizenship education respond to such obvious cases of misrecognition and violation of human rights?

In their recent critical review of contemporary discourses of citizenship, Knight Abowitz and Harnish (2006) conclude that liberal citizenship discourses are with civic republicanism the two dominant discourses in K–12 curricular and policy texts. In particular, liberal discourses prioritize individual rights and equality for exercising freedom. As Knight Abowitz and Harnish explain, freedom from the tyranny of authority and the deliberative values of discussion are viewed as the two primary values in this discourse. A significant focus of this discourse is also on learning the values and skills necessary to take part in a multicultural society. In multicultural societies in which immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers constitute an important component of culturally diverse public life, "schools perennially create and recreate citizens and the nation" (p. 664). An additional question, then, that may be raised at this point is: How do liberal discourses of citizenship treat the representations of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as fearsome individuals?

One of the central strategies employed by liberal discourses of citizenship to respond to fearism is to generate forms of recognition for immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers that work against their identification as hate figures (Tyler, 2006). Thus, there is a coupling of humanitarian and liberal values; that is, humanitarian discourses ask the public and schools to see immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers as individuals with humanity, assuring 'us' (the hosts) that 'they' are just like 'us.' The strategy of *re-humanization* of the Other is a pervasive one, seen especially in key professional literature of the social studies, conflict resolution, and peace education and in the literature of non profit and humanitarian organizations (Zembylas, 2008). In this discourse, normative values relating to respect, empathy and tolerance ask 'humanitarian' subjects (e.g.,

teachers, students, the public in general) to place themselves in the position of others (i.e., immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers) and recognize them as human beings, in ways that counter their dehumanizing portrayals in public and the media (see Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Tyler, 2006).

It is usually assumed that liberal/humanitarian argumentation against the misrecognition of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers is a productive way of making dehumanization more difficult (Tyler, 2006). However, a central concern of this article is whether the liberal/humanitarian response to fearism becomes in any way complicit with the structures that legitimate the exclusion of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers. Is it possible that liberal/humanitarian arguments help sustain the 'invisibility' of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers insofar as they perpetuate "the same categories of inclusion/exclusion, authentic/inauthentic, us/them, as xenophobic discourses" (Tyler, 2006, p. 196)? As noted earlier, immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers seem to be 'visible' to the public as objects of both fear and sympathy. Other aspects of this population, however, are made 'invisible'—for instance, granting that these individuals are not citizens, many of their rights (e.g., work, education) are violated. In this sense, then, their visibility as a symbol of fearism and invisibility as citizens depend on each other. This connection highlights two major challenges to liberal/humanitarian arguments.

First, the categories of 'immigrants', 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' are rarely contested in liberal and humanitarian discourses of citizenship education curricula, but rather they are taken for granted (Zembylas, 2008). Yet, these very concepts in their short life, as Tyler (2006) argues, have worked to erase entire populations from view through strategies of (mis)recognition. Seeking recognition (on behalf of the Other) is usually grounded on humanistic representations of 'the victims' (e.g., photographic close–ups of faces and first–person accounts). Although such appeals can be extremely effective in forming compassionate recognition, they are situated "within the language of the law which they nevertheless contest" (Tyler, 2006, p. 196). In other words, these appeals depend on the same categories of exclusion/inclusion, us/them as xenophobic discourses. Interestingly, therefore, these dichotomous categories overlap with those embedded in fearism and work together to reinforce both fear and sympathy toward immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers. It is for this reason that Agamben does not hesitate to take the position that a failure to question the foundations of social structures that tolerate such categorizations essentially "maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight" (1998, p. 133).

Second, liberal/humanitarian discourses of citizenship "are virtually impossible without recourse to identity politics" (Butler, 1992, p. 15) and the preservation of bounded membership within ethnic and citizenship boundaries (Balibar, 2003). Citizenship education that is grounded in perceptions of bounded membership is still the most prevalent way that citizenship is taught (Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). In particular, Soysal (1994) points out that the feeling of national belonging takes precedence to whatever precedence one happens to inhabit. Also, research on ethnic/citizenship identity, xenophobia, and stereotyping in schools highlights notions of belonging and bounded membership (Zembylas, 2009). For example, some European studies raise concerns about students' feelings of intolerance toward immigrants (Van Peer, 2006); analyses of civics education curricular intent have also shown that different priorities of European countries in relation to national and European citizenship goals create tensions about insiders and outsiders (Ortloff, 2006; Sutherland, 2002). In other words, the structures of modern sovereignty such as rights and citizenship are rarely challenged in any critical way in citizenship

education (Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006) and the consequences of their limits are not interrogated in terms of struggling for a new political community that is more inclusive. For example, the very idea of legality (attached to citizenship) must be opposed (Agamben, 1998) however, this opposition needs to be translated into material forms that increase the agency of marginalized individuals (Tyler, 2006). By emphasizing identities and differences (grounded in legal arguments) among social groups, the politics of identity/difference diverts resources from efforts to address the unjust material structures (Eisenberg, 2006) in which immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers find themselves and undermine the social solidarity upon which a *radical politics* (Agamben, 1998) can be formed. There is certainly some form of utopianism in the hint for unbounded notions of belonging and citizenship, pointing to a radicalized global village, which has no concrete basis in reality. However, 'undoing' the rights and privileges of 'western citizens' functions as a shift away from ideological concerns (e.g., citizenship rights) toward issues of unjust material structures and power imbalances. In the next part of the essay, I use Agamben's theory on biopower to interrogate the ways in which the figure of the immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker is appropriated by liberal/humanitarian arguments. This move will help to make more visible how the categories of exclusion/inclusion, us/them work together to reinforce fear and sympathy toward immigrants/ refugees/ asylum seekers.

Giorgio Agamben's Theory on Biopower

Biopower is understood in its broadest sense as power over life. In his *Homo Sacer* (1998, 2002, 2005) trilogy, Agamben offers a reformulation of Foucault's formation of biopower. Foucault (1990, 2003, 2007) used the term 'biopower' to designate the mechanisms through which disciplinary strategies (enforced by producing docile bodies within sites such as the prison, the school and the hospital) were replaced in modern times by a biopolitics whose power was the regulation of the life of populations. In defending society, the state acts preventively in order to protect the population's biological well–being, thus it must kill the Other: "If you want to live, the other must die" (Foucault, 2003, p. 255). In this way, killing is no longer perceived to be murder but it is justified in the name of security. The politics of security—"the dispositif of security" as Foucault (p. 242) calls biopower—establishes a binary categorization between 'us' and 'them', or between the 'normal' (e.g., legitimate citizens) and the 'abnormal' (e.g., illegal immigrants, un-qualified refugees or bogus asylum seekers). The former deserve to live, while the latter are expendable (based on racial and other kinds of profiling; see Foucault, 2003).

Agamben makes two crucial modifications of Foucault's position on biopower (Spinks, 2008). The first one is that he disputes Foucault's claim that biopolitics is a specifically modern phenomenon and argues that biopower signifies an ongoing theme in western thought from classical times onward. According to Agamben's (1998) analysis in *Homo Sacer*, the first move of classical western politics was the separation of the biological and the political, as seen in Aristotle's separation between life in the *polis* (i.e., *bios*, the political life) and *zoē* (i.e., biological life) or *bare life*, as Agamben calls it. As he writes: "The entry of *zoē* into the sphere of the polis—the politicization of bare life as such—constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought" (1998, p. 4). Whereas Foucault sees in biopower the major orientation of modern politics, Agamben postulates that this concept is the bare essence of politics as such (Mesnard, 2004). Thus, for Agamben, the concept of biopower means that, at the political level, what is at stake is

the life itself of the citizen, and not just his existence. Moving beyond the distinction between *polis* and *zoē*, political power, argues Mesnard, aims to control the deepest dimension of its subjects.

The second modification of Foucault's position is Agamben's suggestion that biopolitics is grounded in a "structure of the exception" (1998, p. 7). According to Agamben, the separation of *zoē* and *bios* is constituted by the simultaneous exclusion and inclusion of bare life. That is, the exclusion of biological life from political life is at the same time an inclusion, because *zoē* is there as that which is excluded: it is included by the very process of exclusion. As Agamben explains:

> The fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoē*/*bios*, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion. (1998, p. 8)

Agamben thus asserts that all power is by its nature biopower that is constituted by its ability to suspend itself in a state of exception and determine who lives and who dies. For Agamben (2002), Auschwitz represented the classic example of this process, in which human bodies had been declared merely to be biological, hence allowing their erasure without any consequences for the perpetrators. "Insofar as its inhabitants were stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life, the camp was also the most absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized, in which power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation" (1998, p. 171).

It is precisely for this reason that for Agamben (1998), the failure to question the separation of humanitarian concerns from politics—and thus the treatment of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers as bare life, excluded from the political community and exposed to death at every turn—signals a "secret solidarity" between humanitarianism and the powers it should fight. The most obvious examples of this are the neutrality of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the non-political actions of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the refusal of these organizations to comment on the actions of political regimes; this distinction is also seen in the general populace of many nation-states in which great compassion is demonstrated by donating millions of dollars to fund humanitarian aid, while showing great hostility to those same suffering faces when they are more proximate strangers (Bretherton, 2006). The identification of the figure of the immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker as fearsome in political rhetoric and news media is therefore coupled with humanitarian liberal claims, indicating how immigrants/ refugees/asylum seekers function as 'inclusive exclusions' of bare life in the way that Agamben suggests. When *zoē* is included through an exclusion from political life, then bare life (naked life) is produced. Humanitarian liberal claims view immigrants/ refugees/asylum seekers simply as bodies, bare life separate from political life.

Agamben goes as far as claiming that, "Today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West" (1998, p. 181). Governments, for example, suspend essential civil liberties in times of social crisis and decide who can be excluded and who can be included. In this sense, the *logic* of the camp is transformed into a form of sociality and is generalized (p. 20; pp. 174–175); consequently, the camp signifies a state of exception that is normalized in the contemporary social space (p. 166). In the state of exception or what Agamben calls "a zone of irreducible indistinction" (1998, p. 9), "the originary relation of law to life is not

application but abandonment" (p. 29). "He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable" (p. 28, author's emphasis). Following Foucault, Agamben claims that the contemporary state is not based on citizens as free subjects, but on citizens as naked lives; that is, citizens on the threshold, never once and for all 'in' or 'out' (Ek, 2006). For Edkins and Pin-Fat (2005), Agamben's 'bare life' is essentially a life without power relations, that is, a relationship of violence, in the Foucauldian sense (see Foucault, 1983). This hidden incorporation of bare life into both the political realm and the structure of citizenship, according to Agamben, inscribes dangerous links among citizenship, nation and biological kinship (Ziarek, 2008); those links are 'legalized' in a modern sovereign state and citizenship education curricula (especially those grounded in liberal/humanitarian arguments) simply perpetuate this 'legality' (see Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006).

Agamben takes a step further in his investigation of sovereign state and political rights by going back to a figure of archaic Roman law, *homo sacer* (literally 'sacred man'), referring to an individual who can be killed (without consequences) but not sacrificed (in religious rituals). *Homo sacer*, then, is essentially someone beyond the protection of the law (with no political rights) or even worthy to be sacrificed. According to Agamben's account, *homo sacer* is an essential figure permeating western thought. His double exclusion—both from human law and divine law—is also a double inclusion: the exclusion of both the sacred and the profane (Edkins, 2003). For Agamben, *homo sacer* is not only a figure in the legal philosophy of ancient Rome, but is also a subject of recurrent materializations in history (Dean, 2004). It is through the state of exception as seen in mechanisms of colonization that Western states have become involved in the differentiation and categorization of people (Diken & Laustsen, 2005; Ek, 2006).

In other words, it is the nexus between the materialization of the state of exception (e.g., through inhumane detention centers and other migration and refugee camps throughout the world) and the fear for the figure of the immigrant/ refugee/asylum seeker that reveals the limitations in the framework of both state-centric perspectives and liberal humanitarian views (Papastergiades, 2006). A crucial notion in the understanding of the camp and the state of exception is uncovered here, according to Ek (2006): the connection between colonialism/racism and biopolitics. That is, one form of life (the immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker) is separated out in an act of colonialism/racism and imagined as an abject figure of fear and a threat to another form of life (the 'society'). As the logic of the camp becomes more generalized in society, the production of naked life is thus extended beyond the camp's walls; the camp replaces polis, as Agamben argues, and therefore the Aristotelian distinction between polis and naked life, collapses.

An Alternative Politics and Discourse of Citizenship Education

Agamben's analysis of biopower offers a valuable basis for developing an alternative response to the liberal/humanitarian discourses of citizenship, because Agamben traces and specifies explicitly the problematic in the priority given to national security and citizenship over moral obligation to the Other (Papastergiadis, 2006). Liberal and humanitarian discourses grounded in human rights or principles of justice remain blind to the biopolitical aspects analyzed in Agamben's work (Ek, 2006). The problem with liberal/humanitarian arguments is that they appropriate

the figure of the Other in ways that "elide the substantive differences between ways of being displaced from 'home" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 5). Differences are concealed by universalizing the condition of displacement and by placing all immigrants/ refugees/asylum seekers into a singular category, as if they all experience the same thing. Agamben's point—which takes him beyond a familiar critique of rejecting singularities—is to question the very notions of humanity, citizenship and the rule of law within the modern nation state which make possible the generalization of the logic of the camp. In this part of the article, I want to consider how Agamben's views can 'trouble' current understandings of citizenship education (Richardson & Blades, 2006) and expand the set of meanings around citizenship.

In their review of contemporary discourses of citizenship, Knight Abowitz and Harnish (2006) urge educators and curriculum theorists to build on the strong array of diverse critical discourses of citizenship (e.g., critical citizenships, transnationalism) because these discourses challenge traditional definitions of bounded membership and push "against traditional boundaries of agency, identity, and membership" (p. 680). Cosmopolitan (Nussbaum, 1997), transnational (Bauböck, 1994) and post-national (Soysal, 1994) views have challenged normative meanings of identity, membership, citizenship practice, and education. Although critical and transnational perspectives are certainly included in scholarly debates, point out Knight Abowitz and Harnish (2006), "the current formal, taught curriculum of citizenship produces a relatively narrow scope and set of meanings for what citizenship is and can be" (p. 657). The question is: How can Agamben's ideas enrich the current taught curriculum of citizenship?

For Agamben, to turn *only* to liberal/humanitarian (e.g., human rights) discourses in addressing the situation of others (i.e., immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers), without also attempting to think *beyond* such discourses, is to fail to recognize that "the fates of human rights and the nation-state are bound together such that the decline and crisis of one necessarily implies the end of the other" (1998, p. 134). Agamben seems to be suggesting that it is very important to understand the devastating consequences of bounded membership; critical citizenships can certainly align forces with Agamben's views on interrogating bounded membership.

Faced with increased migration after the Second World War, Europe and the United States in particular, have gradually created an increasingly complex system of civic stratifications and immigration procedures that is dependent on bounded membership and the immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker as a fearsome figure who threatens 'our' bounded membership (Tyler, 2006). The results are millions of stateless people inside the territorial states and inhumane citizenship and migration policies and practices (Ek, 2006). As it has already been noted, Agamben's analysis reveals all the shortcomings of the intersection between fearism and liberal/humanitarian discourses of citizenship that are still founded in territorial myths—myths that ignore the biopolitical matrix (Minca, 2006).

Agamben essentially asks us to see the current juridico-political frame as *ideology* with material implications; at the center of this ideological frame is the bourgeois nation–state, which bestows individuals with 'rights' and progressively incorporates them into a body (the nation). For instance, the expression "I love or hate them because they are like me, or not like me" (Ahmed, 2005, p. 108) indicates the ideological aspects that collective bodies entail. Hence in hating an *Other*, a subject also loves itself and those that are similar to itself. This attachment structures political life within a community and provides an affective orientation that characterizes the thinking of this community (or nation). As Kristeva (1993) argues, the nation is an effect of how bodies move toward it and create boundaries. The citizens become members of the body–nation, members to be managed, measured in certain ways, and contained (Minca, 2007).

Thus the definition of belonging to the nation "becomes the state's guiding political preoccupation. […] It is within this exclusive inclusion…that the very principle of citizenship and the idea(l) of belonging are born" (p. 88). When the nation–state begins to systematically isolate a bare life—endowed with citizenship 'rights' or not—then citizenship becomes definable only in terms of the camp, as Agamben asserts.

Critical and transnational discourses on citizenship can use Agamben's views to raise questions about identity, membership and citizenship—questions that are issues of public debate, yet in curricular texts such questions are marginalized (Knight Abowitz & Harnish, 2006). For example, immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers can be considered as 'limit concepts' (e.g., see Agamben, 1994) to radically call into question the fundamental categories of the nation–state, including rights and citizenship. Immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers are powerful figures that invite educators, curriculum theorists, students, and the whole community to confront the politics of what Agamben has described as 'inclusive exclusion.' This inclusive exclusion brings to mind Kristeva's (1982) view of the *abject*.

The abject for Kristeva is an object which is excluded but which still challenges "its master" (1982, p. 2). Although it is excluded, it is simultaneously included in that it continues to disturb borders (between 'us' and 'them') and norms. Thus the abject "does not stand opposed to the subject, at a distance, definable. The abject is other than the subject but is only just the other side of the border" (Young, 1990, p. 144). What is of interest here is an understanding of abjection as that which disturbs borders and norms such as rights and citizenships. The immigrant/ refugee/ asylum seeker becomes the abject Other, the *homo sacer* who has been left behind or been excluded from the territorial boundaries that confer the rights of citizenship (Papastergiadis, 2006).

Kristeva's notion of abject Other can help unfold the unconscious fears that have been directed toward the figure of the immigrant/refugee/asylum. This arrangement of unconscious and fear, argues Papastergiadis (2006), structures the multiple threads that interconnect fear with the 'stranger' other. The effect of seeing the Other as a stranger allows the nation to emerge and involves the dualities of 'us' and 'them'. A boundary is established to separate those who belong from those who do not belong to the nation. A critical feature of Kristeva's (1991) account is that she identifies the mechanisms deployed for resisting the incursion of foreign elements to the nation (Papastergiadis, 2006). Thus, these defense mechanisms toward the abject Other are ambivalent: they both exaggerate and trivialize the figure of the Other, while also asserting the right to exert violence. Once the Other is constructed as abject and fearsome, "they are excluded from the filed of human values, civic rights and moral obligations…[thus] maintaining the boundary that divides 'us' from 'them'" (Papastergiadis, 2006, p. 433). In the case of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers, their figures are constructed in such ways, as being so strange and dangerous to the nation that they could not be included without inflicting serious damage on everyone else. The violence against the Other, then, is seen as a justified response toward the threat posed by the state-less Other.

The aim of reconsidering the abject Other through Agamben's theory is that the figures of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers enable educators, curriculum theorists, students, and the whole community to *see* our *own* bare life and understand that these figures are at the heart of all individuals, that is, we are all immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers. This argument echoes Kristeva's (1993) notion that the stranger is 'me', as well as 'you', is already part of all of 'us' and 'them'; thus the nation does not require violence toward strangers, as strangers are part of the nation, rather than displaced or excluded from civic life. Kristeva, however, asks us to avoid

any simple opposition between a politics of nationalism and one that essentially abandons the very idea of the nation; opening the community up to others does not mean unconditional love (Ahmed, 2005).

On the other hand, Agamben (1994), romanticizing the figure of the immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker, asserts that it is only when the citizen learns to acknowledge the immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker he or she is, that an alternative political reality is possible. The idea that we are all immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers must be perceived with caution because some are already recognized as *others* (Ziarek, 2008). As Tyler (2006) argues, Agamben's work has something important to tell us, yet his utopian account does not say anything about what happens to the already politically excluded, i.e., the refugees and asylum seekers, who cannot even be recognized as such despite their best efforts. Undoubtedly, the idea that we are all immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers needs to be interrogated in efforts to bring Agamben's theoretical insights to pedagogical practice, otherwise this idea may fall into the same camp of the liberal discourse of 'sameness' albeit through a different entry point. It is thus important for students not simply to distribute strangeness to everyone (we are all strangers) but to recognize how strangeness is already unevenly distributed (Ahmed, 2005). This uneven distribution needs to be explored in schools in terms of who gets constructed as the abject figure of the immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker as an effect of relations of power that cannot be simply willed away by sympathy.

The evidence from the US and Europe shows that schools have been essentially caught both in the politics of fear and the appealing arguments of liberal/humanitarian discourses (Zembylas, 2009). Exploring the interrelation between fearism and liberal/humanitarian discourses of citizenship as well as the implications for curriculum theorizing becomes increasingly valuable for educators. Insights from Agamben's work show that the strategy of dehumanizing the Other is not just a moral scandal, but a process that is deeply involved in the colonization of biopolitics and our own *exclusive inclusion* (Papastergiadis, 2006). Agamben's analysis also enables educators and curriculum theorists to pay attention to the entanglement of the abject other and the fearful citizen in contemporary times. Although he provides no solutions and overlooks the micro-forms of resistance within and across different states (see Foucault, 1983, 1990), educators and curriculum theorists are alerted to consider how such resistances are killed in the making by reproducing bounded memberships.

Conclusion: Toward a Utopian Alternative?

This article has highlighted the curricular implications of the intersection between fearism and liberal/humanitarian discourses of citizenship in relation to the figures of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers. It has suggested that liberal/ humanitarian discourses of citizenship are complicit to the structures that produce and circulate fearism. Also, it has been argued that in order to explore the curricular implications of the intersection between fearism and liberal/humanitarian discourses of citizenship, it is necessary that we learn to recognize 'the camp'—as the symbolic (but often material) paradigm of the public and pedagogical field of modernity—and its complex transformations in various shapes and contents (Agamben, 1998). Calling attention to and exploring the various ways in which the logic of abandonment, bare life and the camp are manifest in public and educational discursive practices is an important task for curriculum theorists today.

Admittedly, the case of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers is difficult to approach within the current juridico–political frame because rights are interpreted primarily as citizen rights so those eligible for human rights are already excluded (see Arendt, 1951). The human rights of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers are in a zone where there is no structure that can ensure them (Papastergiadis, 2006). Unless there is a critique and rearticulation of the privileges of western citizens—in both public and pedagogical discourses of citizenship—including grappling with the legacies of colonization and racism—it will be difficult to dismantle the powerful link between fearism and the figure of immigrant/refugee/asylum seeker as an abject Other. Essentially, what Agamben's work urges us to address in both school–taught citizenship and public discourses on citizenship is: Why do western citizens think they have the rights and privileges they do, and how willing are they to undo their own privileges because these privileges are oppressive to others?

Agamben's thinking, of course, has not evaded criticism for a number of reasons (e.g., see Ek, 2006; Long, 2006; Neal, 2006; Ziarek, 2008). For example, Neal (2006) criticizes Agamben for being dualistic in his approach, especially in his theorization of *homo sacer*. Similarly, Long (2006) asserts that for Agamben someone is either *homo sacer* or potentially *homo sacer*; there is nothing in-between. A related critique by Ek (2006) is that Agamben romanticizes *homo sacer* exemplified in the refugee "as the figure of naked life *par excellence*" (p. 371). These theoretical limitations unavoidably pose limitations in understanding the mechanism of construction of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers as objects of fear and sympathy, because the romanticization of this population becomes a sentimental trope that strengthens existing stereotypes of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers. "This *Wizard of Oz* scenario," writes Tyler (2006, p. 197), "in which the curtain of illusion falls back to reveal the operations of power is incredibly simplistic, despite Agamben's theoretical complexity."

Furthermore, Ziarek (2008), writing from a feminist perspective, criticizes Agamben for not sufficiently addressing two crucial questions: "the problem of resistance and the negative differentiation of bare life with respect to racial and gender differences" (p. 89). The first problem, Ziarek (2008) explains, is that Agamben's work lacks a theory of emancipatory possibilities and thus his theory implies that there is no escape from it. For example, it is unclear how opposing the notion of legality per se—as it is embedded in sovereign nation–state citizenship boundaries—can translate into material forms of opposition to the exclusion of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers or will grant this population the possibility of agency (Tyler, 2006). What happens to the already politically excluded, those who know bare life and already live it, like those refugees or asylum seekers who despite liberal/humanitarian concerns cannot even be recognized as refugees or asylum seekers? As Agamben admits: "nothing in it [the 'body']…seems to allow us to find solid ground on which to oppose the demands of sovereign power" (1998, p. 187). Hence, Agamben's diagnosis of contemporary biopolitics is, as Rabinow and Rose (2006) suggest, monolithic, because he does not consider (as Foucault does) how biopower can be resisted other than to suggest that bare life is caught within a state of exception (Cadman, 2009). The second problem, continues Ziarek, is that Agamben ignores how "bare life is implicated in the gendered, sexist, colonial, and racist configurations of biopolitics" (2008, p. 93). "If we argue that bare life emerges as the aftereffect of the destruction of the symbolic differences of gender, ethnicity, race, or class," writes Ziarek, "this means that bare life is still negatively determined by the destruction of a *historically specific* way of life" (p. 93, author's emphasis). Agamben does not consider the practice of liberation because he focuses on undermining sovereign power rather than on transforming bare life. Yet, bare life cannot be considered

in isolation from racial and gender differences (and the power relations involved)—an important issue that is also neglected in many liberal/humanitarian discourses.

In light of the above criticisms, Agamben's work has been characterized by some scholars as 'utopian' (e.g., see Papastergiadis, 2006; Tyler, 2006). Bearing in mind Agamben's theory of biopower, Lewis (2006, 2007) offers an educational intervention by suggesting that a utopian turn is secured, "a not-yet conceptualized relation between *zoē* and *bios* where they do not merely supersede one another, nor collapse into a state of indistinction. Instead, *zoē* becomes its own *bios* and *bios* its own *zoē*" (2006, p. 175). What can be understood by a utopian alternative is that a biopolitical taught curriculum of citizenship works to transform currere into a "productive generative life through which new notions of democratic community can evolve" (Lewis, 2007, p. 700). It is important, then, that educators and curriculum theorists recognize biopower and its implications within *edutopian* (Peters & Freeman–Moir, 2006) projects. But if an 'escape' from biopower is not possible (according to Agamben's theorization), then how and where does an edutopian project emerge?

Interest in utopian thinking is now being renewed in education (Lewis, 2007; Papastephanou, 2008); a detailed working of the multiple notions and manifestations of edutopian thought is impossible here, for reasons of space. However, it is sufficient to emphasize two ideas in the context of this article: first, the notion of utopia as a possibility for opening a number of alternatives in citizenship education (Callan, 1999); and second, the importance of analyzing the relation between utopia and power, drawing on the later work of Foucault (Lewis, 2007). In relation to the first idea, Callan argues that we might cultivate a citizenship identity in which a cosmopolitan ideal of 'world citizenship' is brought into the foreground; or we might seek to elicit a new kind of democratic imaginary attuned to the claims of justice both for the civic outsiders and insiders. Can we allow, for example, the demand for justice as manifest in the claims of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers to play a critical role in reconceiving our own rights and privileges and rights of others, not only grounding these claims in the limits of modern law, but also inhabiting the democratic imaginary to come? As far as the second idea is concerned, new forms of resistance can emerge by further complicating the production of a limit figure of bare life such as immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers (see Foucault, 1983, 2003). Foucault's (1983) influential notion of the conduct of conduct emphasizes that power acts on subjects insofar as they are free. For Foucault (2003), the ultimate problem of modern societies is that biopower (as power over life) remains unacknowledged. For instance, racism and colonialism are mechanisms that allow biopower to regulate the population. Thus, utopia, in this context, is an attempt to reconfigure power in relation to life (Lewis, 2007). In this sense, immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers are not disempowered masses escaping from the tyranny of sovereign nation–states but a vehicle for social and political transformation (e.g., cosmopolitan citizenship).

As this discussion has shown, Agamben allows us to diagnose new forms of domination in contemporary life that are often hidden in benign humanitarian and liberal claims. Curriculum theorizing in relation to citizenship education must further articulate the politics of differentiation and particularly how humanitarian arguments and acts of 'recognition' might become aware of their own shortcomings and complicity with racism and colonialism. Drawing on Agamben's theory of biopower, the utopian function of curriculum theorizing in citizenship education can attempt to establish a radical break with the logic of abandoning others on the basis of citizenship rights. What is at stake, as Butler (1993) argues, is *imagining* how "socially saturated domains of exclusion be recast from their status as 'constitutive' to beings who might be said to matter" (p.

189). If, as Agamben (1998) asserts, we have not managed yet to 'heal' the 'fracture' between *zoē* and *bios,* then immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers as abject figures offer education within schools opportunities to work at the limits of what is available in citizenship discourses, while contesting the existing regimes of truth.

NOTES

1. These adjectives (i.e., illegal, un–qualified and bogus) highlight the characterizations that are often utilized in public representations of immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers. These adjectives turn our attention to the mechanisms of construction and functions of the negative stereotypes assigned to immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers.

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