

ENACTING GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY – THE COSMOPOL PROJECT

A disarming cosmopolitan declaration and constitution-building action plan

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The Cosmopol Project is an ambitious action-planning project invoked by the worsening global poly-crisis and the mounting call for everyone to exercise all-protective global responsibility. The project is conceived to enable the coalescence of a global movement of integrity around the sovereignty-negating and UN-negating flag of Kantian ethics. Upholding the responsibilities of moral autonomy and global impartiality in particular, the project aims to enable this movement to constitute an opt-in system of cosmopolitan democracy and cultivate it within today's political landscape.

I have been conceptualizing the project on my own for many years. The project now needs to be progressed by a multidisciplinary team. In this brief introduction, I cannot present the entire plan and its many sub-projects. Suffice to say that in its broadest conception, the strategy plan echoes the two-stage, revolutionary founding of the USA.

The first stage of the plan entails the orchestration of controversial, worldwide Cosmopolitan Declaration events. These will see declarants publicly commit to global impartiality, relinquish consent for national sovereignty and the UN system, renounce their national allegiance, and play a part in world disarmament by refusing to contribute to national military defenses. The plan's second stage will see declarants participating in web-mediated, world constitution building with the intention of planting and growing one or more species of opt-in cosmopolitan civilization in the prevailing international landscape.

I'll now just briefly focus on the project's ethical ootings and offer glimpses of the main strategies. The project arose from my doctoral inquiry begun 3 decades ago into the call for global responsibility by the Commission on Global Governance. Its 1995 report, called 'Our Global Neighbourhood', assessed the worsening global predicament and offered correctives. Its foremost recommendation was radical: that each and all of us, leaders first, adopt '**a global civic ethic**' – a set of globally protective responsibilities.

Given human limitations – evidenced by along history of idiocy, credulity and savagery—I was and remain skeptical that this civilizing goal is achievable. Nonetheless I could not disagree with the Commission’s ethical advice. Quelling my doubts, I chose to follow the advice, to see where the ethical road-less-travelled might lead, to persistently explore the implications for personal integrity and world order.

A first step question. *If* we accept global responsibility, in principle, what ought we do as a next step, as a first act of global responsibility? The answer should be obvious. Figure out the global responsibilities we should enact.

No simple task: a most challenging learning journey awaits. We need to consider history’s awful lessons, explore the root causes of the more serious harms and their prevention, and apprehend the implications of public adoption of corrective responsibility on world constitutional order and personal integrity. This became the learning challenge I adopted for my PhD inquiry.

I asked: what would a future world political economy look like if most of us were committed to enacting a set of global responsibilities? It seems unlikely that we will continue to consent, tacitly, unaccountably, irresponsibly, to the current international military order. We’ll be steering toward a fuzzy cosmopolitan horizon beyond our experience, whose features will become clearer only by insistently steering toward it.

To this end, it helps to ask: what might education and parenting look were we committed to enacting global responsibility? Could global responsibility be instilled in the world’s children without indoctrinating them, without colonizing their minds as we’ve been doing? Could improved educational methods advance children’s moral development to the post-conventional level of moral reasoning, to see them exercising moral autonomy, deciding their future ethical commitments as Immanuel Kant recommended in his formulations of the *categorical imperative*?

The *categorical imperative*? Similar to the Golden Rule, the imperative asks that we act with integrity, in accord with self-chosen principles we believe everyone should adopt and enact – in order to best protect common interests. It doesn’t tell us what principles to adopt. The choice is up to us. Kant viewed it as the supreme principle of global ethical responsibility, as do I.

It serves as a vital safeguard against moral indoctrination – be it religious, moral, political, economic or ethnic. It implicitly places the responsibility on parents and teachers not to impose their beliefs on the world’s youngsters, but guide them to attain moral autonomy, to self-determine the global responsibilities they believe should be enacted in their future world.

Given autonomous agency, would we choose to be segregated into sovereign military encampments – as has been the global tradition – to be identity branded and allegiance bound, to see our youth trained to serve as mass killers, to have them sacrifice their lives to defend us against segregated youth on the other side of the border, likewise indoctrinated and trained to murder? A key research goal of the Cosmopol Project is to find out and make the findings public.

While we tacitly consent to the divisive norm of national sovereignty and impose it on each other, we deny ourselves the ethical right to be globally impartial. It compels us to be partial, to participate in the deceptive and potentially lethal practice of national segregation and identity-branding, to favour those deemed to belong, and care less, or nothing for those who don't.

The categorical imperative implicitly negates this practice. It calls us to be cosmopolitan, to treat all humans as having equal moral status. For over two centuries, it has stood in the shadows, poked at by curious philosophers, waiting to be recognised as the ethically supreme, all-protective principle of world order, waiting to dethrone the current reign of national sovereignty.

The categorical imperative opens the door to a new paradigm approach to constitution building. To date, expertly crafted paper constitutions and charters have bestowed us with universal rights while largely absolving us of the responsibility needed to fulfil them. As the Commission saw, this approach has seriously failed us. We must come to learn that paper charters protect no-one. People do. We have no choice but to place our trust in strangers. While paper charters have their place, the categorical imperative asks each of us to focus primarily on the development of civic trustworthiness, on crafting our *'inner'* constitutions. It calls us to responsibly decide the globally protective principles that will **constitute our integrity**. An education-led approach to inner constitution building could theoretically provide future generations with far more secure and enduring world constitutional protection than has been possible to date.

The implications for education are radical. An education-led process of inner constitution-building needs to be forged. If students are to undertake the global civic learning journey invoked by the categorical imperative, it will require educational leaders and mentors to undertake it first. The leaders will be those who take the lead. The Cosmopol Project will call them to step up.

The learning journey needs ethical safeguards. Habermas warns of a danger with Kant's imperative. If each decides their principles on their own – monologically – we risk having sociopathic dictators like Hitler and Putin enact their self-determined principles reliably, murderously, with integrity. Hence, argues Habermas, we should undertake the learning journey dialogically with unlike-minded others. He says,

moreover, that our dialogue should be tempered by competent exercise of **discourse ethics** – to safeguard against authoritarian domination and fallacious reasoning.

After completing my PhD, I ran deliberation experiments with several groups to pursue agreement on a set of discourse ethical principles and procedures. The substantial agreements have been encapsulated in a draft meta-constitution. The Project intends to use this draft to engage participants in its ongoing development in the preparatory phase of the constitution-building journey.

To enable the journey, an experimental, online world constitution-building platform is in plan to offer dialogue partner-finding, educational guidance, a public argument mapping facility for registering propositions and arguments, and regular updates on agreement-building progress.

A tandem preparatory project will see the drafting of a Declaration of Cosmopolitan Rights and Responsibilities. This will serve as the centrepiece of globally orchestrated, public declaration events to be enlivened with music concerts, recalling the 'We are the World' Live Aid events of the 1980's. Aspiring world citizens will be encouraged to 'come out', 'from their closets', publicly demand the right to be globally impartial—to not belong to any sovereign nation and renounce national allegiance, refuse to contribute to national military defences, opt out of the divisive UN system, and opt in to cosmopolitan governance networks. The ensuing global controversy and debate will be vital to the Project's success.

The hope is that a well-orchestrated, music-fuelled uprising of integrity against the international military order, might well succeed, finally, after top-down plans have failed, to disarm the world and bring enduring peace.

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Richard's early architectural career segued into environmental design and futures education, then moral and political philosophy. His PhD (2001) explored the transformative implications of global responsibility for integrity and world constitutional order. He subsequently conducted several world constitutional deliberation experiments with lay groups. This spawned his current Cosmopol Project – a multi-component plan to enable cosmopolites to coalesce, constitute and experimentally develop cosmopolitan civilization.

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