

# Nussbaum's Concept of Cosmopolitanism: Practical Possibility or Academic Delusion?

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Volume 15, Number 2, 2006

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1072680ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1072680ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Philosophy of Education Society

ISSN

0838-4517 (print)

1916-0348 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Naseem, M. & Hyslop-Margison, E. (2006). Nussbaum's Concept of Cosmopolitanism: Practical Possibility or Academic Delusion? *Paideusis*, 15(2), 51-60. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1072680ar>

Article abstract

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# *Nussbaum's Concept of Cosmopolitanism: Practical Possibility or Academic Delusion?*

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*In this paper, we explore Martha Nussbaum's version of cosmopolitanism and evaluate its potential to reduce the growing global discord we currently confront. We begin the paper by elucidating the concept of cosmopolitanism in historical and contemporary terms, and then review some of the major criticisms of Nussbaum's position. Finally, we suggest that Nussbaum's vision of cosmopolitanism, in spite of its morally noble intentions, faces overwhelming philosophical and practical difficulties that undermine its ultimate tenability as an approach to resolving international conflict.*

## **Introduction**

During the present period of rapid economic globalization and widespread international conflict there are obvious and compelling reasons to enhance understanding and cooperation among individuals from different cultures and regions of the world. The promise of creating a cosmopolitan, or global, citizen, then, in an effort to reduce or eliminate conflict between cultures and nations understandably appeals to many individuals. In this paper, we explore Martha Nussbaum's version of cosmopolitanism and evaluate its potential to reduce the growing global discord we currently confront. We begin the paper by elucidating the concept of cosmopolitanism in historical and contemporary terms, and then review some of the major criticisms of Nussbaum's position. Finally, we suggest that Nussbaum's vision of cosmopolitanism, in spite of its morally noble intentions, faces overwhelming philosophical and practical difficulties that undermine its ultimate tenability as an approach to resolving international conflict.

While the idea of cosmopolitanism actually originated during the Hellenistic period it was Nussbaum's essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" that appeared in the *Boston Review* in October/November 1994 that revived debate and interest in the issue. Her original article provoked considerable controversy and was published along with 29 responses from a variety of experts holding a wide range of perspectives and opinions on the subject. Later, this same essay was published in book form with eleven original and five new responses along with a final rejoinder added by Nussbaum. Since then academic interest in cosmopolitanism has been rekindled and a spate of articles and books have appeared on the subject. Almost single-handedly, then, Nussbaum has catapulted this subject to the forefront of social science and education debates and, hence, her scholarship is the major focus of our article. Martha Nussbaum is presently the Ernest Freund Distinguished Scholar Service professor of law and ethics at the University of Chicago's Law School.

## Nussbaum's World Citizen

Nussbaum's cosmopolitan citizen is largely indebted to the Stoic philosophy of *Kosmu polites* where the primary citizen allegiance is not to a single state government or temporal power, but rather to a moral community deeply committed to a fundamental respect for humanity.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it was actually Diogenes the Cynic who initially proposed all men of wisdom belonged to a single moral community that he optimistically described as a "city of the world."<sup>2</sup> The Stoics understood the concept of a world citizen in a couple of slightly different ways. In its more robust form *Kosmu polites* required a strict allegiance to humanity where the primary loyalty of all citizens was to their fellow human beings. From this perspective, local, regional and national group loyalties enjoyed no special priority over those afforded to cultures and individuals from outside these groups. The Stoic Zeno observed, for example, that, "there was no law, no compulsion, no currency, no temples. All people embodied the divine spark and all were capable of logos, divine reason."<sup>3</sup> A more moderate version of the cosmopolitan ideal is reflected in the views of Cicero who maintained that citizens may legitimately prioritize particular allegiances, but they remain principally connected and morally accountable to the larger human community through a general moral consensus.<sup>4</sup> As members of the human community, all cosmopolitans are compelled not to act on the dictates of local cultures or nationalistic and patriotic expectations when these values and behaviors contravene universal standards of human behavior.<sup>5</sup>

The philosophical resurgence of cosmopolitanism during the Enlightenment resulted from a variety of historical factors. The growth of capitalism and burgeoning international trade, rapid colonization of the Americas and Africa, and the renewed interest in Hellenistic philosophy all combined with a philosophical focus on human rights and reason to make cosmopolitanism an attractive political option. During both the American and French Revolutions in particular a powerful cosmopolitan discourse emerged based on the idea of universal 'human' rights. Kant similarly emphasized the moral urgency of establishing a universal civic society that instantiated a set of fundamental human rights based on reason regardless of their recognition by individual nation states.<sup>6</sup> Consistent with the various formulations of the categorical imperative all rational human beings, according to Kant, are members of a single moral community and compelled by reason to act accordingly. In the eighteenth century, the terms "cosmopolitanism" and "world citizenship" did not necessarily identify political theories, but indicated instead a measure of cultural open-mindedness and impartiality. A cosmopolitan was a person not linked to a single religious or political position and free from cultural prejudice.<sup>7</sup>

Although Nussbaum, strongly influenced by the Stoic perspective, identifies more closely with the robust view of cosmopolitanism, she argues that becoming a world citizen does not necessarily mean relinquishing local affinities, identities or beliefs. Local identities inevitably define certain elements of human character that inevitably influence our interaction with others. However, an individual's primary moral focus remains on interconnecting human values to ensure that cultural divisions do not usurp the set of universal principles that identify acceptable behavior. The Stoics modeled multiple identifications and loyalties as a series of concentric circles with the individual situated at the geometric center. The first and smallest circle is drawn around the self, the next encircles the immediate family, the next encompasses the extended family and then each subsequent circle envelops neighbors, local groups, city fellows, country fellows and so on. Also included in the model

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<sup>1</sup> Nussbaum, 1996, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen & Fine, 2002, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen & Fine, 2002, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen & Fine, 2002, p. 139.

<sup>5</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 140.

<sup>7</sup> Kleingeld & Brown, 2002.

are concentric circles that envelop ethnic, religious and gender affiliations. Beyond all of these circles is the final circle that encompasses all of humanity.<sup>8</sup> Nussbaum argues that the task before the contemporary cosmopolitan citizen is to draw in groups from the outer circles so that affiliations toward them become identical to those extended to fellow city dwellers.<sup>9</sup>

Nussbaum's affirmation of local and multiple identities is not without some inherent problems. In her later work *Cultivating Humanity*, for example, she is extremely critical of those who understand multiculturalism and diversity in terms of identity politics in which each identity asserts its own claims.<sup>10</sup> Her concern with identity politics stems from the perceived problem of cultural relativism, a concern perhaps more common in US intellectual circles and scholarship than in a Canadian context where the academic tradition is noticeably more open to the idea of multiple identities pursuing their own cultural values and nuances.

The perceived relationship between liberal education and cosmopolitan citizenship is central to Nussbaum's argument advancing the latter ideal. This relationship, according to Nussbaum, draws on the lineage of Western philosophical intellectual traditions from Socrates concept of 'the examined life' and Aristotle's notion of reflective citizenship to Greek, Roman and Stoic models of liberal education. In her view, liberal education is a liberator of minds from the "bondage of habit and custom" and thus provides an educational vehicle capable of producing students whose sensibilities and rationality are consistent with that required by a cosmopolitan citizenry.<sup>11</sup> Nussbaum argues that liberal education is most fully developed in the US where critical reflection on cultural values and national policy is a standard part of the learning experience.<sup>12</sup> However, she warns that this does not mean the ideal of a liberal education that produces cosmopolitan citizens has been achieved, but rather if there is an education system capable of achieving this ideal, it is the US liberal education system backed by the nation's liberal democracy.

Nussbaum suggests that a properly designed liberal education cultivates three basic capacities among cosmopolitan citizens to free their minds from narrow tradition, custom and habit including the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions (Socratic self-examination), the capacity to identify with a global moral and human community, and finally the capacity for narrative imagination, or the ability to imagine cultural difference in order to decipher alternative narratives of the 'other' and relate or connect to them in a meaningful and sympathetic way.<sup>13</sup>

The Socratic pursuit of self-examination is a capacity that liberal education needs to develop consciously among students. In spite of her general support of the US education system, Nussbaum recognizes that self-examination is typically sacrificed at the altar of instrumental socialization where Socratic questioning is replaced with more passive and subject-centered approaches to learning.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, within many US contexts and learning environments, behaving as a philosophical gadfly is increasingly considered subversive, radical and socially corrupting, contrary to the more immediate needs for economic efficiency, blind patriotism and political expediency. Unfortunately for Nussbaum, the present status of self-examination as a primary liberal education experience central to cosmopolitanism undermines her problematic view that US education affords a potential prototype for global citizenship.

The widespread rejection of personal and national reflection in the US, with a corresponding loss of democratic freedom, has been especially evident since the events of September 11, 2001. The dissenting voices critical to liberal learning speaking against present US foreign and domestic policy

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<sup>8</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 83.

<sup>11</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 80.

<sup>12</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 9-11.

<sup>14</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 16.

decisions are often deemed subversive, anti-patriotic and sympathetic to terrorism. For example, as Henry Giroux points out, the City University of New York trustees and chancellor recently condemned their own faculty members for identifying American foreign policy as one contributing factor to the 2001 terrorist attacks. He goes on to suggest that the attempt to muzzle legitimate dissent is especially disconcerting when endorsed by the wife of the vice-president who castigated the chancellor of New York City schools for suggesting that the “terrorist attacks demonstrated the importance of teaching about Muslim cultures.”<sup>15</sup> Although we share Nussbaum’s commitment to liberal education as an ideal and to critical self-examination, the US, at least in its present form, hardly represents an example of a society genuinely committed to Socratic questioning.

Regardless of whether the contemporary US education milieu represents an appropriate example on which to construct cosmopolitanism, the importance of Socratic self-examination to Nussbaum’s global citizen cannot be overstated. Self-examination and critical reflection are clearly essential in a deliberative democracy that genuinely considers reason as a moral and political good.<sup>16</sup> Nussbaum recognizes that encouraging Socratic self-examination will not automatically provoke the desired changes in global relationships or enhance understanding between cultures because some prejudices are simply too deeply rooted in irrational belief. However, Socratic self-examination creates the opportunity to reason together about problems and issues rather than merely trading unsubstantiated claims and counter claims based on unreflective bias. Self-examination and critical reflectivity might not make us love one another, but at least according to Nussbaum they may prevent us from pretending that rational arguments support our unfortunate antipathy toward one another.<sup>17</sup>

In Nussbaum’s view, a liberal education based on Socratic philosophy will produce students who are not only adept at self-examination, but who are also comfortable discussing questions of global citizenship. As Nussbaum puts it, “attaining membership in the world community entails a willingness to doubt the goodness of one’s own way and to enter into the give-and-take of critical argument about ethical and political choices.”<sup>18</sup> She claims that education for world citizenship should begin early in a student’s learning experience and by the time students attend college or university “they should be well equipped to face demanding courses in areas of human diversity outside the dominant western tradition.”<sup>19</sup> Here, it is at least mildly ironic that Nussbaum sees no contradiction in advancing liberal education, a Western civilization artifact, as the pedagogical foundation for her cosmopolitan project. She is also silent on the profound structural impediments confronting many US students who are routinely denied access to the intellectual resources that the more liberal universities and colleges provide. Without specifically addressing the economic disparities that create stratified and disparate learning opportunities, and providing practical strategies to overcome them, liberal education, contrary to cosmopolitan requirements, remains the privileged domain of the economic elite.

The other liberal education quality required for cosmopolitanism, in Nussbaum’s view, is an imaginative understanding of the motivations, sensibilities and choices of people from different cultures. It is one thing to be knowledgeable about other cultures, but until such time that we actually imagine why others think and behave as they do, it remains difficult to develop affinities that extend beyond the immediate family or cultural group. Nussbaum suggests that literature and the arts could play an important role in promoting this understanding by nurturing student imagination and curiosity about other cultures. A story or narrative, apart from providing specific information about other groups, also arouses student curiosity and stimulates the imagination to consider possible scenarios beyond those described in the text.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Giroux, 2003, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 36.

<sup>18</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 62.

<sup>19</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 89.

Nussbaum argues that, “without the training of the imagination that storytelling promotes” it will be extremely difficult for a child to conjure sympathetic images of the other.<sup>21</sup> The imagination effectively reveals common points of reference between differently situated individuals:<sup>22</sup>

Literary works typically invite their readers to put themselves in the place of people of many different kinds and to take on their experiences. [Such works] speak to an implicit reader who shares with the characters certain hopes, fears and general human concern, and who is situated elsewhere and needs to be informed about the concrete situation of the characters. In this way, the very structure of the interactions between the text and its imagined reader invites the reader to see how the features of society and circumstances bear on the realization of shared hopes and desires.

When employed in this fashion, the imagination potentially facilitates understanding beyond the bounds of immediate cultural influences and highlights the common connections between all individuals. The imagination encourages citizenship that is reflexive and deliberative, sympathetic and responsive, and respectful of separateness and privacy.<sup>23</sup> When used effectively, according to Nussbaum, the imagination promotes understanding and compassion, essential ingredients for tolerance, respect, responsibility and global citizenship.

Although literature and the arts serve to kindle the imagination, there is no automatic cause and effect relationship between literature/storytelling and imagination, curiosity and cultural tolerance. Not only must literature be approached critically, it must be accompanied by in-depth historical and moral analysis. Rather than simply celebrating various cultural practices, Nussbaum argues that these practices should be questioned, critiqued and vigorously debated on the basis of their respective merits.<sup>24</sup> This critique should be formally incorporated into courses that consider the cosmopolitan perspective during their actual development rather than simply being the result of spontaneous classroom instruction.

Nussbaum compellingly argues that, “the goal of producing world class citizens is profoundly opposed to the spirit of identity politics which holds that one’s primary affiliation is with one’s local group, whether religious or ethnic or based on sexuality or gender.”<sup>25</sup> She distinguishes multicultural education from ‘cosmopolitan’ education because the former is a “new anti-humanist view... one that celebrates difference in an uncritical way and denies the very possibility of common interests and understandings, even of dialogue or debate, that take one outside one’s own group.”<sup>26</sup> Nussbaum suggests an education program focused primarily on identifying particular differences and behavioral anomalies between cultures and ethnicities stands in sharp contrast to one illustrating the purported shared qualities of humanity.

While cosmopolitanism seeks to understand differences in a deliberative and dialogical manner, the identity politics of multicultural education, the prevailing model of alternative cultural instruction, portrays the world as a marketplace of competing ideas and values constantly jockeying for power. Value and behavioral differences are viewed as something to be affirmed and accepted rather than critically analyzed, understood and potentially challenged.<sup>27</sup> Multicultural education taught in this fashion reifies and celebrates difference while cosmopolitanism seeks to understand differences in order to bridge them, and to identify common bonds that connect all of humanity. Hence, the multitude of contemporary and poorly conceived approaches to multicultural education occurring in

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<sup>21</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 5-7.

<sup>23</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, pp. 109-110.

<sup>26</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 110.

<sup>27</sup> Nussbaum, 1997, p. 110.

our schools and universities may actually subvert their stated objective of enhancing ethnic tolerance by highlighting human difference over collective similarities.

Nussbaum argues that cosmopolitan citizenship is imperative in order to build international democracy, to strengthen the global economy and, unfortunately sounding hauntingly colonizing, to advance US international political and economic interests. However, cosmopolitanism is necessary not in a purely instrumentalist sense—cosmopolitanism as an instrument to seek politico-economic ends—but as a deliberative rational mechanism through which differences are understood, similarities identified and conflict ultimately reduced. She believes that cosmopolitanism has the potential to identify common values that bridge cultures without negating local and more immediate affiliations. Rather than undermining everyday and local identities, the larger human moral and rational community provides the concentric circle that embraces all of humanity. In summary, then, cosmopolitan citizens are self-examining individuals and the product of what we believe is a highly elusive liberal education that is universally accessible, critical, imaginative and sympathetic.

### Critics of Cosmopolitanism

As might be expected, not everyone is entirely convinced that cosmopolitanism offers an adequate or workable solution to the problem of global conflict. As we noted in the introduction, the initial publication of Nussbaum's seminal article on cosmopolitanism in the *Boston Review*<sup>28</sup> provoked a series of passionate responses that included a wide range of criticisms against the position. The original article was published along with some twenty-nine different critiques, while a later anthology was accompanied by sixteen responses.<sup>29</sup> The numerous responses to Nussbaum's version of cosmopolitanism include philosophical critiques,<sup>30</sup> class analyses,<sup>31</sup> and some critics who simply condemn her for proposing a stateless world society or even a world state devoid of their patriotic predilections.<sup>32</sup> Other critics have even described her cosmopolitanism as unimaginative.<sup>33</sup>

We have decided to focus primarily on the critiques advanced by three individuals, Appiah, Guttmann and Wallerstein, because they identify important dimensions missing in Nussbaum's articulation of cosmopolitanism. Appiah, for example, explores the possibility of constructing cosmopolitanism from multiple philosophical traditions including non-Enlightenment ones, thus making the idea more relevant to those beyond the bounds of a Euro-centric world. Guttmann challenges Nussbaum's notion of cosmopolitanism on similar grounds, suggesting the very idea of a "global" community is simply a chimera. Wallerstein explores the power dimension in global politics and argues that any model of cosmopolitanism that avoids this subject, as Nussbaum does, is woefully incomplete. We elaborate on these criticisms below.

Kwame Anthony Appiah offers a rather gentle rebuke to Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism by raising some ideas that she leaves inadequately examined in her original argument.<sup>34</sup> According to Appiah, cosmopolitanism and patriotism are not incompatible ideas because they are not mutually exclusive or antithetical concepts. Rather, cosmopolitanism, as Nussbaum describes it, celebrates autonomy and democracy, and must therefore respect the right of others to live within and celebrate their independently constructed cultures and democratic states. Appiah's contribution to the cosmopolitan debate maintains, contrary to the critical rationality of Enlightenment philosophy, that the values it

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<sup>28</sup> Nussbaum, 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Nussbaum & Cohen, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Guttmann, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Wallerstein, 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Himmelfarb, 1996, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> McConnell, 1996.

<sup>34</sup> Appiah, 1996.

adopts and promotes cannot emerge from a single philosophical or cultural tradition.<sup>35</sup> He distinguishes between cosmopolitanism and humanism by arguing that the latter desires global homogeneity while the former celebrates “different local human ways of being,”<sup>36</sup> a position similar to the multicultural model Nussbaum condemns. Appiah summarizes his version of liberal cosmopolitanism as follows:<sup>37</sup>

A liberal cosmopolitanism might put its point like this: we value the variety of human forms of social and cultural life; we do not want everybody to become part of a homogeneous global culture; and we know that this means that there will be local differences (both within and between states) in moral climate as well. So long as these differences meet certain general ethical constraints—so long, in particular, as political institutions respect basic human rights—we are happy to let them be.

Appiah’s version of cosmopolitanism requires multiple citizenship models that supposedly converge on the basis of a universal set of common human rights and ethical constraints.<sup>38</sup> The resulting and unresolved difficulty, then, is establishing the epistemological basis and moral foundation on which these universal principles are constructed, and then mapping out subsequent practical strategies for their successful and universal implementation. These important foundational and practical problems are left glaringly unaddressed in Appiah’s critique.

Amy Gutmann challenges Nussbaum’s cosmopolitanism on the grounds that it offers, at best, an abstraction and, at worst, an ideal that advances elite American cultural values. Ironically, these are precisely the same sins that Nussbaum accuses Gutmann’s democratic humanism of committing. Nussbaum’s claim that our primary allegiance should be to a world community is problematic, according to Guttmann, because no such community actually exists. If Nussbaum suggests, as she seems to, that all human beings should be treated as moral equals according to established principles of right and justice – concepts themselves standing in obvious need of considerable clarification – we see little difference between her cosmopolitanism and Guttmann’s democratic humanism. For example, according to Guttmann, “our primary moral allegiance is to no community, whether it be of human beings in our world today or our society today. Our primary moral allegiance is to justice - to doing what is right.”<sup>39</sup> However, “doing what is right” remains a moral abstraction and, from a practical or applied standpoint, not an easily discernible objective even within limited cultural domains let alone within a global community.

Wallerstein points out, mirroring a point we raised earlier in the article, that Nussbaum’s concept of cosmopolitanism obfuscates the class dimensions that distinguish social and educational opportunities.<sup>40</sup> For instance, both within and between societies, why would economically and politically oppressed groups view their oppressors as moral equals? Alternatively, why would people who have internalized an artifice of intellectual and moral superiority based on class privilege reach across well established structural barriers that protect their advantage to form a collective sense of community? From Wallerstein’s perspective, “being disinterested and global on one hand and defining one’s narrow interest on the other are not opposites but positions combined in complicated ways.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the economic globalization merging from contemporary neo-liberal policies and practices that routinely exploit many individuals to advance hegemonic financial corporate interests seemingly confirms his observation.

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<sup>35</sup> Appiah, 1996, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Appiah, 1996, p. 94.

<sup>37</sup> Appiah, 1996, p. 94.

<sup>38</sup> Robbins, 1998, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Guttmann, 1996, p. 69.

<sup>40</sup> Wallerstein, 1996.

<sup>41</sup> Wallerstein, 1996, p. 124.



## A Critical Response to Nussbaum

Although we generally sympathize with Nussbaum's mission of creating global accord based on universal principles of human rights and social justice, we are compelled to take issue with her cosmopolitan project on a number of important fronts. As we suggested earlier, her scheme of building cosmopolitanism through a liberal education based on self-examination is applicable only among those cultures and classes with widely accessible democratic political and liberal education systems. A number of nations, including the US, increasingly rely on discursively constituted nationalism rather than reason to promote their image as political saviors to their citizens. Some of these states enjoy monopolistic control over the media, education and communications, and loosening this control through a widely accessible liberal education that encourages Socratic self-examination is politically improbable. According to Nussbaum, the model of liberal education practiced in the US supplies the foundation for cosmopolitanism, but that nation continues to suffer profound class and ethnic divisions perpetuated by policies often developed by the same individuals who receive the type of liberal education she views as a global solution. Hence, the US political, social and educational system provides little theoretical or practical reassurance that a global cosmopolitan community based on liberal education and democratic values is a genuine possibility. In fact, historically it seems to suggest precisely the opposite.

Nussbaum's model of cosmopolitanism is sanguinely, and we would argue naively, predicated on the assumption that global citizens adopting similar moral values and beliefs will effectively eliminate, or significantly reduce, global conflict. However, the history of human conflict is not limited to competing groups who possess distinct cultural, moral and human values. Rather, there are a myriad of historical conflicts where groups or nations who share virtually identical values compete violently against one another for reasons such as territorial control or limited resources in what Ian Harris describes as structural antagonism: "It is quite possible for there to be two communities absolutely identical in all their most cherished values – and yet, at the same time, locked in a fatal and irreconcilable struggle with each precisely because they do share the same values but do not share a higher value of living in peace."<sup>42</sup>

This brings us to our final and perhaps most philosophically problematic point of concern. Any model of global citizenship must articulate the universal relationship between various local identities and the assumed larger human identity to mount a compelling argument for cosmopolitanism. In order to implement cosmopolitan values in all cultures, then, Nussbaum must identify characteristics and values that are universally shared and consistent with cosmopolitan ideals. We believe this challenge presents a serious difficulty for her project. For example, in cultures where widely accepted gender differences are manifested in disparate rights and obligations, the implementation of cosmopolitan values assuming gender equality based on appeals to reason seems practically impossible. Many religions, including Islam and Christianity, often reject reason and self-examination as the primary means of acquiring moral knowledge, and appeal instead to faith in metaphysical beliefs or sacred texts. Indeed, many religions and their followers subordinate every sphere of life to religious dogma, including law, politics, morality, economics, and family life. Hence, cosmopolitanism based on liberal democratic ideals, rather than providing a vehicle for global peace as suggested by Nussbaum, might actually provoke additional tensions or conflicts with cultures unwilling to accept its basic tenets of reason and self-examination as universal goods.

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<sup>42</sup> Harris, 2003, p. 5.

## Conclusion

Although the sanguine hope of uniting citizens around the world on the basis of mutual respect is a potentially appealing aspiration, we suspect the possibility of Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism achieving this objective is extremely remote. The more probable course of events is that the unifying feature of any global citizenry will be the neo-liberal policies and practices of unfettered consumerism that increasingly affect international cultures and communities. Rather than building a global community based on Socratic self-examination, imagination and sympathy, and a general respect for humanity, it is more apt to be one based on commodity fetishism, worker exploitation and neo-liberal capitalism. In opposition to this probability, we believe the need to create an alternative discourse that advances the hopeful ideal Nussbaum identifies has never been more urgent. However, this ideal must have the epistemological and moral sophistication to create a global community without violating local sensibilities. The challenge, it seems to us, is both a daunting academic and practical one.

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