



# When the state doesn't commit: a review essay of Julian Culp's Democratic Education in a Globalized World

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REVIEW ARTICLE



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## When the state doesn't commit: a review essay of Julian Culp's *Democratic Education in a Globalized World*

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### ABSTRACT

The world has evolved from being international to being global. Increasingly, global issues like climate change, migration, pandemics, trade, big data, and terrorism spill over borders drawn centuries ago as if they were no longer there. In this globalized world, however, people are still born and educated as citizens of particular nation states. Indeed, education is still used as one of the state's main tools for shaping citizen virtues and commitments. Political philosophers have acknowledged both the increasingly global nature of contemporary political problems and the power of education to shape citizens but have failed to recognize how the two are interconnected. In his book, *Democratic Education in a Globalized World: A Normative Theory*, Julian Culp seeks to rectify this double-sided failure by building a theory of and framework for educating people for democratic citizenship in a world of border-crossing issues. I outline how he seeks to overcome this problem, set out an analytical framework with which to engage with his account, and note some significant worries that arise from this analysis. In particular, I focus on a specific blindness from which Culp's account suffers, which makes it unable to detect wrongs that arise when the state fails to commit to fundamental normative principles.

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The world has evolved from being international to being global. Increasingly, global issues like climate change, migration, pandemics, trade, big data, and terrorism spill over borders drawn centuries ago as if they were no longer there. In this globalized world, however, people are still born and educated as citizens of particular nation states. Indeed, education is still used as one of the state's main tools for shaping citizen virtues and commitments. Political philosophers have acknowledged both the increasingly global nature of contemporary political problems and the power of education to shape citizens – but have failed to recognize how the two are interconnected. In his book, *Democratic Education in a Globalized World: A Normative Theory*, Julian Culp seeks to rectify this double-sided failure by building a theory of and framework for

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educating people for democratic citizenship in a world of border-crossing issues. Below, I outline how he seeks to overcome this problem, set out an analytical framework with which to engage with his account, and note some significant worries that arise from this analysis. In particular, I focus on a specific blindness from which Culp's account suffers, which makes it unable to detect wrongs that arise when the state fails to commit to fundamental normative principles.

*Democratic Education in a Globalized World* is a thorough book, which carefully lays out several of the existing positions in debates about education, autonomy, and pluralism. The book scrutinizes these views with a keen sense of argumentative detail. This meticulousness, however, regularly gets in the way of bold speculation and originality of argument. This is disappointing for a book of normative theorizing. In several key places, furthermore, individual theorists are dismissed on the basis of specific details of their accounts and the core idea their views represent (moral cosmopolitanism, ideal theorizing, or autonomy-facilitating education) is cast aside without deeper engagement with what is really at stake. Shying away from these basic-level discussions, Culp's arguments are often left balancing precariously on rather slender support. In this essay, I delve into some of the foundational fissures that Culp leaves underexplored.

### Education, globalization, and transnational democracy

The stated aim of Culp's book is to guide a legitimate transformation towards an internationally oriented educational institutions and policies. First we need to know, however, on what moral grounds these educational reforms should be based. Culp's answer is to base them on the idea that everyone has a 'basic moral right to justification' (36). Because of this need for justification, institutions should be set up so that everyone can challenge the existing setup (structures of justification) ensuring that they see themselves as authors of their political order. Justificatory co-authorship need not mean that everyone has equal influence on the final outcome, but merely that everyone counts as an authority, is taken seriously, in the process of determining how political institutions and policies should look. While Culp's specific version of the notion of justificatory co-authorship is heavily indebted to Frankfurt school theorizing, the general idea is familiar from the writings of many other contemporary theorists.

*En route* to proposing his 'Global Democratic' view, Culp dismisses a few other prominent candidates for the moral basis on which educational policies are pursued. Most time is spent on rejecting and distinguishing his view from 'Liberal perfectionist education', the goal of which is to further 'personal ethical autonomy' (personal autonomy, for short). Personal autonomy relies on the idea of 'self-creation' and, thus, requires 'an evaluative standpoint' (30) that the student must take on herself. Culp worries that the state pursuing this educational goal conveys a message to citizens that only an autonomous, self-created life is a flourishing one. This is problematic because some citizens might disagree that devising and living one's life in the light of one's own values leads to flourishing. Instead, they think, for example, that one should live life according to the values and prescriptions set out by God, tradition, one's family, or some other epistemic authority, in order to flourish. Because of this, liberal perfectionist education 'is incompatible with the liberal idea of neutrality' (31) in its stance

towards worldviews that are not autonomy-centred. Indeed, Culp maintains that even seeking to *facilitate* autonomy – that is, merely making an autonomous life available to all, rather than actively promoting such a life – is problematic for reasons of non-neutrality (31).

It should be noted that theorists against whom Culp addresses these worries, do not usually believe that autonomy should be promoted (or facilitated) because a self-reflective life is the only path to flourishing. Rather, they believe it should be promoted because, without such education, children are precluded from knowing about or pursuing a number of paths that may (or may not) lead to flourishing (Brighthouse 2003; Clayton 2006). On Culp's view, however, if the state acts to ensure that children are made aware of and provided with the opportunities to forge their own path, the state is embracing a controversial conception of the good – one that is non-neutral with respect to the value of individual choice. This is because Culp understands the constraints of anti-perfectionism in an unusually demanding way, by which facilitating the choice between several life paths is objectionable *in the same way* as advocating the choice of a specific life path is (31–32; 147–148).<sup>1</sup> To adhere to this strict form of anti-perfectionism, global democratic justice aims, more minimally, to ensure everyone's capacities for democratic deliberation, rather than their capacities for autonomous choice (40). Let's call this first substantive element of Culp's account, *the anti-perfectionist grounds of education*.

The grounds of Culp's educational account, then, emphasizes the importance of justificatory structures and attitudes and the importance of not appealing to perfectionist judgements in the formation of state policy. But what about the democratic element? The basic idea of Culp's view here is that educational public policy must equip all with *adequate* (not necessarily equal) democratic capabilities and that educational policies should be determined democratically. This means that the aims of educational policies – beyond ensuring democratic adequacy – must be decided through political deliberation. The goal of democratic education, then, is to equip and enable people for such deliberation, participation, and justification. We should not, then, aim for equalizing educational opportunities until we have ensured that everyone has an adequate level of education to participate in the deliberation about what equalizing *entails* (75). In support of this, Culp argues that standards of success in life are not shared by all (especially in culturally diverse societies) and that in the absence of such a shared conception 'social elites will more or less arbitrarily determine the dominant notion of success' (76). Let's call this second substantive element of Culp's account, *the politically determined aim of education*.

Culp outlines the ways in which inter-, trans-, and supranational contexts have been transformed and are increasingly shaping people's political and economic opportunities. These transformations have eroded national sovereignty, making it increasingly difficult for people to co-determine how they live together. To combat this democratic deficit, institutional reform is needed. However, such reforms must be underpinned by democratic education that shapes the norms and values of both those governing and those governed to ensure greater accountability.

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<sup>1</sup>See also Culp (2020), where Culp expands on his strict conception of anti-perfectionism.

A first principle to guide the intended reform is that ‘citizenship education contributes to enabling all citizens of all states to participate in the domestic decision-making procedures by way of cultivating domestic democratic consciousness in all states’ (101). A purely domestic focus, however, fails to encourage two important democratic virtues: the practice of appealing to international standards (of, say, human rights) to criticize the domestic context and the awareness of one’s international obligations. A second principle is needed – namely that: ‘educational public policy must prepare citizens of all states to participate in meaningful ways in domestic as well as transnational political discourses that influence international decision-making’ (101). Let’s call this final substantive element of Culp’s account, *the globalizing content of education*.

Culp laments the fact that most contemporary theories of justice focus solely on distributions and too much on what ideally just societies would look like. Instead, he argues, we should focus on political procedure, on power and on decision-making structures and his suggestions for educational reform are transitional and explicitly non-ideal (35–39; 117–120). Culp, in this spirit, aims to establish a set of political procedures (and the corresponding attitudes) that are not dependent on a particular vision of society. Culp, in this way, seeks to avoid an ideal-theoretical approach to political philosophy because such approaches ‘appear out of touch with social reality’ (34) and are often liable to fall prey to status quo bias, reproducing dominant ideologies and the personal biases of the theorist. Let’s call this methodological basis for Culp’s account, *the anti-idealist method*.

To summarize, Culp’s view is based on an anti-idealist method that focuses on political procedure rather than a vision of the ideally just society (or, rather, world). He argues for building educational policies on anti-perfectionist grounds to avoid espousing the contested view that autonomous lives are better than non-autonomous ones. Everyone should be ensured democratic adequacy, but beyond this, the aim of education should be determined politically to ensure that it does not simply reproduce the measure of success of the dominant elite. Finally, education should globalize, aligning people’s political habits and democratic virtues with an increasingly transnational political world. Below, I will engage with these points critically, starting with the three substantive ones and finishing with the methodological one. Before doing so, however, I will briefly set out a framework for how to think about state action, which will guide my ensuing analysis.

### What the state does (even when it doesn’t do anything)

In order to reconstruct and analyse Culp’s claims, I will distinguish three different forms of state action. Culp, himself, does not employ this distinction, but it helps bring out some interesting (and controversial) elements of his view. First of all, following Corey Brettschneider (2016), we can distinguish between the *coercive*, law-enforcing power of the state and its communicative or *expressive* power.<sup>2</sup> The state can commit an *expressive wrong* when its policy choices are guided by principles that express inappropriate attitudes towards certain members of society<sup>3</sup> – for example, by principles

<sup>2</sup>See also Anderson and Pildes (2000).

<sup>3</sup>Anderson and Pildes (2000), 1527.

that express a lack of equal concern and respect for all members of society or a failure to treat some citizens as moral agents with interests, plans, and purposes that deserve consideration. When institutionalizing educational policies built around the idea that choice and autonomy are of normative importance, Culp argues, the state *sends the message* that such lifestyles are superior to other, less autonomous, ones and it is this expression that makes them problematic. Culp's justification-based view, thus, embodies the expressive power of state action.

State action should be evaluated on a third dimension as well: its *formative* power. The formative power of state action concerns its influence on the shape and content of the preferences of children (and adults) growing up under the present set of institutions and policies. The state can commit a *formative wrong* if its policies shape (or predictably and avoidably allow for the shaping of) people's preferences in ways that are objectionably paternalistic or, otherwise, autonomy-infringing. The preference-shaping element of state action is an unavoidable part of most (if not all) policy decisions, but it is particularly important in educational policy in which the formative aspect is most obvious and, often, intentionally foregrounded. While Culp does not address the formative element of state action in those terms, he is keenly aware of its import when considering the worry that education merely reproduces a certain ideological set of preferences (149–154); discussing the prospect of grounding educational policies in the importance of economic growth (27–29); and when dismissing what he calls the functionalist view (27). All three forms of state power, thus, play a role in Culp's account – even if the distinction is not one he uses himself, but one I apply to his analysis in order to bring out certain implications more clearly.

However, the state not only uses these various powers when *enacting* policies. The state also does so when it *chooses not to enact* (or *fails to enact*) certain policies leading to a predictable and avoidable outcome.<sup>4</sup> For example, by failing to enforce just redistributive taxes, failing to speak out against sexism or racism, or failing to help its citizens avoid addiction and dependency. Culp's account is significantly less sensitive to the wrongs the state can commit when it fails to act or commit in these ways. Overall, we can distinguish six different ways in which the state can influence policy outcomes:

Of these six different forms of state influence, Culp's account deals with the ones with checkmarks in the table, but ignores the ones with X's. First, he worries that the state uses its coercive powers to enforce a particular conception of success in its pursuit of equality of educational opportunities. Second, he worries that enacting educational policies that facilitate personal autonomy send a disrespectful message to religious members of society –

	Coercive power	Expressive power	Formative power
Enact	✓	✓	✓
Not enact	✓	X	X

<sup>4</sup>Dworkin (2002) invokes a similar distinction regarding the coercive realm of state power, between laws that are 'enacted' and 'sustained' by the state (1).

one that rejects their status as justificatory co-authors. Third, he seriously considers the objection that any form of autonomy-based education is ideological (149–154). In such cases, using my terms, the state would be committing a *formative wrong* by enacting certain (ideological) policies. Culp also considers the way in which the state can fail in its obligations by *not using* its coercive powers. Specifically, he argues that the state must not let parents withdraw their children entirely from the educational system – failing to ensure educational adequacy in such a situation would constitute a failure on the part of the state.

My primary worry about Culp's view moves over well-trodden ground in the literature: I believe the state *should* use its coercive powers to promote and facilitate personal autonomy and I am unconvinced by his arguments to the contrary. Delving into this discussion, however, would require extensive theoretical excavations and unearth, at most, a few philosophical knick-knacks. Therefore, I will set aside the issue of how the state uses its coercive powers and focus, instead, on its expressive and formative ones. In particular, I will focus on the expressive and formative wrongs that the state can commit *when failing to facilitate autonomy*. While I am concerned by such wrongs, Culp worries little about instances where the state fails to enact certain policies and, thereby, predictably and avoidably make certain (wrongful) outcomes come about. Specifically, he does not consider the disrespectful message the state can send by failing to enact certain policies. Nor does he consider that the state can fail its citizens when it makes them predictably and avoidably subject to paternalistic preference inculcation by other societal authorities by failing to use its formative powers to protect them. These oversights are the subject of my analysis in the next two sections.

### The anti-perfectionist grounds of education

Imagine a society, *Acceptia*, in which a majority uncritically accepts the doctrines of the principal, extremely conservative religion. Indeed, they never even let themselves consider, let alone walk, alternative paths of life. They acknowledge only one way in which human beings can flourish: through religion. If members of the majority have a homosexual orientation, furthermore, they will not live a life in which they express their homosexuality, since doing so is considered sinful and immoral by their extremely conservative religion. Amongst the non-religious minority, however, those who have a homosexual orientation *do* express their homosexuality, finding it neither sinful nor immoral.

In line with Culp's prescriptions, *Acceptia's* educational policies do not rely on the assumption that an autonomous, self-created life is normatively superior to the unchosen, unquestioned one – it does not, in other words, rely on the 'controversial anthropological assumption that different individuals possess distinct personal constitutions such that individuals need to pursue different paths of life in order to experience human flourishing' (32). Due to this lack of emphasis on personal autonomy, citizens who are part of the majority and grow up in *Acceptia* predictably and foreseeably come to embrace the dominant religion and internalize its doctrines – ones that are unquestioningly conservative and one which will see them repress their homosexuality.

Culp argues that it would be disrespectful to the religious majority in *Acceptia* to, instead, facilitate (sexual) choice and autonomy through the state's educational policies,

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<sup>5</sup>Culp specifically engages with the example of homosexuality and religion in his response to Brighouse (32).



as religious citizens would not be able to see themselves as justificatory co-authors of such policies.<sup>5</sup> As mentioned previously, I disagree with Culp – I think the state should promote autonomy and that children have a right to an autonomy-facilitating education.<sup>6</sup> Setting that aside, however, I think Culp's account gives us the wrong answer in this case for a different reason as well: namely, because of the disrespectful message the state can send to minority members by *not enacting* autonomy-facilitating policies. In particular, it seems to me, we should worry that in failing to facilitate autonomy – in refusing to provide a counterweight – the state sends the message that they endorse the predictable and avoidable outcome of their inaction: the repression of homosexual identities. What are the homosexual minority of *Acceptia* to believe about an educational policy that predictably and avoidably ensures that a majority of society's citizens disavow and repress their homosexuality? How can they consider themselves co-authors of a policy under which their co-citizens are told to not question such conservative and anti-homosexual ideas – one that discourages reflection on (sexual) preferences and discourages choosing a life that reflects these? In failing to act, the state expresses a lack of equal concern for the status of its non-religious homosexual members, becoming complicit in the repression of homosexual lifestyles and preferences. The state, in this example, is problematically non-neutral towards certain forms of life. In this manner, the state commits an expressive wrong to which Culp's account is, at best, blind and, at worst, indifferent.

### The politically determined aim of education

Education, according to Culp, should ensure that everyone is adequately equipped to participate in collective decisions (74). Recall that the state commits a formative wrong if its policies shape (or predictably and avoidably allow for the shaping of) people's preferences in ways that are objectionably paternalistic or, otherwise, clearly contrary to their flourishing. Ensuring educational adequacy, according to Culp, constitutes a legitimate use of the state's formative powers. I agree. Once we have ensured that everyone is at the level of adequacy, however, Culp maintains that the allocation of additional educational resources should be determined *politically*. If the allocation is not determined in this way, he notes, educational policies would fail to respect the diversity of views in society and would likely be built around a contested notion of what constitutes a successful life – one that is likely to be determined at the whim of the reigning social elites. In this way, people's preferences and worldviews would be shaped by the state in a top-down, objectionably paternalistic manner which is at odds with Culp's non-perfectionist grounding. In doing so, the state commits a formative wrong by enacting policies that shape people's preferences in a problematic manner.<sup>7</sup>

However, the state can also commit a formative wrong when it *fails to act* in the realm of preference shaping. Specifically, when it fails to equip its citizens with the tools to defend against predictable and avoidable authoritative preference formation by other

<sup>6</sup>This, broadly speaking, is the view espoused in Brighouse (2003); and Clayton (2006). See also Zwarthoed (2020) for a globalized version of this view.

<sup>7</sup>Culp discusses what I call the formative element of state action in several places. In particular, when dismissing the functionalist view that educational policies merely sustain the present social order (27) and when discussing the worry that education merely reproduces a certain ideology (149–154).



societal powers. Due to the powerful influence of such actors, citizens will predictably and avoidably come to hold (or be heavily influenced by) the, often perfectionist, and sometimes objectionable, conceptions of the good of non-state societal authorities – such as the church, the family, the market, or civil authorities of a particular culture.<sup>8</sup> Non-state institutions play a key role in shaping the prospects and social norms people face and the expectations with which they are met. Contrary to Culp, my claim is that the state can commit a formative wrong when it fails to provide a counterweight to the preference-shaping undertaken by powerful non-state actors.

Culp's reluctance to embrace educational policies that facilitate autonomy is reiterated and expanded in his worry that the distribution of educational resources must be decided democratically. He worries that equipping citizens with the autonomy-generating tools of critical thinking, self-reflection, and openness to the different possible ends of human life, is objectionably perfectionist. But citizens are moulded by a multitude of societal forces, some of which wield considerable power over the shaping of people's preferences. And when the state fails to protect its citizens from such preference shaping, it commits a formative wrong. Culp's account, I venture, is problematically insensitive to such wrongs.

Consider a few examples where citizen preferences are shaped by powerful, non-state institutions and adapted to the norms and expectations that such circumstances bring, and subjected individuals internalize such preferences as their own. First, women in sexist cultures are taught that a woman's place is in the home and that they should be submissive, professionally unambitious, and publicly shy. Second, consumers in extreme market societies are taught that constant economic growth is imperative, that luxury goods bring happiness, and that personal worth is measured by one's money-earning capacities. Third, homosexuals who are a member of the religious majority in our imagined society from before are moulded into thinking that homosexuality is a sin and that they should repress their preferred lifestyle. In all three cases, the preference shaping relies on a controversial conception of the good (and one that is objectionable). The shaping is performed by powerful non-state actors, undercuts the flourishing of the citizens in question, and could be countered by educational policies that facilitate autonomy. Presumably, such practices would not be endorsed by Culp. With his reluctance to promote (or, at least, facilitate) personal autonomy, however, his account seems problematically unprotective against the objectionable preference-shaping of non-state actors. Despite claiming that the aim of his educational policies is to make individuals 'capable of resisting whenever others attempt to impose on them certain understandings of who they truly are' (154), Culp's account, in fact, seems to leave citizens at the mercy of such authoritative impositions of who they are and what is expected of them.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to being blind to potential expressive wrongs committed by the state, then, Culp's account ignores formative wrongs committed by allowing other influential societal actors to shape the preferences and worldviews of its citizens in objectionable ways or in ways that otherwise clearly undercut their flourishing without helping them resist such

<sup>8</sup>Putting this in the words of prominent capabilities scholars, Martha Nussbaum and Serene Khader, we can say that people's preferences are *adaptive*. See Khader (2011); Nussbaum (2001).

<sup>9</sup>As seen elsewhere, Culp is aware of this issue – i.e. when noting that 'citizenship education must fight the potentially very problematic socializing effects of unjust institutions that sustain injustice' (118).

impositions. Culp worries that the state is objectionably perfectionist if it embraces educational policies that facilitate autonomy. But by *not* facilitating autonomy in a context of a plenitude of powerful societal actors, who predictably and avoidably shape citizen preferences, the state becomes complicit in the perpetuation of the norms, expectations, and worldviews of the status quo – in the subjugation of women through social norms and expectation, in the repression of homosexual lifestyles through religious dogmatism, and in the narrow materialist consumerism of extreme market societies. In refusing to provide people with the tools to reflect critically on and make an informed decision regarding the authorities that shape their horizon of opportunity, in failing to enact autonomy-facilitating educational policies, the state commits a formative wrong.

### The globalizing content of education and the anti-idealist method

Culp's proposed educational reforms aim to equip citizens with the attitudes, habits, and political capabilities needed to navigate a globalized world through domestically based education. Globalizing education targets several important issues: the mismatch between the nationalized self-understanding of domestic politics and an increasingly transnational reality; a general lack of awareness and commitment to cross-border obligations; and a too narrow conception of what such obligations entail. I am sympathetic to Culp's suggested interventions, which seek to globalize the heart, minds, and political institutions of democratic citizens.<sup>10</sup> Thus, I agree that globalizing interventions are needed for resolving these urgent issues. If anything, Culp's suggested interventions do not globalize enough. I have two suggested amendments.

First, while Culp's focus is educational policies, I think his suggestions tend to underestimate the formative power of other contemporary institutions – especially, when it comes to shaping people's preferences in a nation-centric manner. State and civil societal institutions create and recreate the national identities of their citizens through a multitude of paths and means that go far beyond the educational system. They promote a common language through the state bureaucracy and create a sense of common identity through national symbols, such as statues of great generals, streets named after composers and scientists, and museums of national history, and communal events, such as the Olympics, national holidays, and royal weddings (Axelsen 2013, 463). Many of these nation-building tools, furthermore, are wielded by non-state institutions who share the nation-centred perspective. Considering this context, Culp's educational policies seem inadequately transformative and unlikely to be able to offset the heavy nationalist bias of the preference formation performed by state and non-state actors alike.<sup>11</sup> Much more than educational policies, then, must be globalized if we are to achieve a transnational motivation and accountability. This critique, however, is compatible with the ideas at the heart of Culp's view and should be seen more as a friendly amendment or extension than an objection.

<sup>10</sup>Clayton (2006), chapter 4, also focuses on this issue.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Beckstein similarly worries that Culp's proposed policies will not succeed in motivating citizens for transnational solidarity. See Beckstein (2020). However, he proposes that their low chance of success stems from a failure to engage with tradition, while I argue that it stems from a failure of the state to commit fully to moral cosmopolitanism.

Second, while Culp's account of globalizing the content of education aims to create 'transnational democratic conscientization' (117–129), surprisingly, the lens through which it view the issue is not global. Rather, it is 'internationalist' – that is, state-based. Thus, the principles meant to govern transnational institutions are built by 'national representatives of internally sufficiently just states' (39) and the content of transnational education assumes and starts from the existence of nation states. In doing so, Culp assumes the continued existence of the system of nation states in his policy prescriptions. His interventions, in other words, are *institutionally conservative* – relying on the idea that that normative principles should incorporate significant institutions through and around which the lives of political agents are currently organized and are likely to keep being organized for the foreseeable future (Axelsen 2019).<sup>12</sup>

The problem with this approach, I contend, is that the system of nation states and its continued existence is one of the primary obstacles to the universal fulfilment of basic human needs and rights (Ronzoni 2009; Wenar 2008; Wiedenbrüg 2021). Incorporating the continued existence of nation states into one's prescriptions, therefore, makes such prescriptions unable to rectify the systemic and structural problems endemic to this system, which cause and uphold global poverty and inequality (Axelsen 2019). For his suggested policies to be attuned to these systemic issues, they must be *truly* global and abandon the inequality-exacerbating system of nation states. Culp might reply, reasonably, that his book merely concerns principles of democratic education and are not meant to 'flesh out which institutional arrangements would perfectly realize democratic justice' (118). Abolishing the system of nation states, then, might well be compatible with Culp's account (although its institutional conservatism makes this outcome less likely). Again, then, this is meant more as an expansion of the view than a central objection.

There are reasons to think, then, that Culp's account can accommodate these two reservations. It is worth pausing, however, to reflect on why his prescriptions are not more strongly committed to cosmopolitanism and global institutions. I suspect that this reluctance has to do with Culp's general scepticism towards ideal-theoretical approaches and his hesitancy in specifying the normative ends towards which we should aim.

This is not the place to decide the longstanding debate concerning the place and value of ideal theory. For the purpose of this article, I will merely note one significant and often overlooked advantage to such approaches – one that Culp's account, by distancing itself from ideal theory, is left without. Normative theories play a dual role to play in their application to the real world: they *guide action*, telling political agents what they ought to do, and they *inspire*, deepening the convictions of political agents and inspiring them to fight for a better world. Good ideal theory emphasizes the inspirational component. In the words of Hwa Young Kim, 'Fundamental principles generate, develop, and sustain the depth of conviction that political agents need to fight for justice even when the personal costs are high and the odds of success are low' (Kim, unpublished).<sup>13</sup>

Culp's account relinquishes ideal principles and fundamental commitments to moral cosmopolitanism and personal autonomy. In doing so, it gains in feasibility and action-guidingness what it loses in inspirational force and motivational power. Many people might be satisfied with this trade-off, but I, for one, remain sceptical. By motivating and

<sup>12</sup>See also Blake (2001).

<sup>13</sup>The present argument, in general, is heavily inspired by Kim's work.

inspiring political agents, by deepening their convictions in the principles by which we ought to live, ideal theory can push the boundaries of feasibility (Kim (unpublished), 15). Lacking the inspirational force that such principles can provide, on the other hand, action-guidance easily congeals into inaction.

Julian Culp's book, *Democratic Education in a Globalized World: A Normative Theory*, is not showy. There are no ideas here that will shake or shore up the foundational beliefs of any cosmopolitan lefty, nor are there concepts or principles that will inspire the production of new banners to be carried into protests of activist political movements. Culp's arguments are not adventurous and break little new argumentative ground. Instead, the book is thorough and charitable in many of its depictions and analyses of the most prominent positions in these debates. Based on this careful analysis, it proposes a feasible and (deliberately) philosophically uncontentious sketch of how states should reform their educational policies and why. *Democratic Education in a Globalized World* leaves some stones unturned and its reluctance to commit to fundamental normative principles like moral cosmopolitanism and personal autonomy in its educational policies makes it vulnerable to potent objections. It is also, however, well-researched, carefully argued, and provides plausible guidance towards solving one of the greatest challenges of our time: that the world is globalized, but people and states act and think as though it is still nationalized.

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