

# The Ethical Foundations and Curricular Principles of Global Education

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## 1. Intrinsic Value of Human Beings

Education is of immense value and significance in human life both as an end in itself (as an intrinsic good) and as a means directed toward a greater end or good. The greater good is directly derived from the intrinsic value of education as a right of persons. Persons as ends in themselves bring with their intrinsic value certain rights, one of which is the right to education. This greater good also includes the common good of humanity and future generations (global education as a public good), for without effective global education and a concomitant transformation of human consciousness into world-centric modalities, it is unlikely that human beings will survive the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

A person exists as an on-going dynamic set of potentialities, not as a passive, fundamentally unchanging object. These potentialities of a person can be actualized as the person pursues life-goals—the perceived goods that he or she wishes to pursue during life. Education develops the potential of a person; it helps actualize their life-possibilities in relation to their life-goals, and therefore is included in the range of fundamental rights necessary for a flourishing life. Something similar pertains to humanity, which exists as an on-going dynamic set of potentialities for human liberation: for peace, justice, freedom, and sustainability.

At both levels, what is valuable without qualification is a human being. Every human being is an end in him or herself, as Immanuel Kant (1964) pointed out. To be an end in oneself, he correctly inferred, is to have “dignity,” as opposed to “price.” Dignity is beyond all price, incomparable, denoting an “infinite worth” that cannot be calculated as “more or less.” Human dignity is also the foundation of human moral and legal equality.

Equality here does not mean quantitative sameness. It means that each person has measureless dignity: none more, none less than any other person. Yet “more” or “less” do not apply here in any literal fashion. Since dignity denotes “infinite worth,” applying to each human being, “equality” in this context cannot mean a unity of measurement in which a quantity of more or less can be compared to the same in a quantifiable fashion.

This is a fundamental reason why “equality” can be the objective of legislation or juridical decision-making. These institutions can declare that every person is equal before the law, that each has equal rights with all the others, that each has one vote, and so on. The basis for such legislation is the posited equality of human dignity. There are a number of constitutions worldwide that have the concept of “dignity” written into them (see Daly, 2013).

The first sentences of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights identify this dignity and equality: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and

conscience and should act towards one another is a spirit of brotherhood.” This statement need not mean that humans have “natural rights” prior to the Constitution or the law. This principle can be understood as a social recognition of the special, presuppositional status of persons that is assumed by all legitimate law-making.

Today, there are associations or scholars and activists dedicated to bringing these principles into human relationships and the institutions that govern human relationships. For example: “Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies” founded and directed by Evelyn G. Lindner (2006, of which the present author is a member), forms a worldwide association that studies patterns of humiliation and ways that human beings are subtly or not so subtly marginalized and made to feel less in dignity than others.

They quote some of the great moral leaders of humankind such as Mahatma Gandhi who declared that “It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honored by the humiliation of their fellow beings.” They investigate how these principles of equal dignity and non-humiliation can be placed at the foundation of educational, cultural and legal practices of humankind: “striving to build “right relationships” in every aspect of our collaborative efforts, that is, relationships characterized by equality in dignity, unity in diversity, mutuality, and growth that supports the growth of all involved.”

Where does this mysterious dimension of “infinite worth” come from? It is a contested notion to be sure. Kant declared that it could be presupposed by the fact that each person is a free, rational agent capable of doing what is right regardless of his or her inclinations. The free-rational quality, Kant argued, located our essential humanity in the “intelligible world” beyond human knowledge and science. Today, however, this two-world model has been largely replaced by the holistic world paradigm discovered by contemporary science and articulated by many thinkers worldwide.

From within the holistic model, we no longer speak of two worlds but, rather, of a holistic cosmos consisting of integrated, interdependent “fields within fields” permeated by “depths” that are ultimately infinite or unfathomable. Holistic philosopher Raimundo Panikkar describes our situation as follows:

Every being has an abyssal dimension, both transcendent and immanent. Every being transcends everything – including and perhaps most pointedly “itself,” which in truth has no limits. It is, further, infinitely immanent, i.e., inexhaustible and unfathomable. And this is so not because the limited powers of our intellect cannot pierce deeper, but because this depth belongs to every being as such. (1993: 61)

Nothing which stifles human freedom can endure or be called truly human. Humanness demands the free fulfillment of Man. There is no justice if liberty is not respected. But there is no freedom where justice is violated. No monistic system or uniform worldview will ever satisfy the inexhaustible versatility of Man, whose greatest dignity is inseparable from his or her freedom and personal uniqueness. (Ibid.: 8)

Our dignity is inseparable from our freedom and personal uniqueness. Under the new holistic paradigm, it is dawning on human beings that each person must be understood as a microcosm of the macrocosm. Human beings are not an accidental phenomenon within a vast alien universe but, rather, the evolutionary crowning glory of a cosmos become conscious of itself in us. As microcosm within a holistic universe, each person is not only a unique center of cosmic consciousness but, simultaneously, a manifestation of our common, holistic humanity. Unity-in-diversity emerge together on all levels of the cosmos, and with utmost perfection and beauty in human beings.

On the ethical level, as Emmanuel Levinas points out, each of us is summoned by the depths, the “infinity,” reflected in the face of the other: “The other man commands by his face, which is not confined in the form of its appearance,” he writes (2006: 7). “Between the one that I am and the other for whom I answer gapes a bottomless difference, which is also the non-indifference of responsibility, significance of signification, irreducible to any system whatsoever” (Ibid.: 6). If we address this declaration from the point of view of each being a microcosm of the macrocosm, we understand that we each can recognize the depths in our neighbor, in the other human being, depths that command me to absolute responsibility: to a recognition of that person’s infinite dignity “irreducible to any system whatsoever.” As for Pannikar, Levinas also understands that there is an abysmal dimension that evokes our ethical response, the response of “Here I am”:

The unutterable or incommunicable of interiority that cannot hold in a Said is a responsibility prior to freedom. The unspeakability of the unutterable is described by the preoriginality of responsibility for others, by a responsibility prior to all free engagement, before describing itself by its inability to appear in the *said*. (Ibid.: 52)

The absolute ethical responsibility for the other arises from the absolutely incommensurable infinity reflected in the face of the other, prior to language, prior to what can be said. Yet I must respond; I experience this command as a categorical imperative. This response is the recognition of human dignity, the “infinity in the face of the other.” The dimension of the ethical relationship that can be variously called compassion, empathy, charity, respect, or solicitude is what characterizes my response to the demand arising from the dignity of the other person. I am most fully myself—my personhood in its highest aspect is evoked—when I respond in solicitude to the ethical demand that speaks to me in the face of the other.

## 2. Equality and Justice in Human Institutions

This concept of “solicitude” is elaborated by Paul Ricoeur, the fourth major thinker that I wish to invoke here (in addition to Kant, Panikkar, and Levinas). For Ricoeur, the absolute command for justice recognized in the human existence of the other is responded to in me through my capacity for solicitude, for recognizing the other self “who is an *each*,” that is, an absolutely unique person. I have the capacity to respond, to awaken my empathy. I can open up my capacity to suffer with the other, to understand the needs of the other. On the level of institutions, this translates into the demand for human equality and justice before the law. Ricoeur writes:

*Equality, however it is modulated, is life to institutions what solicitude is to interpersonal relations. Solicitude provides to the self another who is a face, in the strong sense that Emmanuel Levinas has taught us to recognize. Equality provides to the self another who is an each. In this, the distributive character of “each” passes from the grammatical plane, where we encountered it in the Introduction, to the ethical plane. Because of this, the sense of justice takes nothing away from solicitude; the sense of justice presupposes it, to the extent that it holds persons to be irreplaceable. Justice in turn adds to solicitude, to the extent that the field of application of equality is all of humanity. (1992: 202)*

Each person is equally irreplaceable and can be said to have certain right solely in terms of their personhood. Recognition and honors can be earned or merited by some persons and not others. However, human dignity will have none of that. It demands absolute equality and universal institutional structures that can address that dignity through a regime of justice.

In point of fact, the world now lacks any such institutions that might even begin to address the need for universal justice and equality. Expressed differently, the world stands in violation of Article 28 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights which reads: “Everyone is entitled to a social and

international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.” Both the institution of global capitalism which, in fact, establishes vast inequality among human beings, and the system of sovereign nation-states, which legally entrenches inequality, block the imperative for universal justice.

To be born among the poor masses in any number of the world’s sovereign nation-states is to be born into a situation of *structural violence*, generated by the interfaced institutions of capitalism and sovereign nation-states, a structural violence that actively blocks both equality and justice. It is to be born into a situation in which one’s life-opportunities are several restricted, often to the point of deprivation, painful want, and early death. Justice, like Article 28 of the UN Universal Declaration, demands that this be addressed through the adoption of democratic world law under a document designed to address this structurally generated inequality. Such a document is found in the *Constitution for the Federation of Earth* (see Martin, 2010).

The demand for justice is simultaneously the demand for equality and the structural demand for institutions that make equality possible and likely. Upon ratification, the *Earth Constitution* instantly makes every person a world citizen of the Earth Federation, establishing universal legal equality, and thereby also transforming human consciousness in significant measure from a parochial, nation-based form to a universal, planetary form. Article 1 presents one basic task of the Earth Federation government the mandate to “diminish social differences;” Article 12 gives every person equal civil liberties, fundamental freedoms, and due process before the law; and Article 13 guarantees everyone decent housing, wholesome food, clean water, sufficient wages for a dignified existence, and social security in case of old age or in event of accident. The *Constitution* also guarantees everyone a disarmed world of peace with justice and a sustainable protected environment, thus fulfilling Article 28 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Fundamental ethics focuses on the simultaneous equality of all and uniqueness of each. This recognition must also be fundamental to our educational practices if we are ever to have a fulfilled and flourishing world characterized by human liberation. The *Earth Constitution* is our best hope for actualizing such a world. It is concrete, practical, and eminently available for relatively easy ratification. As indicated above, in all likelihood, the adoption of the *Earth Constitution* will immediately begin to transform human consciousness from parochial modalities to a cosmopolitan awareness of world citizenship.

### **3. The Curriculum and Goals of Global Education**

But the worldwide Earth Federation government would also have tremendous impact on educational efforts worldwide in both public and private institutions. Given awareness of this potential impact, the Provisional World Parliament, at its 8<sup>th</sup> session in Lucknow, India, passed World Legislative Act number 26: the Education Act (see Parliament, 2004). The act sets up a curricular framework for all schools, public or private, associated with the Earth Federation or receiving funding aid from the Federation.

The topics of instruction are to be introduced at a young age, and reintroduced throughout the young person’s educational journey at progressively more sophisticated levels. The presupposition of the entire syllabus is world citizenship. Students will be educated into effective world citizenship by

studying global issues, the nature of good government, the possible meanings of “a quality life,” the principle of unity in diversity, the dimensions of world peace, and the *Constitution for the Federation of Earth* itself.

World citizenship is developed through studying these topics on progressively higher levels of sophistication and integration. The following six paragraphs are quoted directly from World Legislative Act number 26:

(1) *Study of global issues.* The global crises confronting humanity at the outset of the twenty-first century are and should be everyone’s concern, including all school children according to their age and cognitive growth. The Earth Federation must make a tremendous effort, similar to that already begun in seminars held by the Graduate School of World Problems and the Institute On World Problems, to educate humanity concerning the astronomical costs of global militarism, global population explosion, global poverty, worldwide lack of healthcare, worldwide lack of sanitation and clean water, and the host of global environmental crises from global warming to global depletion of agricultural lands, fresh water supplies, grazing lands, and ocean fisheries. Every school receiving credit lines or other support from the Earth Federation will integrate study of these issues into its programs. This can be done easily in subjects such as biology, geography, geology, history, sociology, anthropology, physics, chemistry, management, engineering, business, government, medicine, or economics.

(2) *Study of the Constitution for the Federation of Earth,* the history of its creation and ratification, transformation of the old world order to the new, and how it is designed to aid the people of Earth in dealing with global crises. The *Constitution* alone cannot save humanity from the cataclysms portended by the above named global crises without the active help of hundreds of millions of world citizens. The *Constitution* must be studied in every school with an eye to how its spirit and intent (of a peaceful, sustainable, and just world order) can be achieved by people working in their communities, regions, nations, and together worldwide.

(3) *Development of a quality of life index.* Sustainable ecologists have repeatedly pointed out that the conception of “quality of life” promoted by commercial interests and believed by the “consumer society” is an illusion dispelled upon serious thought. It is not and should not be the role of government to dictate what constitutes a “quality life” for humanity other than fulfilling the basic rights of everyone to education, healthcare, social security, peace, security, a decent wage, safe working conditions, etc. However, if every school and educational institution encourages thoughtful reflection on what constitutes a quality life, it is certain that the unsustainable over-consumption and unnecessary consumption of throw away trash now promoted by the commercial interests of the world will rapidly evaporate. Every school and class should be encouraged to discuss what constitutes a quality life and how this can be achieved for the vast majority of persons on our planet. The process will empower people from below and rapidly convert consumption patterns to sustainable, durable, not polluting goods without requiring a burdensome quantity of top-down regulations from the Earth Federation.

(4) *Study of the requirements for world peace.* Every school curriculum shall integrate the concept of “world peace” into a variety of subjects and encourage students and citizens to develop a “world peace index” that will specify the conditions, attitudes, assumptions, activities, and processes that can result in world peace. Students may wish to study the self-justifying and self-perpetuating nature of

the old war-system in the world and contrast this with the assumptions and requirements of a world peace system. As with the quality of life index, reflection on this subject and the construction of one's own or one's group's index will empower people to implement the *Constitution* and the work of the Federation on the local, regional, national, and mundial levels in ways that foster peace, nonviolence, increase in toleration and mutual understanding, disarmament, communication, and world social solidarity.

(5) *Development of a unity in diversity index.* The Preamble to the *Constitution* places the principle of "unity in diversity" into the spirit and intent of the Earth Federation. Curriculum shall study the many forms of diversity in the world, such as religious, cultural, gender, personal, linguistic, tribal, national, ideological, and racial diversities. Students shall discuss throughout their educational experience, at progressively higher levels, the forms of diversity and their relation to various kinds of unity, from cultural, to spiritual, to governmental, etc. Again, this will both empower students and allow them to see the mutual relationships and interdependence of many forms of unity in diversity without excessive governmental legislation from the top down.

(6) *Development of a good government index.* Public education shall encourage students of all ages to reflect on what constitutes good and bad government and to develop a good government index. This index may specify a number of parameters that might constitute good government and ways by which such government may be achieved. Students will better understand the limitations and difficulties of good government. Through education, people shall be empowered to critically examine and participate in local, regional, national, and federal world government in order to make it as good as possible. Such study will lead many to become involved with government throughout their lives and should engage citizens in the process of global transformation toward a decent world order.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the present period of worldwide structural inequality and injustice, prior to the ratification of the *Earth Constitution*, a quality educational curriculum should also address all of these six areas of study. Each of these areas develops world citizenship, both in terms of the knowledge necessary for participating in world government but also in terms of the "world-centric" consciousness necessary for world citizenship. In this era prior to ratification, it is just as important to study the *Earth Constitution* (its structures, integrated designs, and fundamental principles) as it will be after ratification.

Individual dignity and the respect that it demands comes together in the educational praxis that treats students as developing public citizens, as public world citizens who study global public issues in the light of the universal equality and justice that institutionalized ethics demands. In global public education with a curriculum such as the one mandated by World Legislative Act 26, the interpersonal ethical dimension of solicitude and respect interfaces with the institutionalized public dimension of equality and justice. The equal dignity of students is recognized and presupposed in their developing encounter with the great public questions of human existence (global issues, global governance, world peace, etc.). Ethical relationships and public justice come together (both in the era prior to ratification of the *Earth Constitution* and in the era of world peace subsequent to ratification) in the educational praxis that focuses on the *Earth Constitution* as the historic meeting point of the dimensions of dignity and justice.

To think in terms of world government, and the design of a *Constitution* giving us non-military democratic world government, is to rapidly enhance the cosmopolitan consciousness necessary for the future of the world. It also serves to train those who will be ratifying and participating in the world government once the first operative stage is reached. In sum, within this little essay, as briefly as possible, I have tried to outline the ethical foundations of global education, the institutional forms of equality and justice that it must assume and promote, and the general form of the curriculum that it should best pursue. Let us all join together to make effective global education and democratic global government a living reality.

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