

Appraise the pros and cons of cosmpolitanism

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Cosmopolitanism is the term to illustrate a theoretical belief of how some think the world should be, where interstate boundaries are abolished and citizens become part of a global body. It is derived from the ancient Greek, kosmopolites, usually translated as 'citizen of the world'. Cosmopolitanism takes different stand-points throughout the fields of sociology, politics and philosophy.

Gerard Delanty splits the concept into four main categories: "internationalism, globalisation, transnationalism and post-nationalism" (Delanty 2000: 52) and four sub-categories "legal, political, cultural and civic" cosmopolitanism. This essay shall analyse and evaluate arguments for and against the notion of cosmopolitanism according to Immanuel Kant's perception and Hegel's analysis of the subject matter.

Since Kant's perception is pre-dominantly a form of internationalism and legality, and he is known as the modern forefather of the contemporary conceptualisation, I shall primarily focus on the arguments for and against legal cosmopolitanism. Immanuel Kant developed his notion of cosmopolitanism as a result to the ever increasing Hobbesian 'state of nature' in the international realm, between the individualistic actors, nation states and the ever growing interstate communication; especially post the peace of Westphalia where state sovereignty became formalised.

Hegel believed that this individuality amongst states in their hobbesian 'pursuit of felicity' would only lead to war. "when the particular wills of states can come to no agreement, the controversy can be settled only by war." (Hegel 2001: 264) This in mind, I shall reference the views and opinions of contemporary theorists on Kant's conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism. One <https://assignbuster.com/appraise-the-pros-and-cons-of-cosmpolitanism/>

of the main positives of cosmopolitanism according to modern theorists is accountability, Kant's predominantly legal cosmopolitanism was the ideology where state conflict could be resolved into 'perpetual peace' through international laws.

Contemporary legal cosmopolitanism as an example, arguably is demonstrated in the Nuremberg trials in 1945. It was the first time that states and state leaders could be held accountable under international legislation and judicial trial. Karl Jaspers states that the trial was a "new attempt in behalf of order in the world" (Jaspers 1947: 51) and Robert Fine elaborates on Jaspers argument that "Nuremberg marked the dawn of a new cosmopolitan order in which individuals, as well as states, could be held accountable to international law even when acting within the legality of their own state." (Fine 2003: 610) Kant's philosophy towards the birth of modern cosmopolitanism was pre-dominantly legal, as he desired republican universal legality across the international realm, in order to achieve 'perpetual peace'. "No Independent States, large or small shall come under the dominion of another state by inheritance, exchange, purchase or donation" (Kant 1795).

Thomas Pogge, a contemporary cosmopolitan theorist depicts that in cosmopolitanism's universality "the status of the ultimate unit of concern attaches to every living human being equally- not merely to some subset, such as men, aristocrats, Aryans, Whites or Muslims" (Pogge 1992: 48), according to this some may argue that one fault in Kant's idealistic Cosmopolitanism is that there were no equal rights for women and that the law under cosmopolitanism only applied to men.

This indicates that the trial with the Nazi crimes against humanity would be amicably subsumable to Kant's theory because it is bringing the injustices of the German state during the Nazi period of power to justice. Kant wished to retain the exercise of power to law" (Delanty 200: 55) Having a ' universality' of international laws to present crimes or excess power conclusively is a positive aspect supporting the theory of cosmopolitanism.

Some aspects of cosmopolitanism are embedded within our society today by the overrule of international law, especially since the increase of globalisation and the extensive expansion of interstate communication. However arguably some see cosmopolitanism as a means of promoting western political values over common enemies for example during the cold war with the USA's involvement into communist Vietnam. Vietnam was seen as a case study where the US intervened in order to promote liberal democracy.

This was a result of the US's foreign policy, you could argue that there has been considerable criticism towards the USA's foreign policy as it has created an abundant amount of unnecessary conflicts, for example the Iraq and Iran conflicts. Robert Fine states that " a destructive criticism of the idea of cosmopolitan right has been put forward by legal and political theorists who argue that cosmopolitanism is essentially a banner under which powerful nations conduct wars against their enemies and portray them as enemies of humanity itself. (Fine 2003: 611) Essentially this depicts a detrimental aspect to the ideal of cosmopolitanism. " a number of states may make themselves into a family, the union, because it is an individuality, must create an opposition, and so beget an enemy. " (Hegel 2001: 259) This

illustrates Hegel's awareness of Kant's idea, though he is illustrating here that Groups or unions will be created from states to, on a larger level create one individual to face their enemies.

Though Carver and Martin illustrate that Kant was a "critique of imperialism and colonialism" which you could argue is a primitive form of spreading political values and beliefs, he was a promoter of republicanism and at the centre of his philosophy he believed that "all political constitutions should ultimately be republican" (Carver 2006: 39-41). Delanty also contributes to this issue by stating the problem with Kant's cosmopolitanism is in "transferring the republican constitution onto the international order".

Even Hegel thought that Kant's theory was inaccurate to modern times. Though many thought Hegel wished to criticize and oppose Kant's understanding of cosmopolitanism, evidence suggests that he supported it but thought that it just needed reformulation in accordance to different epoch. "It is argued that Hegel's critique was neither regressive nor nationalistic, but rather that he advanced the theory of cosmopolitan right beyond the Kantian framework of formal natural law. (Fine 2003: 610) "Hence, Kant proposed an alliance of princes, which should settle the controversies of states, and the Holy Alliance was probably intended to be an institution of this kind. But the state is individual, and in individuality negation is essentially implied"(Hegel 2001: 259) Robert Fine refers to Karl Schmitt's biography on the Nuremberg trials, where he states that "the only distinction between crimes against humanity and crimes for humanity is that the former were committed by Germans and the latter by Americans. (Fine

2003: 611). Fundamentally this denotes that there is a considerable amount of evidence to illustrate the faults with cosmopolitanism on a whole. On the other hand Kant had anticipated for this abuse of power within his concept and as Robert Fine states he desired to create " a federation of nations based on mutual co-operation and voluntary consent among a plurality of independent states. " This deems that the individual nation state remains with some sovereignty but the overall power lies within the federation of states.

Although Kant's republican prejudice may promote western ' imperialism' because by stating that all political systems should work within the ideology of republicanism, it shall overwhelmingly create conflict with other foreign systems of politics and contrasts with what Robert Fine illustrates as the basis behind cosmopolitanism. " standing armies would be abolished, no national debt would be incurred in connection with military costs, no state would forcibly interfere in the internal affairs of another, no acts of war would be allowed which would ' make mutual con? ence impossible during a future time of peace', foreigners would be afforded a right of ' universal hospitality', and the indigenous inhabitants of newly conquered colonies would no longer be ' counted as nothing"(Fine 2003: 613) Essentially it is difficult to appraise the pros and cons of cosmopolitanism especially when referring to its earliest contemporary form. Each pro or con has its own co-relating positive and negative.

However overall evidence suggests that if I were indeed to analyse the above pros and cons it would seem that there are more significant arguments in favour of cosmopolitanism as accountability is key in the

modern world we live in. Therefore cosmopolitanism is a better alternative to a liberal democracy that creates conflict.

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