

KATRIN FLIKSCHUH,  
RAINER FORST &  
DARREL MOELLENDORF | **On The Role of the  
Political Theorist  
Regarding Global Injustice**

**Interview of Katrin Flikschuh, Rainer Forst and Darrel Moellendorf  
by Valentin Beck and Julian Culp for *Global Justice: Theory Practice  
Rhetoric (TPR)***

In July 2013 TPR spoke with Katrin Flikschuh, Rainer Forst and Darrel Moellendorf about the role of the political theorist regarding global injustice at the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities in Bad Homburg, Germany. The choice of topic traces back to one of the core intuitions that led to the foundation of TPR: In order to achieve progress in the theorizing of global justice, it is necessary to examine real public discourses. Theories of global justice should take into account the communicative strategies that are involved in public discussions of social phenomena relevant to global justice. After all, if theorists of global justice aspire to be practically relevant, then they should be sensitive to the social struggles for global justice “on the ground” and also assess to what extent their ideas and claims are taken up by political actors.

However, there is a significant gap between the very prominent role of theories of global justice in contemporary political theory and the prevalence of these theories in public discourse. Even though public discourses relate to many social phenomena that are relevant for global justice theorizing, these discourses do not reflect public familiarity with the philosophical notions that are important for the current theorizing of global justice – e.g. that of background justice or non-domination. Starting with this observation, it seems pertinent to discuss the dual role of the political philosopher as a participant in the formation of theoretical discourses and as contributor of normative ideas to the public discourse. In the interview, we grouped our questions for Katrin Flikschuh, Rainer Forst and Darrel Moellendorf under three headings: recent developments in the academic literature on global justice, the relation between normative theorizing and public discourse, and the way in which the institutional academic context influences political philosophers’ and theorists’ work on global justice.

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**TPR:** Let us start with your assessment of the recent developments in the literature on global justice. Some theorists claim that there are some recent publications that belong to a “third wave”<sup>1</sup> of theorizing about justice. According to this evaluation, the third wave is different from both “the first wave” of cosmopolitan or globalist theories, which extrapolated liberal-egalitarian principles of domestic justice to the global realm, and the “second wave” of statist or nationalist theories which defended the validity of sufficientarian norms of justice beyond the state. These third wave theorists share the intuition that a theory of global justice should require more than just the realization of a global minimum, even if they don’t postulate liberal-egalitarian principles for the world at large. Arguably, theorists

<sup>1</sup> Laura Valentini, *Justice in a Globalized World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3; Gabriel Wollner “The Third Wave of Theorizing Global Justice”, this issue.

who are good candidates for membership in the third wave understood in this way are Laura Valentini, Matthias Risse, Richard Miller, Aaron James and Lea Ypi.<sup>2</sup> What do you think of the notion of a third wave of global justice theories? And would you say that these recent works are proof of progress in the theorizing of global justice?

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** If I may start by noting a slight puzzlement, in the sense that I probably do not share the view that this third wave is all that distinctive. My own sense is that it is largely a reaction to John Rawls' *The Law of Peoples*, just as the cosmopolitan debate before that was largely a reaction to Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*.<sup>3</sup> So the first wave cosmopolitans such as Charles Beitz and Thomas Pogge typically argued that Rawls' liberal theory of justice like all liberal theories is a universal theory, because it supports moral individualism. They asked why one should therefore not extend the principles of justice to the global sphere. And then the nationalists reacted against that. My sense is that Rawls at some point intervened and set out what is now often referred to as international statism, i.e. a halfway house between the two poles of cosmopolitanism and statism, by saying that even though there are no global duties of distributive justice, there are certain natural duties of justice that states owe to one another. The initial reaction to Rawls' intervention of course was that it is very disappointing, that it is just the status quo, really. And then I think it began to be absorbed more and perhaps reflected on more *why* Rawls held that position. Was it really just that he was a bit unaware of what was going on, or was it a theoretically well-defended position? I think the third wave develops out of that. But I do see it largely as a response to the Rawlsian lead in a certain way, like the first wave. So in that sense I don't find that position quite so unexpected as it may seem to others.

Whether progress has been made? One could say there has been a certain retrenchment from an initially quite optimistic view about the fact that "we live in a globalized world". Some of these books that have appeared, e.g. *New World Order* by Anne-Marie Slaughter, saw the demise of the state and were very optimistic.<sup>4</sup> But now there seems to be less optimism about that. Is that progress? I don't know whether it is progress or whether it is simply a kind of retrenchment back to a more minimal position.

**DARREL MOELLENDORF:** One of the noticeable things about the theorists you have mentioned is that they all represent very different positions. And I think

2 Laura Valentini, *Justice in a Globalized World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Matthias Risse, *On Global Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Richard Miller, *Globalizing Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Aaron James, *Fairness in Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Lea Ypi, *Global Justice & Avant-Garde Political Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

3 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

4 Anne-Marie Slaughter, *New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

that is characteristic of the state of the debate now. It has become much more complicated and more refined – I suppose that is the way to put it. So the lines are not so easily drawn between statist and cosmopolitans as they once were. People are taking up positions from the perspective of coercion, for example, or from the perspective of fairness in a trading practice. Or they are starting out with a fairly modest statist position but then go on noticing that there is this great deal of injustice that is caused by, say, American imperialism, which brings their position into a kind of view of remedial justice that looks a lot like cosmopolitanism.

So I think that one of the things that is characteristic of the debate is that – and this is true of philosophy in general – as debates continue they become more complicated and the positions and the differences between people become much more fine-grained. I suppose it is fair to say that's generally progressive. That is what we would expect as we begin to think more seriously and carefully about things.

**RAINER FORST:** Well, I would always hope there is progress in philosophy, which is contingent on what others have achieved before you. And I think Katrin is right that Rawls plays a major role in how the debate has developed. I am also not sure if I would speak of a third wave. That may be saying too much, because cosmopolitanism and state- and nation-based views are still around and not a thing of the past – and theories which transcend that stale alternative have been developed before, if, for example, you think of the volume *Global Justice* edited by Thomas Pogge in 2001.<sup>5</sup> But surely the theories become increasingly differentiated as Darrel says. But it's not just that the debate between cosmopolitanism and statism or nationalism became more refined. In the course of the debate other aspects of the problem of global justice came to the foreground, and that's a good thing.

In recent years the question of the relation between theory and practice has become more prominent. At first it was dealt with as the issue of ideal versus non-ideal theory. But as many people have shown, there are so many different ways to understand the distinction that you need a more refined apparatus. Then practice-dependence and practice-independence played some role. But the question of *what* kind of practice we need to focus on has to be addressed more thoroughly. In my view, it's an improvement that this distinction came to the foreground, but it has to be pushed even more into the realm of an empirical analysis of the relations of global *injustice*. So there is room for further development. I think in particular of the valuable contributions of critical theory, if I may cite Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, Jean Cohen, the late Iris Young, Jim Bohman, Hauke

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5 Thomas Pogge (ed.), *Global Justice* (Malden et al.: Blackwell Publishing, 2001).

Brunkhorst and others – Habermas to some extent, of course, too, even though his view is not a global justice view in the standard sense. Critical theory has a particular approach to the relation between the normative and the empirical. And in the context of global (in-)justice, this relation is even more difficult and pressing than it has been regarding questions of justice within a bounded society. We still lack a clear view of the kinds of injustices that exist on the global level: conceptually and empirically. Thomas Pogge’s work is still important here because he emphasized to take global power relations into account. But in order to do that, we need to address the question of what the empirical sources actually are that we rely on when we ask questions like *Who Governs the Globe?*<sup>6</sup>, as well as why the power relations which we investigate are “unjust.” There is the need for more cooperation between philosophy and the social sciences here.

We also need to remind ourselves of a question that Katrin focuses on in her work – and Darrel and me to some extent, too – namely the universalism, culturalism or contextualism question. It is a pressing question and I think a number of the works including those you referred to as the third wave need to do more to ask to what extent premises of our arguments come from a particular cultural context, and what it means to universalize them. We are already familiar with these issues from the somewhat older debate about human rights, and I think that the global justice debate must move a little further in that direction; it must reflect the problems of universalising particular normative outlooks, whether they are liberal or of another kind. Even the idea of a “nation” if universalized might run into similar problems.

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** Can I ask you a follow up question? I think I am inclined to agree with you, Rainer, but I am not quite sure which way you were going. So you suggested that in the global debate the question of the relationship between normative principles and empirical aspects is more pressing than in the domestic context.

**RAINER FORST:** At least it is more complicated.

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** Empirical problems are always normatively prefigured – what we take to be an empirical problem is in part a function of our normative principles. And so in a certain sense we identify something as a problem of politics by reference to our value framework. So we assume that in the domestic context, which we know relatively well (where we know the institutions, the governmental processes and our society better), there is a kind of fit (for having done it for years, and years, and years), between our normative principles and what we take

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6 Deborah Avant, Martha Finnemore and Susan Sell (eds.), *Who Governs the Globe?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

to be the relevant empirical analysis. Whereas at the global level it is perhaps not clear that there is such a fit – at least not yet. Are you saying something like that?

**RAINER FORST:** Well, I mean two things. First, with respect to the global level, the challenges for an empirical analysis of the nature of the existing legal, economic, political, social and cultural relations worldwide are enormous. If you think of a global sociology that people like Wallerstein and others have developed, you see what an enormous challenge that is. You have to factor in colonialism, capitalist forms of exploitation, cultural particularities, state failure, all kinds of things. It is also a value question what kind of empirical description you follow, as you say; it is not a question to which the social sciences alone will give you the answer. You have to relate the normative to the sociological in a sensible way.

But you also mentioned a second aspect. The question of the institutions that are necessary or conducive to solving or alleviating the problems on a global scale is also very complicated. That is partly due to the fact that we do not have these institutions yet, and partly due to a lack of institutional imagination. True, we already have a few transnational institutions, but we might not want to preserve them in their current shape, though we have to start with them, maybe with a reform of the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), for example. So the sort of institutional imagination that is needed is left in the air as compared to the institutional imagination about our domestic societies as we know them. And so it is no wonder that people come up with ideas about how the world should be regulated that look like the Federal Republic of Germany, for example. [laughter]

In sum, we need three things: We need an empirical account of the relations we actually talk about, we need a normative account of what justice means beyond the state and we need an institutional way of thinking about bringing – to say it carefully – more justice about.

**DARREL MOELLENDORF:** You don't have to say that the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk to also think that philosophers need to be pretty modest when giving these sorts of institutional recommendations. We are not going to lead on these questions, we are going to respond to developments as they come about through other forces.

Our job will be to make normative sense of institutions such as the WTO. This is difficult because these institutions are relatively new. We have several hundred years of experience of living in states and theorizing about states, but we have only a couple of decades of experience of living under an increasingly institutionalized international trade framework, and we are still trying to understand what this institution is and what it does and what the possibilities for it are. And that

makes the theorizing about it very different from the theorizing about justice in a domestic context.

I think this necessarily throws us into empirical issues more than if we were to look at state institutions. So another characteristic of these developments in global justice is that you see people spending a lot of time dealing with empirical literature, trying to understand empirical literature. Sometimes they even make interventions into the literature as Thomas Pogge admirably does. Not many people are capable of doing that, most are trying to understand the literature. I think that this happens much less often with respect to domestic justice.

**TPR:** Let us now move on to a second theme. There is a very visible gap between the familiarity of global justice and injustice in theoretical discourses on the one hand, and an almost complete absence of that notion in public discourses. Obviously there are exceptions. There are some social actors who refer to that notion. But there is clearly not an abundance of public conversation about global justice. This is particularly striking because certain relevant social phenomena, such as the exploitation of labour in the textile industry, occupy a very significant space in our media. Our point is that these phenomena do not occupy this space *explicitly* as phenomena of global injustice. So how do you explain this mismatch between the theoretical and public discourses? And do you think it is likely to disappear in the years to come?

**RAINER FORST:** This is a great question, but it has a disputable premise, namely that in philosophical theorizing there is a prominent and to some extent shared notion of global justice or injustice. It is true that the notion is prominent, but I do not know how much agreement there is; if you ask different philosophers what global injustice consists of, you get very different answers.

I think in the general public – at least in Germany and in some of the countries I know a little better – social justice is mostly framed as a national affair. The idea that citizens as members of a particular political community owe each other institutions of justice, even though they disagree widely about what that exactly means, defines the proper context of justice for most people. And that is why when they think about the question of global justice - justice beyond the state - they think about it mostly in two terms, namely “development” and “aid”. And the whole rhetoric of “aid” and “helping others” deflects from the justice question, because it implies that even if there is a duty to help others in need, the fact that they are in need is not caused by a global structure. The thought that we might profit from this structure and that it might be unjust is generally not raised. So I think there is an ideological component in redefining the question of global justice as a question of development and aid, because it deflects from the question

of how closely poverty in one part of the world and wealth in other parts of the world are related.

The other term that regularly comes up in public discourse is that of human rights. And I think human rights are notoriously ambivalent – depending on whether they are used in the global aid rhetoric or in a global justice rhetoric. If you think there is a duty to realize human rights worldwide, and if you add social rights, then that becomes a justice argument, as Simon Caney and others present it. If you think human rights are primarily an internal affair of nations, but that you need to help certain nations in becoming capable of realizing those rights, then it becomes an aid issue. And still, even if the human rights issue is defined as a justice issue (say with the help of the capabilities approach) it does not necessarily include the full causal, structural story of injustice, which I at least think should be part of the picture. You could have a justice argument about human rights, for example that each person is owed certain resources by all those who are capable of securing them, in order to realize a certain status of basic needs fulfilment. And for that you do not need a comprehensive causal story about injustice. So I think there are a number of moves within philosophy as well as in the wider public to deflect from understanding global injustice as a complex of structures of domination, especially economic and political domination.

**DARREL MOELLENDORF:** 10 to 15 years ago there were massive demonstrations about the WTO in cities throughout North America and in Europe. And I think it would have been fair during that time to describe that movement as a global justice movement. I think many people involved in it conceived of themselves as being in a global justice movement. This was partially because there was this new institution. And because this new institution looked like it was vulnerable to critique in a certain way, it drew a considerable amount of attention. Since it became a standing and seemingly accepted feature of international practice, it doesn't seem to be object of the same amount of attention and criticism anymore. But it's a bit hard to say whether or not we are in some down period of a cycle that is likely to rise again or whether or not there is just a general predisposition in the public to not think in terms of global justice and whether there really is a mismatch of the sort you described. I'm not sure but I think it is worth noting that it has not always been the case that there is no global justice movement.

This is connected with what Rainer has been saying. Part of the reason there isn't a lot of awareness or concern about global justice issues amongst the broader public is that people experience institutions of a state, but not institutions beyond the state. They buy and sell things, but they don't experience these actions as being influenced by institutions of a global market; they buy or sell, or bargain

with their employer about wages, but they rarely think of these interactions as being influenced by the institution of a global market. Even though international institutions such as the WTO have an effect on domestic policies, many still experience the market first and foremost as a domain of domestic policies. So it takes another intellectual move to see what the sources of those policies are. And insights like these depend on what the media does and on what educators do.

One additional concern is that because theorists of global justice often speculate what new institutions would be and do as opposed to examining existing institutions, it is harder for people to get a handle on that sort of discourse, because they are busy dealing with the institutions that they are experiencing on a regular basis. That partly accounts for the difference of attention between the public and the theorists of global justice.

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** Some of these anti-WTO movements were perceived as anti-globalization movements. And I think that they were ambivalent about what they wanted. I agree with Darrel that people do still think very much in terms of the state, and one cannot blame them for that because that is what they experience. The question though seems to ask “why isn’t everyone on the barricades? This is such an urgent problem and we are discussing it until the cows come home. No one in the political theory debate can avoid encountering the problem of global justice. Why isn’t this reflected in society more?”

But I wonder whether it isn’t slightly misplaced to think that there is no conscious acknowledgment of it. It does seem to me that over the last thirty or forty years people’s perceptions have shifted on quite a number of topics. Racism for instance is no longer acceptable, at least not overtly, even in fairly traditional societies. Other instances of shifting perceptions might be shared attitudes towards music or interactions via social media, which both account for people finding the world has become a much smaller place. So even if there is not necessarily a conscious articulation of the problem of global justice, there is nonetheless a kind of shift in the general social understanding of the impact of the world out there on one’s own domestic environment. I don’t know what that means. I’m saying that just because the word “global justice” is not used in ordinary discourse doesn’t mean there aren’t some kinds of social shifts in perception about global connectedness, both negative and positive. Clearly some of these movements are against this interconnectedness – supporting local farmers and stuff like that – but some are also in favour of it.

In general, though, I do not think the debate in academia is responsible for that shift. It seems to be wider economic and social developments. So if the question is: “Why does the academic literature not have more of a social impact on the



debate?”, then I would answer that this is nothing unusual. It doesn’t strike me that academia in general has an awful lot of immediate impact on what people talk about in the streets.

**RAINER FORST:** If it has, it is only because its discourse is connected to transnational political movements and agents who have some force, a critical force, even if only as a minority. But I think part of the problem of global justice is to determine who are the movements and agents to carry that project forward. This is the problem to which Katrin referred when she was responding to Darrel about how the anti-globalization imagination works: namely that criticizing global injustice does not imply that you endorse the same substantial vision of global justice as a project that would unite Swedes, Italians, Ghanaians, Brazilians, Canadians, Koreans and people in other places.

We have to see that the left (to use this very general term) predominantly is a socialist or social democratic left that has its support within particular countries, has its projects and base there, has its democratic force there, and has its constituency there. The socialist movement and the social democratic movement always had a universalist core idea about justice, but it was mostly directed at national regimes and organizations of society, especially once the global proletarian revolution was not an option any more.

So yes, there are movements against extreme forms of exploitation and terrible working conditions, there is a movement concerned with ecological issues, with climate change in particular. But is there a global movement for distributive justice? I am not so sure.

**DARREL MOELLENDORF:** I think that there are bits and pieces of these things. There are for example people who are talking about global or international financial regulation and an international financial transaction tax. But they are not just talking about it, they are mobilising campaigns, having demonstrations, having people write to their local politicians. But it hasn’t grabbed the public imagination, that’s for sure. It is not yet headline news.

**RAINER FORST:** Think of Europe at the present and of how things fall apart when a major distributive crisis comes along.

**TPR:** With regards to the current state of affairs, Darrel has suggested that the anti-globalization rhetoric of 15 years ago might have had more in common with global justice theories than public discourse does now. Taking into account the global financial crisis, one could add that the issue of global poverty is less present now than it has been before – especially if you think of the Gleneagles G8 summit in 2005 or the “End Global Poverty Now” campaign at that time. This issue seems less prominent now than it was a couple of years ago. Does this

development make the intervention of normative theorists into public discourse more or less relevant? And conversely: how relevant are theories of global justice for addressing the global financial crisis? Do normative theorists have anything important to say about that?

**DARREL MOELLENDORF:** I believe they *should* have something important to say about the global financial crisis. So many of the premises of theories of global justice derive from some understanding of the way in which the world is interconnected, and that makes the issue of global justice a live one. The global financial crisis is a textbook example of interconnection. So what starts as a homelending crisis in the United States spreads to other developed countries, then the developing countries and the least developed countries. But it is remarkable that there has been little from theorists of global justice about the issue of the interconnectedness of global financial institutions and the justice of how these institutions expose people to risk, i.e. to the risk of being part of this broader international financial framework. So that's a disappointment, I think. This is partially because it is hard for philosophers to understand. It's economics, it's political economy and it's not easy to get into. But it seems to me that it's one of the areas that hasn't been adequately addressed. It is one of the areas that we should be willing to spend a lot more time on. And the European crisis is a good example as well. It's a similar sort of thing over a smaller geographical area. But the way in which a crisis can spread from country to country would be the natural territory for accounts of global justice.

I guess a part of the question you have posed has to do with why people who are living in a time of crisis in Europe might be thinking less about justice and being more preoccupied with the crisis conditions they are living in, and I think that is a problem for politics. A problem of politics is that when these events begin to unfold people turn inward and so you have the rise of nationalist, fascist and racist movements. And of course there is a big difference between the public response to these economic crises and the responses theorists might consider.

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** I just wonder at what level normative theorists would be expected to intervene in these things, because crises happen all the time. Granted, the financial crisis was a big one, but the petrodollar crisis in the early 80s, for instance, was big, too. We didn't notice it so much because it was more about the so-called developing countries. But that was a massive crisis. I think it partly started the global justice debate, because the deprivation caused by the structural adjustment programs was really quite phenomenal. So now we have a financial crisis which we find ourselves more immediately subject to. Is the expectation

that we shift gears, theoretically, in explaining what that particular crisis is about, or in how we should react? Arguably, this would be an over-reaction. There is something to be said for taking a longer-term view and not necessarily reacting to every crisis that hits us.

I worry that we are not even sure what the theoretical question is in global justice. What is it that we are really asking? I find it less and less clear. So from that perspective I think we shouldn't always assume that we have something to say in reaction to every event that happens, but that we should take stock in a much more abstract way by asking ourselves whether the ways in which we have been wont to think about political processes and political morality since Hobbes, say, is really still adequate.

A lot of global justice theorists currently think that 1945 was some kind of watershed, a point at which the world began to be different from the world until then. And my sense is that we have still not quite understood the enormity of the change. My sense is that there was decolonization, for example, and the expectation that the decolonized states would develop in the Western mould. This didn't happen. We are not quite sure how these states are going to develop, but we may have to learn to accept that it may not be these states that are failing the model of Western liberalism, but the model that is failing those contexts. And if that is a real possibility, we need seriously to re-think our basic theoretical assumptions. So it is not necessarily a good idea to just react to the most recent crisis. It is better to look back and ask ourselves what has shifted fundamentally – this is what we are still trying to catch up with theoretically.

**RAINER FORST:** I also don't know whether society, in order to reflect on the current crisis, needs more political theorists to inform it about how to do so. As we know, if you have five different philosophers in a room, you get five different opinions. That is enlightening, too. But the theorist isn't necessarily also a public intellectual with a lot to say to the public. However, should a political theorist who thinks about global justice be able to reflect on the crisis as an issue of global injustice? There I would say yes, for the quality of a theory depends on whether it is in touch with the current state of affairs. You need – as Darrel said – a story about the interconnectedness and about the systemic failures that are going on. In that sense I think the crisis is relevant. So it is not so much that the public needs the theorist, even though sometimes it does. It is rather that the theorists need to take into account what's going on.

I think your question raises general issues about how political theory is being done, how specialized it is – which often is a great thing and accounts for some of the progress you asked about. But it comes with disadvantages, too. The lack of interdisciplinary exchange and the incompatibility of vocabularies – even

within philosophy sometimes – is a problem. All of us agree that theorizing about global justice is a normative challenge, but it is a normative challenge that you have to take on with a conviction that you speak about a complex political, social and cultural landscape of which you need an adequate understanding. But political theorists apply very different paradigms to social reality. Some have the idea that the world is a plurality of different cultures and societies. And so their theorizing tries to make these units compatible, or find an overlapping consensus or *modus vivendi* for these units. But others have a very different view. Some, like me, think structural domination exercised by economic and political forces is the key to understanding what is going on. Others have a view that focuses on the capabilities or the lack of resources that individuals have. So you get very different ideas about what the major issue is, and these ideas in turn animate thinking about global justice. So when we engage in debates about global justice within political theory and political philosophy, we have to exchange our views about precisely what situation it is that we are addressing.

**TPR:** ... which brings us to our last questions on the academic background conditions of theorizing about global justice. Rainer Forst in his very first remark questioned whether theories of global justice, especially the most recent ones, are sufficiently sensitive to the plurality of world views, cultures and ways in which people think about normativity itself – that is about how certain rules become binding. Is there perhaps a liberal bias in theorizing on global justice? And if there is, could it be that the academic institutional contexts in which the discourse on global justice is carried out are partly responsible for it?

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** I very much agree that the bias, to the extent that there is one, probably has a lot to do with the institutional framework. I think it also has something to do with the dominance of the Western tradition of theorizing. It is a written tradition that has spread over many continents, whereas other traditions have been much more local. I take it that African philosophy, for example, has suffered, comparatively, from the fact that it is an unwritten and oral tradition. So it is less easy to transport elsewhere – and, of course, it suffers from the dominance of the Western tradition in other ways. The idea of universities and academic learning generally is a very Western idea, i.e. that you have these institutions and that you sit there and reflect. So the very setup seems to reflect a particular kind of intellectual culture. It also reflects the fact that there has been a long tradition of written exchanges, especially amongst Europeans, who used to write in Latin and now often write in English. So it is a tradition that has historically been quite dominant and I don't think that one can fault it for that historical heritage. I think what one can fault it for is the unreflective nature of that state of affairs, that by and large a lot of us talk merely to *each other* about our latest thoughts. And you get caught up in that, because you travel from one such institutional

site to another. I don't think it is wilful and I don't think it's malicious. But it is unreflective. It is also quite hard to break out of, and we need to make an effort to break out of it. So there is a bias – unintentional, yet often harmful nonetheless, intellectually and in other ways.

**DARREL MOELLENDORF:** This is a hard question in some ways. One thing that is clear is that when we think about what political theory and political philosophy might be a hundred years from now, it is going to look different, probably largely due to the influence of Chinese and Indian philosophers. I would expect that the Indian and Chinese academic life in general would overtake the Western academic life in this century. But we don't know what that is going to do to the disciplines. I suspect it will mean among other things that people will talk more about the political traditions of those countries than they are now. And some of us will have to learn a lot more about those traditions than we have so far. But I suspect the debates will proceed with the same emphasis on what counts as good argumentation and good scholarship, i.e. that there will be the same focus on presenting and defending critical points of views in the way that we are doing it now. So the transition might be rather a transition of reference than a transition of style. Whether or not this tradition is going to have different core values relative to the dominant liberal paradigm is hard to say. My sense is that liberalism, at least of a certain kind, is the philosophy of liberation. Where people rub up against authoritarian governments, they are going to be naturally drawn to liberal political principles and we are going to see resistance in authoritarian countries that leads people to endorse liberal-egalitarian principles. They may endorse them by embedding them in their own tradition, but I suspect that those principles won't disappear.

**RAINER FORST:** I agree that the academic discourse about global justice is not a global discourse. It is dominated by certain views, and it would be good to globalize this discourse. However, I also think that it is a mistake to assume that there are unified non-Western traditions. Think of all these societies where there is unrest at the moment, and where there have been conflicts about what a justifiable social order is. It would be a simplification to think that there are Western conceptions of justice and completely different non-Western ones. Rather, there are differing views within Western societies (and within other societies and traditions), and areas of consensus between different societies. We must be sensitive to the social struggles in different societies, past and present. And we will have to see whether these social struggles for liberation and justice can be understood using a general, unified language.

So I think we should adopt a critical theory view on contemporary societies and cultures, and look at the conflicts *within* them, because justice is a term

that applies to such conflicts. It is about engaging in struggles in the first place, questioning justifications and creating new ones. It is also a mistake to believe that the West has exclusive possession of certain normative ideas such as the idea of individual rights. The Western tradition took a long time to bring forth the idea and a much longer time to implement the reality of individual rights. We still see many struggles in Western societies about that. So there is not only the problematic cultural homogenization of other societies, there is also homogenization of Western society, as if a Rawlsian description of a society is a description of the society we live in. That's a major error.

**KATRIN FLIKSCHUH:** The only addition I would like to make to Rainer's comment is that we shouldn't only study the social processes in other countries, we should also study the philosophical theories of other countries. I agree with Rainer, but I think that the thoughts as well as the social institutions should be of interest for the political theorist.

**TPR:** Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts on these matters.

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