

Gillian Brock

Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account.

Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009.

288 pages

US\$110.00 (cloth ISBN 978-0-19-923093-8)

US\$45.00 (paper ISBN 978-0-19-923094-5)

Those who embark on an account of cosmopolitan justice have to navigate their way past more than one set of hazards. They have to eschew idealized accounts of justice that have no bearing on the world as it actually is, but at the same time avoid a theory which makes too many accommodations to present states of affairs. They have to show how a morality that centers on individuals and their equal entitlements can be realized in a world where nationalist motivations predominate and nation-states remain the principal agents. They have to explain how just global governance is possible short of establishing a world government—which almost no one wants or thinks is possible. Gillian Brock is well aware of these hazards and her book, more successfully than most recent literature on global justice, makes a concerted effort to avoid them.

Her book advances the discussion of global justice in a number of ways. It puts forward a plausible view of what those concerned with global justice should be aiming for. It contains insightful criticisms of the views of those who have written on the subject. But its most important contribution is that it explores the ways in which a conception of global justice could be realized in the world as it is or could become. Her accomplishment is to show how moral cosmopolitanism can be combined with a concern for the creation and operation of effective and just global institutions. Other theorists and reformers may have different ideas about how this should be done. But the pragmatic turn that Brock's work represents is welcome and necessary.

Her conception of global justice is derived from a thought experiment. Imagine that you are a randomly selected delegate to a global convention with the aim of determining 'what would be a fair framework for interactions and relations among the world's inhabitants' (49). Since you are behind a veil of ignorance you do not know what position you will occupy when the veil is lifted, what country you come from or even what generation you belong to. You do however know relevant facts about global problems. Brock does not think that the requirements of justice that you and the other delegates agree to are going to be the principles that Rawls favors in *A Theory of Justice*. She thinks that the experimental work done by Frohlich and Oppenheimer—their attempts to simulate Rawls's original position—establishes that delegates will reject Rawls's difference principle. Instead, they will insist that social and political arrangements in global society ought to ensure that every individual is able to meet his or her basic needs and enjoys a decent range of opportunities.

There are reasons to quibble about Brock's thought experiment and her view about its outcome. In her version of the original position what is up for grabs are not only principles of justice for global society, but also the very existence and nature of this society, the institutions it ought to contain and the way people ought to cooperate. It is not so easy to see how an agreement about global justice is possible when different institutional frameworks might result in different conceptions of justice. And the results of the Frohlich and Oppenheimer experiments with real individuals are not to be trusted as a realization of Rawls's requirement of rationality. Did the people in the experiments sufficiently discuss problems of desert? Did they take into account the way that income differentials affect the opportunities of the next generations? Were they over-influenced by views of justice prevalent in capitalist societies? Would the results of the experiments have been different if participants had been exposed to contemporary debates about executive salaries?

But these quibbles are of little importance. Brock does not overwork her thought experiment. She offers other arguments for her conclusions, and mostly she uses it as a reminder that in our actions and political policies we should always prioritize the satisfaction of the basic needs of individuals, wherever they are situated in the world. We are entitled to favor fellow members of our nation, she says, but only when we have first acted to put in place institutions that ensure that everyone in the world can satisfy their needs. Even philosophers who believe that they can justify more demanding requirements of global distributive justice will have to agree that satisfying basic needs is a crucial first step, and that in the world as it is Brock's idea of justice stands a better chance of being widely accepted.

One of Brock's main aims is to explain how cosmopolitan justice, so understood, can be realistically achieved in a reasonably short time. This means that she considers how presently existing institutions can be made more accountable, more effective, and thus more just to all of the world's people, and she makes suggestions about new institutions that could overcome some of the obstacles that stand in the way of people meeting their needs.

In one of her best chapters Brock explains how trained health workers from poor countries are recruited, sometimes *en masse*, to work in developed countries, thus depriving people in their homeland of health care and taking advantage of the efforts it put into training them. She proposes the adoptions of codes of practice concerning recruitment of health workers, and she thinks that developed countries should make more of an effort to train their own health workers, and meanwhile provide compensation to countries that supply them.

To provide poor countries with more funds to overcome poverty, she proposes that multinationals operating in their territory pay their fair share of taxes, that tax havens be abolished, that transfer pricing be eliminated, and that proposals be considered for

taxing world trade, email traffic, use of carbon, or international goods for the benefit of poor countries. She proposes the creation of an international body, or the extension of the powers of existing organizations, to collect and distribute the funds. To deal with corrupt governments who exploit and abuse their own people she proposes measures that will protect liberty—above all, freedom of the press—which can be promoted by internal and external pressure groups. In the worst cases humanitarian intervention may be necessary. Ideally, intervention should be decided on and managed by an accountable organization dedicated to protecting vital interests of individuals, and funds should be made available for this purpose and for preventative measures. Many other ideas for institutional changes are discussed in her book—all with the aim of removing injustices that prevent people from satisfying their needs.

None of these proposals are worked out in detail, and readers are likely to have all sorts of questions about what they amount to and how well they deal with global problems. They are best regarded as a contribution to a debate in which experts of all kinds need to participate. What Brock is trying to provide is not a blueprint for a just global society. One of her main purposes is to overcome the obstacles standing in the way of reasoning about global justice: the worries of skeptics who doubt the very possibility of a just global order, the concerns of nationalists who fear the power of global institutions, the idealism of those who have nothing to say about how their views might be put into practice. She may not have fully accomplished her purposes. Nationalists will worry about the nature and power of the global organizations that she recommends. Radicals will accuse her of not sufficiently remaking the global order. And there is plenty of wiggle room for skeptics. Nevertheless her book is a laudable attempt to go beyond these theoretical dead ends and to force philosophers and others to engage in a more productive discussion about the possibilities for a just global order.

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