Carol C. Gould. *Interactive Democracy: The Social Roots of Global Justice*. Cambridge University Press 2014. 303 pp. $84.99 USD (Hardback ISBN 9781107024748); $29.99 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781107607415).

Carol Gould's *Interactive Democracy: The Social Roots of Global Justice* aims to provide a theory of global justice that is both cosmopolitan and egalitarian without being excessively utopian. Our review will focus on a limited but important subset of the many themes discussed in the book; these themes are the rights of women, the need to balance human rights with local tradition, the rights of the disabled, the right to democracy, and solidarity as a basis for global justice.

But before we jump into these topics, we need to say a word or two about Gould's project as a whole. According to Gould, global justice is realized only when positive liberty is equally distributed to the widest degree possible, where 'positive liberty to do X' is understood as 'capability to do X'. Importantly, the capability to do X includes the absence of oppression and exploitation. So for example, one does not fully possess freedom, in the sense of positive liberty, if one will be harmed or ostracized for speaking. Indeed, as Gould sees it, these capabilities are what human rights are meant to protect. Moreover, Gould emphasizes that these rights are not just legal claims against states, they are also social and moral demands that apply to 'a range of economic, social, and political institutions' (24). Corporations, for instance, are just as capable of violating human rights as governments are.

Let us turn to Gould's discussion of women and human rights. As Gould notes, women are disproportionately likely to be the victims of oppression and exploitation. In some cases this oppression and exploitation take obvious forms; for example, women are frequently manipulated for labor and sex. But in other cases the oppression and exploitation is more subtle. Women are often not free to participate in government, whether in exercising the right to vote or in holding public office. Therefore, women are especially likely to benefit from taking human rights seriously. While Gould resists the temptation to offer anything like the promise of an easy solution to these problems, she stresses the need to investigate the application of human rights to real-world circumstances, a project that has, in her view, been pursued less often than it should be.

Concerns about the application of human-rights thinking raises familiar concerns. 'Aren't human rights just another way of imposing western ideas in former colonies where they're not wanted?', critics will ask. Gould attempts to address this concern in two ways. Firstly, she insists that human rights must be upheld not only in the Global South, which gets the lion's share of attention, but also in North America and Europe as well. However, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Gould's response is better aimed at those who accuse the west of hypocrisy, not those who accuse it of cultural imperialism. Secondly–and more plausibly–Gould interrogates the question of who speaks for a culture. It is perverse, she maintains, to respect what are called the norms of a culture when those oppressed by the norms have no voice in them. Roughly speaking, the idea is that one is not being culturally imperialistic (or even culturally insensitive) by opposing a norm that allows, say, 10-year-old girls to be married to middle-aged men if these girls (and women in general) have no say in formulating and approving this norm. Balancing human rights and local traditions is no easy matter, of course. Gould rightly shies away from cookie-cutter solutions here too. But she clearly makes room for the robust enforcement of human rights to protect the oppressed against repellent practices.

Obviously, women are not the only group of oppressed people who would benefit from promotion and protection of their human rights. Another group that gets surprisingly little attention in Gould's book is those with impairments and disabilities. Consider, for example, the current situation in Germany where, while it is illegal to discriminate in employment decisions against those with physical disabilities, basic accommodations such as special purpose parking places and wheelchair ramps are uncommon, as are elevators in publically accessible buildings. Of course, Gould can hardly be faulted for not anticipating every manner in which human rights are relevant. But this topic seems especially well adapted for her approach to global justice, and we would welcome further discussion of the matter from Gould in the future.

Let us turn now to one of Gould's more controversial claims: that there is a human right to democracy. Gould's first order of business is to refute a wide variety of arguments against the idea that there is a human right to democracy. While the details of this dialectic are beyond the scope of a short review like this one, there are some points worth noting. Gould stresses that her own conception of democracy is much broader than that which is often assumed in discussion of this issue. Democracy, as Gould sees it, does not require 'a particular structure of government', involving elections, voting, and the like (85). Rather, for Gould, democracy is to be understood in terms of a consensus-based decision procedure where equal respect and equal consideration are given to all. This kind of decision procedure is consistent with a diverse range of types of government, so Gould escapes the charge that there is only one legitimate form of government. Interestingly, Gould goes so far as to argue that there should be democratic input at the global level. She maintains, for instance, that there should be a 'Global People's Assembly, within the U.N.' (94). In making this claim, Gould strays somewhat from her desire not to be overly utopian, however desirable a global parliament might be.

Anyone who has taught an ethics course in which global issues are discussed will recognize the importance of trying to ground demands for great global justice in something tangible. It's one thing to inform one's students that roughly a billion human beings struggle to survive on $1 or less per day; it's another thing to explain why those who live in comfort, far from such misery, should care. Gould is alive to this point and is at pains to explain how global justice is rooted in what she calls 'global solidarity'. Gould rejects monistic accounts of solidarity, in which everyone who possesses some property P has special duties with regard to one another but not such duties to those who lack property P. Gould prefers a pluralistic conception of solidarity and it is one where there are 'overlapping solidarity networks' (99-100). In these solidarity networks, one has special duties based on a cluster of interrelated properties, some of which one shares and some of which one does not share with others. Few can genuinely empathize with the suffering of billions of people or do anything to improve all of their lives. Gould does a fine job of showing how imposing this dilemma is, so it should not come as a surprise that her solution–overlapping solidarity networks–leaves us with further questions. One such question is: in traditional monistic accounts of solidarity, mutual special duties are often grounded in mutual benefit (e.g. I owe a special duty to my fellow Americans because we jointly support a common good through paying taxes, contributing to public discourse, working toward shared economic and political goals, etc). In contrast, the network of shared overlapping social identities in which both I and an Eritrean teacher or a Chilean socialist share need not involve any mutual benefit. I simply free ride if I don't act on my special duties to my fellow Americans, but it's not clear that I do so if I don't act on such duties (if they actually exist) with regard to my Eritrean or Chilean counterparts. Therefore, it's not clear what sort of new normative importance there is to the kind of solidarity that Gould champions.

Despite some of our reservations expressed above, *Interactive Democracy* is an important and valuable addition to the growing literature on democracy and global justice. In many ways, it culminates Gould's decades-long engagement with these topics, starting with her *Rethinking Democracy: Freedom and Social Cooperation in Politics, Economy, and Society*. The book as a whole has other weaknesses typical of reworked material, some of which (such as the chapter on humor) does little to advance her overall argument and some of which simply becomes repetitive. Nevertheless, the work will benefit a patient and careful reader who wants to think hard about where the philosophical rubber meets the road of global affairs.

Leonard Kahn, Loyola University New Orleans and
Tara Malay, University of Jyväskylä, Finland