ABSTRACT

BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES
JUSTICE AND EXCLUSION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION

Theories of global justice usually assume that at a philosophical or moral level the organization of the world in different nation states is an accident that cannot ground any moral differences between individuals who should therefore be entitled everywhere to the same rights and advantages. They consider in consequence that the "limited universality" of classical theories of social justice which limits their provision to individual nation states, is also a kind of accident, or an overview, a failure to recognize that what is conceptually universal is strictly universal. Simultaneously, and somewhat paradoxically, they tend to view nations as inevitable, "historically necessary accidents" so to speak, and consider that global justice can only be built on the basis of existing nation states. Both theses, I propose, correspond to an abandonment of politics. Rawls, to the contrary, who was acutely aware of the political dimension of his theory of justice, refused for that very reason to extend to the global level his two principles of justice.

In this paper I argue, first, at a theoretical level that once the political dimension of theories of justice is taken into account there is nothing accidental about their limited universality. To the contrary it constitutes an essential element of the theory. Second at the practical level I want to argue against the inevitability of nation states. That is to say we should not view global justice as a question of equity between states because the system of sovereign nation states among which equality should be established is disappearing in front of our very eyes. This leads to a final question: to what extent are our conceptions of social justice related to (dependant on) the nation state?