

Introduction

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The texts collected here were first presented at the conference entitled *JUSTICE WITHOUT BORDERS: MULTICULTURALISM AND GLOBAL JUSTICE* that was held at Ritsumeikan University on March 23, 2009. They represent a partial selection of the talks delivered at the conference and we hope that they can help readers to realize the importance and interest, but also the complexity, of the issues that were discussed then.

Recently, global justice, the idea that questions of justice cannot be addressed within the confines of individual nation states, but must be considered at the level of the whole world has made important inroads in discussions concerning justice. This shift away from exclusively national concerns, even if those concerns were often addressed from a universal perspective, is due, not only to the realization that the world as a whole is a very unfair place with a staggeringly uneven distribution of resources, income, and opportunities, but also to the realization that individuals participate in institutions which cut across the boundaries of nation states; international and transnational institutions that have different influence on people living in diverse areas of the world. The goal of the conference was to enquire into the impact the question of global justice on the issues of multicultural and of social justice. Migrant workers for example, who often are both underprivileged with regard to access to social services and in relation to the protection of their cultural particularity, also are actors in institutions whose consequence and action extend beyond national borders. Similarly minority groups are often distributed over the territories of more than one nation state and they may gain to have their concerns addressed at an international level. Apart from such specific issues, the irruption of global justice in the discussion between social justice and multiculturalism can profoundly transform the way in which the debate between these two types of issues has usually been framed, as pitting universal individual rights guaranteed by individual states against the particular demands of specific minorities. Global justice rests on a conception of universal rights that is independent of national particularities and of the need to defend it from the more specific interests.

In fact, turning our attention to global justice rapidly forces us to realize how partial and artificial is our spontaneous habit of addressing issues of justice within the confines of each nation taken individually. Even if global justice has only recently gained an important place in discussions on justice, topics such as those of translation and of slavery which are present here, remind us that global justice is not really a recent issue. What is perhaps new is the desire to tackle as questions of justice, problems which traditionally have been viewed under the heading of international relations

and of national interest, two domains where justice was not seen as having a fundamental role to play. Alternatively, these issues have sometimes been conceived as problems relating to international aid. However to see them as issues of justice is to consider that the reduction of inequality world wide is not simply something that would be nice, if it were possible, or that rich nations should try to alleviate the plight of less fortunate ones through generous aid, but that those who are disadvantaged by the present world system have rights and are entitled to justice. That is to say: they are not only aid recipients who profit from our generosity, but individuals whose rights are being violated by the world order that advantages us.