

Western Philosophy of Social Science

Lecture 16. Towards a Global Civil Society

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The role of ethics in development

- These are issues where clear thinking about values and principles can make a material difference in the quality of our thinking and planning.
- We need to navigate well into the world of the 21st century; and thinking about social, political, and ethical values is a crucial part of our navigation.

Our choice

- The world of tomorrow will unavoidably be one of increasing global interconnectedness and interdependency. The question is, will this global interconnectedness be of a sort as to lay the ground for a just and peaceful future for humanity, or will it be such as to lay the seeds for continuing deprivation, injustice, and conflict?

The causal role of injustice

- The pursuit of justice and human equality throughout the world is itself a crucial component of a peaceful and humane future for world society
- Injustice stimulates conflict and violence
- Just institutions lay the ground for enhancement of community

Large processes of globalization

- Extension of markets and international trade; global competition
- Increased mobility of capital through liberalized financial markets
- Enlargement of foreign direct investment
- Extension of the reach of global media
- Commercialization of traditional societies

Practical utopias

- the importance of articulating a vision of a world towards which we are directing our efforts
- a vision of the world that is both desirable and feasible
- an alternative to fatalism and gradualism
- where do we want the world to be in 50 years?

A vision of an attainable global utopia

- Multi-ethnic world
- High minimum standards of human wellbeing
- Democratic states embodying effective protections of human rights
- Fair domestic and international economic institutions
- a “global civil society”

Civil society

- An important and multi-threaded theory of democratic society
- What is a civil society? Two concepts:
 - civility and
 - civil associations
- Theories--
 - Rousseau
 - Locke

Civil society

- Are these threads connected?
 - Civility sustains trust and assurance in institutions
 - Associations lend power to citizens in preserving the grounds of civility

The well-ordered society

- society “as a fair system of cooperation over time from one generation to the next, where those engaged in cooperation are viewed as free and equal citizens and normal cooperating members of society over a complete life” (Rawls 2001:4).

A well-ordered society

- Citizens within a well-ordered society respect one another; they have confidence that their most basic interests are fairly treated; and they have confidence that the basic institutions of society permit them fair access and permit them to pursue their conceptions of the good
- Just institutions reinforce stability and assurance

Civility

- the value within a community that is placed on mutual respect, tolerance of difference, and a commitment to the legal resolution of conflict
- a shared commitment to maintaining a structure of relationship among citizens that continually renews the basis of cooperation, respect, and non-violence

Shared civic values

- The thesis is that shared moral values, including particularly the values that determine the terms of social interaction, create the grounds of stability in a society.
- Profound disagreement about these values--or their embodiment in existing social institutions--creates the possibility of serious conflict.

Important shared values

- Justice--fair treatment by basic institutions
- Diversity--respect for the range of differences found in human experience
- Mutual respect for the worth of all citizens
- Respect for the value of freedom

the value of civility

- This shared value in turn provides each citizen with the assurance that he or she needs to assume the sacrifices for the public good that citizenship requires. The broad availability of the value of civility gives citizens the confidence they need that their interests will be fairly treated

Civil association

- A society characterized by multiple associations; free activities and choices by individual agents; and a framework of law that assures rights and liberties.
- A society with multiple forms of power and influence, minimizing the potential for exploitation and domination by powerful elites or the state.
- Associative democracy

Sustaining civility

- What are the “social-psychological” requirements of civility?
 - solidarity—some degree of shared identity among the individuals who make up the society as groups with interests in common
 - a sense of justice—confidence that the basic institutions are fair to all
 - confidence in the future, that one’s children will have reasonable (and improved) life prospects

Sustaining civility

- a sense of dignity—of being treated with human dignity, of being assigned equal human worth
- a need for stable, fair, and predictable institutions that give citizens the confidence that they can pursue activities, form associations, and engage in civil discourse without fear

What is a global civil society?

- a world in which all persons recognize and respect the human reality and worth of all others—near and far.
- a world in which people are tied together through cross-cutting civil associations—local, national, and international (labor organizations, women's organizations, environmental organizations, or religious groups)

What is a global civil society?

- a world in which persons share a sense of justice—they share a basic agreement on the essential requirements of fairness of the institutions that govern their lives.
- a world in which all people have grounds for hope for the future—that there are opportunities for them to improve their lives,

What is a global civil society?

- a world assuring fair access to these opportunities, and that their children will have better lives than they themselves have had.

What is a global civil society?

- National states in a just international system
- a framework of treaties and international regimes establishing a just system of cooperation
- National societies embodying just institutions
- international relations governed by commitments to non-violence and negotiated outcomes

What institutions might create a global civil society?

- Multi-stranded associations from domestic to international scales (e.g. labor organizations, environmental organizations)
- democratic political institutions at national and local levels; “associative democracy”
- institutions embodying social and economic justice--domestic and international
- strong commitments by wealthy nations to global economic progress

Justice in international development

- Respect for human rights
- enhancement of standards of well-being for all people.
- Gender justice
- Extension of democratic institutions

Multiple vehicles of citizen influence

- political participation
- economic activity
- private associations and organizations
- freedom of association
- democratic political institutions

International institutions

- the critical point: a completely unrestrained international system of trading does not have a built-in tendency to create or assure social safety nets;
- competition among capital over price in fact tends to erode the ability of national governments to provide such regulation and safety net.
 - (Kapstein, Stieglitz)

International institutions

- the critical need for effective new international institutions
- effective development assistance--OECD, World Bank; the need for greater participation
- new institutions for environmental regulation
- new institutions for labor standards

Conclusion

- Ethics matters to development.
- It is essential that we “visualize” a feasible future for the global world.
- The moral elements of civility, democracy, justice, and assurance provide an essential framework for a global civil society.