

GLOBAL JUSTICE, POWER AND THE LOGIC OF CAPITALISM*

KAI NIELSEN

Department of Philosophy
The University of Calgary

Both Charles Beitz and Henry Shue have made distinguished defenses of conceptions of global justice and have argued strenuously against limiting considerations of social justice to considerations of domestic justice.¹ They are, as I am inclined to believe every sensitive and reflective person must be, good internationalists. However, they also believe that there is a problem about the relation of domestic justice to global justice, a problem acutely, if perhaps confusedly, felt in the affluent societies of the world. Dramatically it is felt as the problem of self-pauperization. There are millions and millions of desperately poor people, many of them malnourished, a not inconsiderable number of them starving. Presented with these facts, we in the affluent societies, while feeling a kind of hopeless guilt about the starving masses, still feel we are facing a bottomless pit. Must we, to do our duty here, pauperize ourselves until we hit some baseline of equality of resources across the world or at least until all basic needs are met? The strains of commitment here are very

* This was part of a symposium on international justice held at the Eightieth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) in Boston on December 29th, 1983. My fellow symposiasts were Charles Beitz and Henry Shue. Their articles, together with an abstract of mine, were published in *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. LXXX, No. 10 (October, 1983), pp. 591-610. References to their articles are given in the text. All other references are given in the notes.

¹ Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) and Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and American Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). See also Shue's review article of Beitz's book in *Ethics* Vol. 92, No. 4 (July 1982), pp. 710-719.

evident. We need to know, Beitz and Shue claim, the limits of our duties under conceptions of global justice.

What needs to be ascertained, at least if we construe things as Beitz and Shue do, is how much can be justifiably expected of us as individuals in affluent nations or, even more importantly, what can, as a matter of public policy, be justifiably expected of such nations? Wherever we set that, common sense morality at least will believe that even affluent nations should, in redistributing resources, give greater weight to improving the well-being of their own domestic poor than to improving the well-being of the domestic poor elsewhere, even when their own domestic poor are better off than the foreign poor. More generally, there is the widespread belief that, as Shue puts it, *compatriots take priority*.

Beitz examines a variety of rationales for this common sense belief and concludes that none are persuasive, though cumulatively the various considerations leave us, he believes, with a complication for global justice. Even with a commitment to internationalism, we cannot simply ignore local attachments. Where a government cannot both help its own poor and help the equally poor of another nation, the correct public policy for that nation is to help its own poor. At least in such situations, common sense morality would have it, the compatriots-take-priority-principle should be followed. Both Beitz and Shue, while recognizing the importance of local attachments and while seeing them as complicating factors in any adequate theory of global justice, argue that global justice is not a mirage and that we cannot rightly limit our concerns to domestic justice.

If we take it as important to distinguish, after Rawls, between ideal and non-ideal theory and regard Beitz's and Shue's accounts as ventures in ideal theory, then, so understood, I am in basic agreement with the general lines of their accounts —accounts which seem to me to be complimentary. My reservations concerning their projects are about the relevance of ideal theory in such contexts, about the stress on the importance of the distinction between domestic and global justice and over the emphasis given to the distribution

of benefits and burdens. We need, as well, to be concerned about attaining or approximating equality in relations of power. We need, in being concerned with that, to be concerned with the kinds of social structures, including modes of production, that place some in positions of dominance and control and place others in positions of submission and powerlessness. We need to see how this works both domestically and internationally. What is crucial to look at is forms of social organization that produce and sustain relations of power and exploitation. These considerations cut across questions about global justice and domestic justice by raising issues about pervasive class conflict, whether acknowledged as such by the protagonists or not, rooted in Capitalist and 'State Socialist' domination of labour.² We will not get beyond an *ideological* understanding of how global justice requires a North/South redistribution, and what that redistribution is to consist in, if we see the issue as simply a conflict between affluent nation states and poor ones and do not instead understand it in terms of capitalist domination rooted in the imperatives of the capitalist mode of production. Until we see the situation in those terms both what must be done to achieve a just world order and what a just world order will look like will be obscured.

II

The thing is to start our thinking about global justice from toughminded background assumptions about how societies actually function and can reasonably be expected to come to function and about how in our contemporary world the various societies are interrelated. My belief is that if Beitz and Shue had attended to such background assumptions certain key problems about global justice they found most perplexing and disturbing would have turned out to be idle problems we need not come to grips with in thinking about global justice.

² 'State socialism' is in scare quotes and it is not a pleonasm.

When we take to heart the facts of mass starvation and malnutrition —ten thousand people starve each day— we understandably come to worry whether either duties of mutual aid or the moral requirements of compassion will require, if we think about them nonevasively, that we pauperize ourselves until all basic needs of people everywhere are met. But this, as Shue nicely shows, very quickly raises the strains of commitment. It gives rise not only to a sense of futility and powerlessness, it gives rise as well to a feeling, an ambivalent and guilty feeling, that somehow too much is being asked of us.

In the face of our belief in the moral equality of humankind, we are very likely, in such an environment, to come to feel some vague commitment to something like the belief that compatriots should take priority and to the related belief that an adequate account of justice needs to find a little *lebensraum* for ourselves and our families. We will go, if we are people of tolerably liberal sentiments, in search of a rationale for such local attachments that will square with our belief in the moral equality of humankind. We seek to display a coherent and plausible conception of global justice which squares with both the internationalism of an enlightened moral point of view and the importance that we actually give to local attachments. The inconclusiveness of Beitz's and Shue's careful accounts attests to the difficulty of that problem. I shall argue that their cluster of problems are not problems we need to settle in order to resolve questions of global justice if we keep firmly in mind the relevant social realities and social possibilities.

The world, a few pockets aside, has been very interdependent for a long time and is becoming increasingly so. And this interdependency with the reality of imperialism and the existence of the great transnational corporations takes the form of a criss-crossed domination of some groups by others.³

³ Michael Barratt-Brown, *The Economics of Imperialism* (London: Penguin Press, 1973), Bob Sutcliffe and Robert Owen, *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman Ltd., 1972), Robert Rhodes (ed.), *Imperialism and*

Throughout much of the world it is the domination of one class over another class or classes and, while not altering that, it is also the domination of one part of the world, *i.e.* that part of the world containing the great capitalist states in North America, Western Europe and Asia, over much of the Third World. It is rooted in the distinctive imperialism of the capitalist order. There is by now a world capitalist economic order with a basic division between centre and periphery — the main capitalist states and their Third World dependencies.

In the initial stages of capitalist imperialism the centre essentially plundered the periphery, in a later stage the centre prompted trade with the periphery to further its own industrialization and in our present stage of capitalist imperialism transnational corporations are now making direct investments in the periphery, though still investments which are thoroughly in their control and which aid the transnationals in their never ending drive for greater capital accumulation.

These stages of imperialism all, though in different ways, rob the poor for the benefit of the rich.⁴ It may be that at

Underdevelopment (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), Charles Wilber (ed.), *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment* (New York: Random House, 1973), Arthur MacEwan, "Capitalist Expansion and the Sources of Imperialism" and Thomas E. Weisskopf, "Imperialism and the Economic Development of the Third World" both in Richard C. Edwards et al. (eds.), *The Capitalist System*, Second Edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 481-490 and pp. 499-514, and Stephen Hymer, "The Internationalization of Capital", *The Journal of Economic Issues* Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 1972). Sidney Morgenbesser has rightly complained about a too inflated use of the term 'imperialism'. But it is, as well, a too restricted use, too much of a conventionalist sulk, to say that we only have imperialism when we have a nation state which literally has colonies. Sidney Morgenbesser, "Imperialism: Some Preliminary Distinctions," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* Vol. 3, No. 1 (Fall 1973). I do not take 'capitalist imperialism' to be a redundancy.

⁴ The Tucker-Wood thesis has made us, as far as Marx is concerned, leery of too quickly going from exploitation to robbery to injustice. For what seem to me two definitive articles which establish that relation for Marx and show its rationale for Marxism, see Gary Young, "Justice and Capitalist Production: Marx and Bourgeois Ideology," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 8 (1978), pp. 421-455 and his "Doing Marx Justice" in Kai Nielsen and Steven Patten (eds.), *Marx and Morality* (Guelph, Ontario: Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy, 1981), pp. 251-268. On exploitation see Nancy Holmstrom, "Exploitation," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 7 (1977).

certain stages such robbery was necessary to develop the productive forces even in the poorer societies, but, given the exploitation involved, it was robbery all same. Moreover, this is not just a matter of the centre exploiting the periphery but of exploitation of one class by another in the centre itself. In the capitalist world system we neither have justice domestically nor internationally. The weakness of the proletariat domestically is intimately connected with capitalist domination of the periphery.⁵

Given such facts of capitalist penetration and domination, even if we appeal only to a Nozickian conception of justice in rectification, for the capitalists in these major capitalist states not to be acting unjustly, for them to cease violating people's rights, we must make vast transfers —transfers required by rectificatory justice— of wealth from the capitalist class to the working class. It would also require, so that we would not end up getting something like new capitalist bosses, a shift in its form from privately owned and controlled productive property to socially owned and controlled productive property. We must avoid going to a new capitalist class from what previously was a segment of the working class. We do not want to simply switch masters.

Though it is not bloody likely that anything even remotely like the making of such transfers is going to happen without a fight if it were to happen, and justice were to be attained or even approximated, extensive transfers from the capitalist class to the working class would have to go on both domestically and internationally. It could not be simply domestically for with the continued exploitation of the periphery the capitalists enhance their domination over the proletariat in their own society as well as over the newly formed proletariat in the periphery.

Given the facts of interdependence and dominance, we cannot separate questions of domestic justice from global

⁵ I think that is fairly obvious. What is less obvious is whether a world capitalist social order could come into existence, in our historical circumstances, which was not unjust. I shall argue that it cannot.

justice; we cannot first, as Shue recognizes himself, settle the simpler questions of domestic justice and then turn to the more intractable questions of international justice. What I am saying is that questions of social justice cannot non-artificially, except for certain very special pragmatic purposes, be separated off into issues of domestic justice and global justice. It is perfectly understandable that Charles Beitz and David Richards should try to articulate a global difference principle to capture what justice in human relations would come to if it were to obtain.⁶ Their natural extension to global justice of the difference principle, as an important element in a plausible conception of domestic justice, reflects the unity of considerations of justice. As things stand we cannot in any full sense have justice in one country. Trying to do so is in important ways like trying to build socialism in one country.

It will do little good to say social justice is a mirage and to try to get along with individual entitlements, Nozick's very unhistorical 'historical' account of justice is utterly inapplicable. If we go back far enough we can be confident that Locke's proviso could have been satisfied, but we have no idea, and can have no idea, what the actual transfers were like. Marauding, plundering, simply seizing holdings were there very early. We have no way by Nozick's stern criteria of making even an educated guess at whether any of the present holdings are rightly held —are something to which we are actually entitled.

Shue, while certainly no Nozickian, allows himself to talk of our being able within some determinate political unit such as the nation-state to talk about our current holdings being holdings to which we are entitled (S 605). But (*pace* Nozick) without some specification of what patterns of distribution are fair, we can have no way of determining whether people within any political unit are entitled to their holdings. We need productive-distributive or at least distributive principles

⁶ Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, and David A.J. Richards, "International Distributive Justice" in J.R. Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds.), *Nomos XXIV* (New York: New York University Press, 1982), pp. 287-293.

of social justice to determine whether domestically any of the putative entitlements are anything we are actually entitled to since there is no way at all of coming to know whether our current holdings are held by means of just transfers which came from original just acquisitions. If *social* justice really is a mirage, as Hayek and Nozick think, then so is *individual* justice. We cannot bypass questions about global justice by trying to talk of domestic justice simply in terms of individual entitlements which are supposedly ascertained independently of determining the fairness of distributive patterns. Given that, and given our condition of global interdependence through the capitalist world system, the integration of various societies through the development of capitalism, with its patterns of domination and control, we cannot have a coherent conception of domestic social justice isolated from a conception of global justice. They come as packaged deal.

III

To have an adequate conception of justice, global or domestic, we cannot simply fasten on questions concerning how we distribute benefits and burdens. We cannot limit ourselves to questions concerning the distribution of resources, we need as well to be concerned about establishing patterns of equality of power in a society and indeed in the world.⁷ And this, in turn, means we must be concerned about production.⁸ But this requires that moral philosophy have a political sociology and indeed one that is carefully crafted and responsible to empirical constraints. To know what must obtain and what must be done to achieve some rough equality of power, we need to know how power is distributed in the world: we need

⁷ Kai Nielsen, "Class and Justice" in John Arthur and William Shaw (eds.), *Justice and Economic Distribution* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 225-245 and my "Radical Egalitarian Justice: Justice as Equality," *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 5 (1979), pp. 209-226. See also Iris M. Young, "Toward a Critical Theory of Justice," *Social Theory and Practice* Vol. 7, No. 3 (Fall 1981), pp. 279-302.

⁸ See the reference to Gary Young's articles in note 4.

to know what the centres of power are and what determines and sustains power relations within the various societies of the world. In our orbits, where the 'our' ranges over the people in the capitalist centres and peripheries, it is vital to look at class structures, at the relation between the various states and the great transnational corporations, the banks and the like. There is a Marxist thesis about these societies which, put crudely, goes like this: such societies are divided into classes with conflicting interests. Where the capitalist mode of production is the mode of production characteristic of a society, there can be nothing even approximating an equality of power within that society. The capitalist class will be the dominant class and for the capitalist system to work there must be exploitation and for it to work optimally there must in the organization of works be capitalist control of the workplace with capitalists, through their managers (elites in the capitalist system), running the show: determining the basic workplace organization, what is to be produced, what is to be done with what is to be produced and what firms are to remain open and where.⁹ There can be nothing like democracy in the workplace; it must be authoritarianly organized and with that human autonomy and the good of self-respect is jeopardized.¹⁰

We also need to recognize that capitalism must continually expand and that in its expansion it will, as we have seen, become an ever more transnational capitalism with deep imperialist penetration into the periphery where the exploitation and domination of labour is even sharper than it is at present in the centre. We have a situation here where, though often in a veiled form, there is class conflict and where, to the degree capitalism is functioning well, workers are in very vital senses

⁹ See Chapter 7 of *The Capitalist System*, Second Edition. See also Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974) and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

¹⁰ Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, "Capitalism and Alienation" in *The Capitalist System*, p. 274-282.

rendered powerless and work under conditions of alienated labour.

In such a world anything even approximating either global justice or domestic justice is quite impossible. There is nothing remotely like an equality of power and in the absence of that there can be nothing like equal liberty, autonomy or the conditions which would make it possible for everyone to realize the good of self-respect.¹¹ Indeed their conditions of life —conditions brought about and sustained by capitalism— make it next to impossible for many people to achieve the good of self-respect. There cannot even be anything like an equality in access to resources, an equality of condition, which is necessary for the attainment or the approximation of equal liberty, autonomy or the achievement throughout the whole of the human population of the good of self-respect.

Marxists argue that in our historical situation there are alternatives to such a world system in which, over time, there would come to be no dominated class which was in such a condition of powerlessness. If that is so, if, that is, there are any other less liberty undermining social alternatives to the capitalist order, then the capitalist order cannot in such a historical context be a just world order. But, as a matter of fact, we do have, both globally and domestically, alternative conceptions of a social order which would be more just.

Now this Marxist account, or even some rational reconstruction of it, may in certain respects be false or importantly exaggerated, but whether it is or not is itself an empirical-cum-theoretical issue. We very much need to at least have some educated hunches about this to know what to say about either global or domestic justice.

However, this Marxist political sociology has received critical and sustained attention and an extensive elaboration. In the face of that, something like it appears to many people in rather different parts of the world to be a reasonable approximation of the truth. There are, of course, many who would reject any such account. But, given the type of claims being

¹¹ My two articles cited in note 7.

made, and given some fairly evident social realities, to try to understand what social justice, domestic and global, could come to, and indeed whether anything like a just world order can come into being, and what it would look like, it is vital to know how much of that Marxist picture is true.

IV

There is another way vis-à-vis the topic of global justice in which a consideration of Marxist political sociology is vital. Both Beitz and Shue want to defend principles of global justice and internationalism but they are also very concerned, and rightly, with the strains of commitment and Shue in addition worries about the moral costs of the enforcement of global justice. A central worry for them is whether an acknowledgement of global principles of justice would commit one to duties to “transfer wealth from oneself or one’s community in such enormous amounts that one would have to commit a kind of financial hari-kari. . .” (S 600).

Doing justice on a global scale, they worry, might be a very demanding thing indeed for the affluent. The worrisome picture is that of the developed world where, if it were to attempt massive developmental aid, it would impoverish itself until, in order to approximate some greater equality, we had a world, as far as the societies of the centre are concerned, which was a poverty stricken world in which we did little more than spread the misery around. That would be a not inconsiderable price to pay for equality. And in such contexts it is not unnatural to go in search —though not without ambivalence— of some rationale for a maxim giving some priority to compatriots.

If a Marxist political sociology is near to the mark, this is a problem we can justifiably set aside. With the undermining of the capitalist world system and the replacement of it by a socialist world system, we can, in a reasonable time, achieve a world order in which we will have both the social wealth and the political will to achieve global justice in an affluent world without the necessity of such financial hari-kari by

people, a miniscule capitalist class apart, in the affluent world. Even then it will only be a hari-kari for these big capitalists in terms of their capitalist privileges and control and in terms of certain liberties to buy and sell. It will not be in human terms. It is not that their conditions of living will be diminished in such a world such that their health, autonomy or the basis for their self-respect would be undermined.

Consider agriculture and land use as a key illustration of how no such impoverishment of the capitalist centre is required. (When I conceive of non-impoverishment here I refer to the non-impoverishment of the people in those societies). For the foreseeable future we have plenty of available fertile land and the agricultural potential adequately to feed a much larger world population than we actually have.¹² Less than half of the available fertile land of the world is being used for any type of food production. Though everyone knows there are severe famine conditions in Africa (to take a salient example), what is less well known is that African agriculture has been declining for the last twenty years.¹³ Domestic food production in Africa is falling while food, formerly imported cheaply from the capitalist centre, is now imported, from that same centre, at prices that a very large number of people in Africa cannot afford to pay. The fact of the matter is that there is plenty of food around and much more could be produced. It is a matter, as Amartya Sen has argued, of its distribution and of people not having the money or other entitlements to obtain it.¹⁴ While the cheap imports were still in the offing African farmers were paid very little for their produce. Under such conditions larger numbers of them were driven, given the cheap food aid coming from the capitalist

¹² Harriet Friedmann, "The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order" in Michael Buraway and Theda Skoopol (eds.), *Marxist Inquiries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 248-286.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (London: Clarendon Press, 1981). Kenneth J. Arrow, "Why People Go Hungry," *New York Review of Books* Vol. XXIX, No. 12 (July 15, 1982), pp. 24-26.

centre (principally the U.S.A.), into rapidly growing large urban centres of societies trying to industrialize where a proletariat and a lumpen-proletariat was being formed. Where before we had agrarian societies, we have come to have, in these African countries, and elsewhere as well, a proletariat and a lumpen-proletariat living and working (when they have work) in, to radically understate it, dreary urban centres. They are centres where poverty and all sorts of degradations are rife. (We should remember that by now Ibadan has a population almost as large as that of Chicago). It is this proletariat in the periphery which provides a cheap, fantastically exploitable, pool of labour for the transnationals.

In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that African agriculture has radically declined. Yet, it in fact is the case that Africa has half the unused farmland in the world. If it were used, Africa could adequately feed itself and become, as well, a large exporter of food. Similar things should be said for the Indian subcontinent.

When we look at the North/South imbalance —and I have only given you a dramatic bit of the imbalance— it becomes tolerably plain that this is principally the result of the workings of a capitalist world economic system. A clear indicator of that, as I have gestured at above, is the world food economy. A stark difference between North and South is in the vast malnutrition and starvation which is principally a phenomenon of the South. What we need to recognize is that these famine conditions result from the working of the capitalist economic system in allocating the ability of people to acquire goods. The food available to people is a matter of income distribution and that, in the capitalist system, is fundamentally rooted in their ability to provide services that people in the economy are willing to pay for.

In thinking about the world food economy and the global injustices it generates, we should think again about imperialism. In the late 1950's and 1960's, the American state, reflecting plainly the interests of its capitalists, developed a policy of food aid to Third World countries. Many of these countries, often under the inspiration of the transnationals,

were trying rapidly to industrialize. This food aid, at one and the same time, provided a lot of cheap food for a new, and very inexpensive, industrial labour force, and a respite for the American farmers with their, relative to market, overproduction. As we have already remarked, a new proletariat was being born in what had once been largely peasant societies. The midwife here was the deliberate capitalist policies of the capitalist centre. Previously self-sufficient agrarian societies were, in this birth trauma, turned into agriculturally dependent countries dependent on food supplied by the capitalist centres first in the form of food aid and later sold under market conditions. What we have here is a commodification of food and a placing of these Third World countries firmly in the commodity exchange system of the capitalist order.¹⁵ It was an astute way to help make the world safe for the flourishing of capitalism, but it was also a way of creating greater imbalances between North and South and an increasingly harsh exploitation of the peoples of the South.

In the 1970's this International Food Order began to come unglued. By then in Africa and other Third World areas there were masses of people separated from any direct ties to agriculture and great masses of them, though they form a cheap labour pool, were (and still are) in conditions of utter poverty and degradation.¹⁶ In the capitalist centre grain surpluses dwindled —much grain was sold to the Soviets— and food prices soared. The grain aid programme of the 1950's and the 1960's gradually lost its capitalist rationale. The commercial markets began to work in the sense that some of the urban workers could now afford to buy food under market conditions while at the same time it became the case that many people, both in urban centres and in the countryside, had the need for the food, but in the newly emergent market system they no longer had the entitlement. They had no purchasing power to acquire it. Given such a situation, along with the

¹⁵ Friedman, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (London, England: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 157-159.

related extensively dismantled local agricultural system and the introduction of cash cropping to the capitalist centre, massive malnutrition and starvation resulted and continues to flourish. In short, these maladies are in large measure a result of the way the capitalist mode of production has developed.

Capitalism, of course, needs a work force that can reproduce itself, but with newly developed industrial enterprises in the Third World a little starvation and malnutrition will not hurt, will not effect the efficiency of capitalist production, as long as they have, as they indeed have, a huge labour pool to draw upon. Individual workers can starve as long as there are plenty of replacements. Things like this happened with the industrialization of the Western World under capitalism in the 19th Century. It is now being repeated with its old savagery in the Third World in the 20th Century.

My reasons for going on about this is to begin to make the case that to establish global justice, to show what must be the case for it to flourish or even to obtain, we are not faced with genuine worries about impoverishing ourselves or even making our lives Spartan and drab. We do not at all need to be haunted by Neo-Malthusian fantasies about our plundered planet and the lifeboat earth exceeding its carrying capacity. The problem, to put it crudely, is socio-economic and political not something rooted in overpopulation or in natural shortages. Indeed much of it is a problem caused by the capitalist world economy and can be gotten rid of by replacing that socio-economic system with a genuinely socialist one or perhaps —though I actually think this is doubtful— by muzzling capitalism by, Swedish style, turning it into a thorough Welfare State Capitalism.

The problem, to repeat, is socio-economic and political. In thinking what it would be like for global justice to obtain, we do not have an intractable problem about whether we should or should not give priority to compatriots. We can state the conditions, indeed the nondesert islandish conditions, under which global justice could obtain. These conditions —conditions which are quite achievable— are not conditions where we would have to reason in accordance with a maxim giving

priority to compatriots. What we do have ahead of us, however, if global justice is to obtain, is a very bitter and probably a long and not unviolent political struggle. What is theoretically interesting here is the recognition that, seen in the clear light of a more perspicuous representation of social reality, once again an ethical dilemma collapses into an empirical issue —an issue about the adequacy of a determinate political sociology and about the possible outcome of a political struggle rooted in different factual assessments of what our social world is like.

Look at it this way, if the picture of the world I have given you is even near to the mark, even on a Nozickian notion of justice in rectification, huge transfers should go from North to South, but if that picture is accurate, it is also the case that this can be done without impoverishing anyone.

RESUMEN

Kai Nielsen, siguiendo una polémica iniciada por Charles Beitz y Henry Shue, discute el problema de la justicia global. El hecho de tener que decidir acerca de la prioridad de la justicia global sobre la doméstica, nos obliga a enfrentar un problema ético. Por un lado, parece ser que las personas que habitan en países ricos y tienen recursos deberían empobrecerse, si esto fuese necesario, para llegar a una igualdad internacional con el objeto de cubrir las necesidades básicas de los habitantes de países de escasos recursos. Por otra parte, nuestro sentido moral se inclina a creer que es más importante ocuparnos de nuestros propios pobres, es decir, a creer que los compatriotas tienen precedencia.

Según Nielsen, una adecuada concepción de la justicia, ya sea global o doméstica, no puede limitarse a un cuestionamiento sobre la manera en que están distribuidas las cargas y los beneficios en una sociedad, es necesario fijar nuestra atención en los procesos de producción.

Basándose en un ejemplo de la producción y el mercado de alimentos en países del Tercer Mundo, Nielsen muestra cómo el capitalismo y el imperialismo han contribuido a que unos países se enriquezcan a expensas de otros. Según él, no encontraremos la solución decidiendo a quiénes debemos beneficiar, ya que no es un problema enraizado ni en la escasez de recursos naturales ni en la sobrepoblación, sino un problema socio-económico y político.

Las injusticias causadas por la economía capitalista podrían desaparecer si ésta fuese reemplazada por un sistema genuinamente socialista o quizá, aunque Nielsen lo duda, por un capitalismo de bienestar, tal como el que se encuentra en Suecia.

Nielsen concluye señalando que el interés teórico de este asunto es que podemos ver claramente cómo el dilema ético se disuelve y aparece un problema empírico, es decir, un problema acerca de la adecuación de una determinada sociología política y acerca de los resultados de una lucha política enraizada en valoraciones fácticas diferentes del mundo social.

[Paulette Dieterlen]